

# **Study Guide for “Lesson on Looking for Truth in World Religions”**

To be used along with the video of the same name on [www.ChristianfromMuslim.com](http://www.ChristianfromMuslim.com)

## **Program Summary and Notes:**

**Quick Summary:** People are searching for Truth. This lesson provides guidelines for those wondering which religion is true. To assist them, we present tools for how to objectively evaluate religions’ claims. For example, we show how to use basic logic to compare the teachings of various religions.

We also provide “keys.” Using these, we can determine if anything, everything, or nothing is true. We take a look at expectations and pitfalls. And we especially examine Eastern Religions, which so many people are now finding an attractive alternative to monotheistic faiths.

(Note: See also *Lesson on Does God Exist?* where we address that question specifically. Both these lessons are directed to seekers, but also serve to strengthen the faith and provide apologetics training for believers.)

## **Reality: Mosques in America** with former Muslim Huda

Huda and Dr. Cynthia have been on a road trip since early morning, 8 hours earlier. Messy and tired, they come across a mosque. Huda expresses frustration at the number of mosques being built in America. Dr. C grabs the camera and films her response for our video.

As Huda sees it, she had no choice about which religion she would follow until she came to America, far into adulthood. She wishes she had been free to choose her religion in the Middle East.

Huda points out the impossible challenges Christians face when trying to build churches in the Middle East, compared with the ease with which Muslims can build mosques in America. She strongly feels this is unfair. Muslims should build mosques in their own countries, not America, Huda tells us.

Dr. C, in the background, reminds her that the United States has freedom of religion. Huda says she fears that Americans will lose their freedoms if Islam takes root, by building mosques. For example, she has said, “If Islam gains power in America, then women will be nothing again.”

Being reality, this video clip exposes Huda’s gut reaction to Mosques in America. It also reflects the Middle Eastern attitude, still held even now that she is a Christian, that a country can limit religious freedom. There are views that we are raised with that are difficult to change, even when living in a different country and with a new religion.

Do not fear however: we are not saying that there should be no mosques in America. As Dr. C explains later in the video lesson, because of Freedom of Religion, we do allow Mosques in America.

## **Which Religion is True?**

### **Why Muslims Look for Truth**

Seeing much violence and violation of human rights in Muslim countries, many in Islam are discouraged and doubting. First, they doubt Islam. Then, since they have been told that Islam is the final revelation of

God with his final prophet, they doubt the existence of God as well. Some ask, “How do I find the Truth?”

A vast number of secular people in the West, raised without religion, are also looking for something to believe. Can we really help them find the truth? Or is all we can do shout that we have the truth, and hope they believe us?

### **Can we find Truth?**

We believe that it is possible to compare religions objectively, meaning in a factual way. This lesson helps you do that.

“But,” **you might say**, “I don’t have time to look deeply into everything. And I’m not very educated. If smart people still argue about what is true after all this time, how can I figure it out? I might make a wrong choice. And if I choose a religion different than that of my culture I could face real trouble. I wouldn’t want that! What if I choose the wrong one and suffer anyway? Doesn’t it make sense to follow what everyone around me believes? I will trust my Imam.”

Jesus in the Injeel tell us to,

***“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”*** Matthew 22:37

**Your Ability.** Some people have a greater brain ability than others. Those who are very intelligent or educated are expected to use their great ability to learn and to reason more. They should honor God by looking diligently for Truth. Jesus said,

***“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded.”*** Luke 12:48

What if your intelligence and education are not so good? God expects less. He is merciful and compassionate. God does not expect more from you than you can do. In fact, it is very comforting to remember that Jesus defended a woman with these words,

***“She did what she could.”*** Mark 14:8

**Example: the Parable of the Talents.** In the Injeel, the New Testament of the Bible, Jesus told us a parable, a story with meaning. It explained that people are given different abilities. They are expected to act according to what they have received. If they are very gifted, much is expected. But even the one who has little is expected to do what he can, and is scolded when he does not. (Matthew 25:14-30)

The Bible tells us that God honors it when we use our minds, not simply believe whatever we are told. For example the people in Berea,

***“...were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.”*** Acts 17:11 (KJV)

***“Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.”*** I Thessalonians 5:21,22

And if you are Muslim, consider these ayah from the Qur’an:

***“Produce your proof if you are truthful.”*** Qur’an al Baqarah 2:111

(Note: This is how the Qur'an challenges the Christians and Jews.)

