

Building Bridges to Share Your Faith

1. John 4: Relational lessons from Jesus and the woman at the well
 - a. Initiation
 - b. Interaction
 - c. Results
2. Luke 15: Jesus and the sinners
 - a. Muttering/murmuring believers
 - b. "Sinners" of modern society
3. Interactive Communications Observation Activity
 - a. Group 1:
 - b. Group 2:
 - c. Group 3:
4. Postmodern Gospel Story: XEE from Evangelism Explosion
 - a. Opening Dialogue
 - b. Gospel Story
 - i. Life
 - ii. Us
 - iii. God
 - iv. Jesus
 - v. Faith
 - c. Response
5. World Religions and Cults
 - a. Appreciating opportunities
 - b. Understanding your community
 - c. Distinguishing Christianity from other religions and cults
 - d. Distinguishing Jesus from church and Church and Christianity
6. Q & A

1 Tim 4:1

Deut 18:9-14

2 Cor 11:2-4, 13-15

Mormonism

- Mormons believe in God the Eternal Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus was simply one god in a pantheon of gods. He is the brother of Satan.
- Baptism is "the very gateway into the kingdom of heaven." Baptism by proxy for the dead is a major activity: "The Saints are redeeming their (unbaptized) dead from the grasp of Satan."

Jehovah's Witnesses

- Jesus is the archangel Michael. He was the first creation of God, he came to earth as a man, died on a stake, and rose invisibly as a ghost.
- Only 144,000 people will share in heavenly glory.
- A dead person is unconscious and inactive; the soul is dead.

Christian Science

- Jesus is the human man and Christ is the divine idea.
- Humans do not need to repent of sins because they are inherently good.
- Salvation is realized through realizing one's true nature as an immortal spirit, "thetan."

Unification Church

- Jesus was a man no different from us except he was without original sin.
- Jesus was a man who failed; Sun Myung Moon is the second coming of Jesus Christ.
- Man is the visible, and God is the invisible form. God and man are one.
- Adam & Eve were tempted by the archangel Lucifer into illicit and forbidden love; through this, they willfully turned away from God and brought themselves and the human race into spiritual death.

Unity

- Jesus is the same as the Krishna of the Hindus and the Messiah of the Hebrews.
- Unity is the truth that is taught in all religions.
- Heaven can be enjoyed at any time through prayer; heaven and hell are not destinations for the afterlife, but rather states of consciousness during one's current life.

Baha'i

- Jesus is one of nine great world manifestations.
- It does not matter which religion you believe, since all religions are basically the same.
- The Baha'i Temple is nine-sided, with each side representing one of the world's religions. They say it doesn't matter which door you come in, since all religions are basically the same. Big signs on the walls read, "All religions teach the same thing about God."

Wicca

- Jesus was a great prophet or religious leader but that is all.
- Contemporary Wiccans worship the Great Mother Goddess and her partner the Horned God.
- The concepts of sin and Satan do not exist.

1 John 4:1-3

Closing Discussion: If one of your close friends were deeply involved in a cult, how would you try to "speak the truth in love" to them?

The World Religions

Distinguishing the Christian faith from Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism

Primary Scripture: 1 Peter 3:15

Opening Discussion: What is one thing you've always wanted to know about another religion?

Judaism

- 23% of the world's population
- Shares the Old Testament with Christianity.
- Focus is to obey the Ten Commandments.
- Modern practice focuses on earthly life.
- Sees Jesus as an extremist false messiah or good but martyred Jewish rabbi (teacher).

Islam

- 21% of the world's population
- Name for God: "Allah"
- The greatest sin in Islam is shirk, or associating anything on the level of God.
- Modern practice focuses on jihād, leading rare extremists to terrorism in order to gain martyrdom, in order to gain eternal life in Paradise.
- Sees Jesus ("Isa") as one of the most respected of over 124,000 prophets sent by Allah.

Buddhism

- 6% of the world's population
- "Buddha" means "The Enlightened One"
- Buddha himself was an avatar.
- Goal in life is to reach nirvana, to eliminate all desires, in order to escape suffering.
- The Eight-Fold Path is a system to free Buddhists from desiring anything.
- While historic Buddhism did not consider Jesus, modern Buddhists see Jesus as an enlightened teacher, or as an avatar of Buddha, but not God.

Hinduism

- 13% of the world's population
- God ("Brahman"), the absolute universal spirit, includes humans.
- Purpose in life is to be released from cycles of reincarnation, achieved through yoga and meditation.
- After death, people with good karma are reincarnated into a better status, while those with bad karma are reincarnated into a worse status to pay for past sins by suffering.
- Final salvation is absorption or union with Brahman.
- Sees Jesus as a teacher, guru, or avatar of the god Vishnu; He is a son of God as there are others.

Closing Discussion: How does Christianity compare with each of these major world religions?

The Cults

Primary Scripture: 1 Peter 3:15

Opening Discussion: What is a cult?

From Random House Dictionary: a religion or sect considered to be false, unorthodox, or extremist, with members often living outside of conventional society under the direction of a charismatic leader.

Cult vs Sect

Sunni vs Shia Muslim

Sunni: 85% worldwide, minority in Iraq & Iran, leadership elected democratically

Shia: 15% worldwide, majority in Iraq & Iran, leadership from lineage of the Prophet Muhammed, first passed to his cousin/son-in-law Ali

4 Types of Cults

Pseudo-Christian, influenced by Western Secular Humanism

- No Creator or personal God
- Evolution
- Man supreme
- Man basically good
- Human potential to become god

Oriental, influenced by Eastern Hindu Mysticism

- Pantheism
- We are one with nature
- We are part of impersonal cosmos
- Yoga, transcendental meditation
- Reincarnation

The Occult

- Spiritism
- Channeling
- Spirit guides
- Astrology
- Crystals
- Tapping into cosmic forces

New Age Movement

- Combines all the above

Spiritism spans the whole universe of darkness, including astrology, tarot cards, palmistry, numerology, witchcraft, Satanism, séances, clairvoyance, and channeling.