*"When it is said to them, 'Follow what Allah has sent down.' They say, 'Nay. We shall follow what we found our fathers following.'" Qur'an, al Baqarah, 2:170*

(Note: The Islamic commentary on this says it means that you should follow God's way, not simply what your parents did. We agree!)

**So, to the best of your ability, you are encouraged to find out the truth.** God expects that of you. According to both the Bible and the Qur'an, it is good for you to examine proof of religions, and use your mind. It is not good to simply follow what your parents and grandparents did.

Again, you are not expected to do more than you can do, but **you are expected to do what you can.** If you don't like to read, you can watch videos online, like the ones at [www.ChristianfromMuslim.com](http://www.ChristianfromMuslim.com). And there is material available in almost every language online somewhere.

**Example: Former Muslim Huda.** Part of Huda's journey to becoming a Christian was learning about Jesus and Christian practices and loving them. But she also looked for the truth. As Huda says in another of our videos,

"I can't believe that for so long my eyes were blind. I did not know the true religion. Now there is more opportunity if people try to search for the truth."

(Note: See also the short video of *Huda on Islam* in either English or Arabic.)

### **Expectations in Looking for Truth**

Dr. C says in looking for Truth, these expectations are important:

- God expects you to **do your best** in looking for truth – not more, not less
- Expect to find **some truth in every** religion or philosophy
  - If there were none, no one would follow it
  - Some truth **does not mean that the entire religion is correct**
  - Don't be surprised or sidetracked by this
- Expect to find **deception**. Remember, Satan in the Garden of Eden showed us the best way of deception is **2 to 1**:
  - Truth, truth, and a lie – tell **two truths for every untruth**
  - This is what we can expect from many false religions
  - Also popular science teachers/documentaries which preach the religion of **atheistic materialism**: a few scientific facts, then falsehood twisted in.
  - Most people are fooled by this strategy, so **beware!**
- Expect **some similarities** between all religions
  - especially if they are related, like many Eastern Religions
  - and monotheistic faiths
  - this **doesn't mean they are all the same**
- Expect to find some things that you **don't understand** in every religion or philosophy

- being **complicated doesn't mean it is true**
- don't get confused and give up
- for example by trying to understand all the levels of Buddhist and Daoist realms, or interpretations of Biblical future prophecies
- Focus on **major beliefs and the evidence** for them
  - **Don't get sidetracked** by something that:
    - you like (for example Eastern Meditation)
    - you don't like (having only one wife in Christianity, or the way some people of a faith dress)
    - a minor belief, possibly an interpretation
  - as Dr. C likes to quote, "**The Main thing** is to keep the Main thing the Main thing!"

## MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

Our lessons primarily address Christianity and Islam; but since Muslims are turning to Eastern Religions, let's look at some of the major ones.

### Islam

Most of our lessons are directed to people who are Muslim, or are familiar with Islam. So we won't teach it here. We do list some of its major doctrines in the comparison chart below.

(Note: If you are unfamiliar with Islam, we highly recommend that you view our video and/or study guide "*Lesson on Introduction to Islam for Christians.*")

## EASTERN RELIGIONS

### Why Eastern Religions?

Eastern Religions, those from the Far East like India and China, are now being strongly considered as alternatives for people from both Muslim and Western backgrounds. Why is that?

### Their Good News is Up Front

Modern life is hectic. Every day we hear of tragic violence. Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism emphasize meditative practices which can lead to a feeling of peace. The peaceful concepts of Buddhism and Hinduism have a widespread appeal. They are promoted as a retreat from conflict and busyness.

Doesn't it sound good, as Eastern Religions teach, to:

- think of the interconnectedness of all living things?
- believe that all is well, and detach from your problems?
- connect to the body's God-given ability to relax by emptying the mind of stressful thoughts?
- simplify your life?
- follow mindfulness – meaning being fully present in the moment, not worried about what comes next, or what else you need to do?

Another appeal of Eastern Religions is their **reluctance to specify sin**. That means people can feel peaceful from meditation, and self-righteousness from performing ceremonies, without needing to clean up their lives from things that the Bible clearly states are wrong.

### But their Bad News is Big

While presenting the positive aspects of Eastern Religions, the **negative reality of these faiths** is not advertised up front. They include the burdensome rituals, lack of practical hope, and the impact on societies that believe in things like fate and the caste system.

Once one sincerely practices these faiths, their burdensome nature is revealed. For example, a dear Buddhist friend who has been called a *bodhisattva* (demigod), said about *samsara*, the futile cycle of reincarnation,

“I hate the *samsara*. I wish it wasn’t true.”

She wishes that reincarnation would not have to continue until every creature had passed through thousands of lives. It doesn’t. But sadly, she does not yet see that.

Another negative aspect of Eastern Religions is *Maya*, the **idea that reality is illusion**, unreal. Can you say that the pain of a mother who has lost her child is not real? Do you believe that cancer pain is unreal? Are mutilation and child molestation illusion?

Denying the reality of pain is not easy when you are suffering it yourself. That is going too far for most Westerners, and for those who have left Eastern faiths. Notable examples are Rachel Brown in *All the Fishes Come Home to Rest*, and Rabi Maharaj in *Death of a Guru*.

**Science.** Monotheism’s very belief in the physical nature of the universe and its laws, is what allowed them to originate science. Although using science now, the East’s pantheism has a less linear or predictable view of the universe, which prevented the logic needed to develop The Scientific Method.

### **Christianity’s Negative**

In contrast, Christianity puts its negative up front. It openly admits that people are sinners and need saving. So it is seen by the world as a negative, exclusive religion. But people are not all good. This accounts for crimes and violence. Deep down most people recognize this, at least to some degree.

### **Christianity’s Positive**

Once we move beyond the obvious fact that no one is perfect, **Christianity has the good news:**

- **Peace** – with God, ourselves, and others
- salvation and **Eternal Life** after only one earthly life!

## **The Main Eastern Religions**

Those of Eastern Religions will usually agree that Christians are on the right path to God, but resist and be offended if we say Jesus is the only path to God.

### **Hinduism**

This, the traditional religion of India, has up to 300 million gods. Some Hindu priests claim there is only one god (the Brahma or highest god). What they mean is since all things are unified, all the gods are part of one god. In this pantheistic view, god is part of the universe, not personal.

*Karma* is a system of merit. Hinduism believes in reincarnation, not just through animals, but through multiple levels of human beings, depending on how much karma they have merited from their past lives. The process of reincarnation is called the samsara.

The cycle of the samsara is the basis of the caste system, which places every person at a different level depending on their birth family, sex, and wealth. Each caste must stay within its level, or earn negative merit for the next life.

Important to Hinduism are a variety of ritual practices, called dharmas. These must be performed reverently and in a specific way for them to have effect. If done right, the ceremonies are thought to win favor with the gods, for both answers to prayers, and merit towards a higher level of incarnation.

There are differences between village “folk” Hinduism, which tends to emphasize revering local gods, for example snakes, and the Hinduism practiced by the high castes and elite, which tend to emphasize a more monotheistic view of God.

The ultimate goal is to progress, through innumerable incarnations, to a plane in which we slip into nothingness and merge with the eternal emptiness – nirvana. Nirvana is not heaven, but non-existence.

Hindus may readily agree that Jesus is “the son of god” – but seeing him as “the only Son of God” is a challenge for them.

### **Buddhism**

Buddhism originated in India, but is more popular in lands farther East, like China, Japan, Thailand and Taiwan.

Since Buddhism is a religion which grew out of Hinduism, the two religions have much in common. It does believe in reincarnation, but with less emphasis on castes. Buddhism attempts to provide way of escaping the samsara to nirvana faster.

Buddha lived around 400 B.C. Through various experiences, he developed a philosophy called the Four Noble Truths. These explain that suffering is a result of desire and attachment. The Eightfold Path are practices to help a follower withdraw from what causes us suffering in this life, and earn merit towards a higher level of incarnation in the next.

One thing that may surprise you is that in Buddhism, you can be either atheist or believe in God, which is an impersonal power. The goal is to have an enlightenment experience, like Buddha did. This means to be able to see numbutsu, that everything is the same: the crooked tree is straight.

(Note: There is a wonderful testimony of a man who almost became a Buddhist priest, but actually became a Christian while meditating in a Buddhist compound. He could not see the peaceful face of Buddha and the agony of Jesus on the cross as being numbutsu - the same thing. His “enlightenment” showed him that Jesus actually was the savior! *Purple Pomegranate Press*)

The current trend presents Buddhism in science-like terms which make it believable to many people. Its leaders emphasize there is no absolute evil or good; just actions that bring about results. Cause and effect rule everything, they say, because of power and balance in the universe.

Using science concepts like quantum mechanics, which few people grasp, this approach sounds real. Seekers can find it hard to resist. And even those who aren’t seekers meet this philosophy almost daily in movies and other media. But as we discussed above, this is an example of taking truth from science and philosophy and adding something untrue.

Buddhism has many sects. One of them, the “Pure Land” sect, is quite popular for offering a heaven-like final state. Zen Buddhism is quite popular in the West. Zen offers a very fast track to enlightenment and nirvana.

Simply being good is not enough to guarantee that you move up through reincarnations to nirvana. For example, the Buddhist friend mentioned above that had known Dr. C for decades. After studying with the Dalai Lama, she made a special trip from her home in East Asia to America, to share an important message with Dr. C. They spent long days and nights reviewing Buddhist and Christian doctrines. After days of this, the friend warned Dr. C,

“You have good karma from your past life because you became a doctor and are doing well. And because you are a doctor in this life, you have good karma for your next life. But that is not enough for you to reincarnate at a higher level. Unless you start practicing Buddhist dharma you will not get any higher. You will not get out of the samsara. You might even go down.”

Dr. C loves and respects this friend, but for many reasons, she is glad that her religion is not true.

So, while denying human **pride and lust**, Buddhism appeals to both of them:

- You are good, because you have reincarnated to your current high level
- You are smart, because you are following the way of the universe
- You are not a sinner, although your choices have consequences
- You can have peace with the power of the universe through meditation and other Buddhist dharma

### **Sikhism**

Although not as well-known as Hinduism and Buddhism, Sikhism is the fifth most popular religion in the world. Founded by Guru Nanak only 500 years ago, it is also the newest.

The Sikh religion arose in the Punjab of India, a region of conflict between Islam and Hinduism, and is a mixture of those beliefs. Its holy book, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, contains passages from the Qur’an and Hindu books. In practice, it feels closer to Hinduism. Its participants frequently follow traditions of both. For example, the *Diwali* (or *Deepavali*), the Hindu Festival of Lights, and the *Nagar Kirtan*, annual parade of the Sikh holy book.

Sikhs believe in one supreme God who resembles, but is less personal than the Christian God. They do not claim to be the only way to God, and consider many religions as valid paths.

They do believe in reincarnation, but have the modification that all humans are on the same level – so in theory there is no high or low caste, and women are equal to men. Christians would consider this an improvement over Hinduism. Because of this equality, communal meals are an important component of worship – something unheard of in Hinduism, where castes must eat separately. Free meals are always available at their meeting places, which are called *gurdwaras*.

The most devout are “baptized” or Khalsa Sikhs, who must wear five symbolic items, including a turban. Sikhs are taught to defend themselves and the weak, with violence if necessary. Khalsas must pledge this. But unlike Islam, Sikhism does not have a manifesto of violent conquest of the world.

Like Christians, Sikhs face persecution from Muslims and militant Hindus. Sadly, being mistaken as Muslims because of their turbans, Sikhs have even been attacked in the West (attacking Muslims is not acceptable either). Fortunately, most Sikhs understand this is not true Christianity and have not retaliated.

For example, Dr. C was asked to represent Christians at a Sikh-sponsored community memorial for those killed in a terrorist attack on Sikhs in Wisconsin.

### **Zoroastrianism**

Although less popular than the top five religions, Zoroastrianism is important because of its attraction to people from the former Persian Empire, mainly Iran. Having suffered under Islam, a faith they consider imposed on them by Arabs, many Iranians look to Zoroastrianism as their natural, pre-Islamic faith.

This faith is characterized by its reverence towards fire, and ceremonies which honor it. Traditionally, fire itself would be worshipped. However, modern, educated Zoroastrians say fire is only symbolic of God and Truth. If you meet an Iranian who wears a golden-winged creature, they are likely more interested in Zoroastrianism, than in Islam.

### **Bahai**

This religion also originated in Persia, in 1863. It is unitarian in that it openly accepts all faiths as valid expressions of God. However, they believe its originator, Baha'u'llah was an incarnation of god. His teachings should be followed.

They affirm family as the pillar of society, marriage between a man and woman, and value human unity. Importantly, they look forward to and encourage a New World Order.

### **Paganism**

This category of religion includes most of the polytheistic religions. Daoism is a polytheist religion that arose in China. As with other “pagan” religions, it honors spirits in the natural world, such as water, rocks, and trees. This it shares with Wicca, Druid, Native American, Shaman, voodoo, and Shinto religions. Daoism and spirit worship may be mixed with Buddhism in Asia, for example Taiwan and Japan.

Pagan worship practices look like idolatry, superstition and demonism to Christians and Muslims. Although frowned upon by pure Islam, some of the practices of folk Islam can resemble pagan, occultic ceremonies. Astrology is also popular in the Middle East.

(Note: for more, see the study guide and *Lesson on Islam and the Occult*.)

### **Is Detachment Good? with Luke Price**

Detachment is an important part of most Eastern Religions. In the video, Price and Dr. C discuss the question, “Is detachment good?” and if so, to what extent?

Christianity and Eastern Religions both warn us of the dangers of attachment to worldly things. The Bible says,

***“Do not love the world, or anything in the world.”*** I John 2:15

Eastern religions however, go farther than asking us not to be attached to things, or this world or life. **They say that the higher path requires detachment from people** – even their nearest and dearest. They say that the best peace arrives as a result of not caring about anything, except doing religious duties.

One of Dr. C’s friends, a celebrity former Muslim, was considering Buddhism. After examining its beliefs, and really liking the peaceful aspects, the decision was against it. Why? Detachment from people was unacceptable. This person has a big heart, and is very involved with family and the international



community. The idea of not caring what happens to them, or those in the country that they left, makes no sense to them.

Christians agree. We are NOT to detach from people. In fact, we are told to,  
*“Love one another deeply, from the heart.”* I Peter 1:22

Many ills in Eastern societies result from extreme detachment. Price shares his view that attachment to others shows our humanity and makes life richer.

### A Look at LOGIC with Luke Price

Price helps us think logically. He provides guidelines for someone who is searching for the true religion. He tells us that there are classic laws of logic which can help us. The names of these two laws are long, but their meanings are easy.

#### #1 The Law of Non-Contradiction:

*Two statements which contradict each other cannot both be true.*

The name sounds complicated, but the rule makes sense, doesn't it? At least it does to people raised in Western culture. For example, you wouldn't say that a dog is white, and then turn around and say it's black, would you? Not unless you had just painted him!

In the West it is becoming **common to believe that all religions are true**, despite the illogic of it. Have you heard any of these?

- Many paths lead to God.
- All religions worship God, just in different ways.
- All religions are the same. They basically tell us to be good.
- If you say that there is only one way to God, you are intolerant and wrong.

In New Age Religion, the Sikh Religion, and popular philosophy you will hear these. But you won't hear them much in Islamic countries, because they teach otherwise from childhood.

Another logic law Price shares with us is called,

#### #2 The Law of the Indiscernibility of Identicals:

*If two things are different, they are not identical.*

Things are not the same if they are different. In the West, we would say that is logical.

Examples: things that are not the same. The video gives two examples,

- Two people. Price and Dr. C use themselves – a man and woman sitting in different chairs are not the same thing.
- A crooked tree is straight. Dr. C gives us an example from a Buddhist book. It says that to be enlightened, you must be able to look at a crooked tree and see it as being straight. It is very difficult for educated people from the West to enter into this way of thinking.

From our discussion, **this law has two applications:**

1. To Numbutsu, the idea that everything is the same: this law shows the illogic of saying that the crooked tree is straight.

Even for people who have not been trained in logic, seeing a crooked tree as straight is not easy. It requires a great deal of training in the Eastern way of thinking to convince yourself that it is true.

2. To World Religions: if we can tell them apart, they are not the same.

Perhaps it is easier to believe all religions are the same than finding out specifically what each religion teaches. That would mean needing to sort through them, or admit that some view might be “wrong.” People often prefer to be like ostriches – hide their head in the sand.

### **Important CONTRADICTIONS between Major faiths**

There is a great difference between religions in answers to big questions like:

- **LIFE:** *Is it real, or illusion?*
- **REINCARNATION:** *Do we keep coming back to earth after we die, or not?*
- **GOD:** *How many gods are there? What is God like?*
- **FEELING:** *If I feel good, does that mean I am going to heaven?*
- **DEEDS:** *How can I please God?*
- **JUDGMENT:** *Will I be judged or not?*
- **HEAVEN:** *Is heaven, or non-existence (nirvana) better?*
- **SALVATION/Moksa:** *How can I get to heaven?*

World religions answer each of these questions differently. How can all religions can be true when they teach different things?

### **APPLYING the Law of NON-CONTRADICTION**

Price and Dr. Cynthia discuss contradictory claims of several of the world’s most common religions.

#### **COMPARISON CHART**

<b>CHRISTIANITY</b>	<b>ISLAM</b>	<b>HINDUISM</b>	<b>BUDDHISM</b>
universe began	universe began	universe eternal	universe eternal
one life	one life	reincarnation	reincarnation

sin	sin	no right/wrong	no right/wrong
judgement	judgment	karma	karma
personal God	distant God	many gods	many gods
heaven	paradise	nothingness	nothingness
life real	life real	life illusion	life illusion
saved by faith	by works	by works	by works

This chart powerfully illustrates that religions teach very different things. According to the Law of Non-contradiction they cannot all be true. Buddhism and Hinduism come the closest to agreeing on major doctrines, because of their relationship. Note that in nearly every essential doctrine, **Christianity differs from the other religions**, including Islam.

### **Confronting contradictions is hard for the West**

If you are from a Muslim country, you have probably been told many times that other faiths are wrong. And most Muslims are taught to confront other beliefs. So hearing that something is wrong might seem natural to you. You might not understand why people in West have a dread of telling anyone they are wrong.

People in **America and Europe are much more reluctant to confront someone** about unrealistic beliefs. We are programmed to accept that everyone has rights not only have their own views, but to express them. It is not nice to tell someone they are wrong. And so, Westerners often think it better to say that everything is right.

But different religions have very contradictory claims. When we apply the Law of Non-contradiction, they fail. The popular idea that all religions are true is not logical.

### **Three Keys to the Truth** with Georges Housney

Many Muslims are disenchanted. The religion they grew up with seems to connected to practices they dislike: terrorism, Muslim on Muslim violence, and the mistreatment of women and minorities. Many want to find the truth.

Georges Housney, renown teacher and evangelist from the Middle East, gives us these Three keys for finding the truth:

**#1 Be Sincere**

**#2 Pray**

**#3 Compare Teachings and Leaders.**

**Be Sincere.** Do we truly want to find the truth? It takes courage to openly examine what we have been taught or grew up believing. But if we are sincerely seeking truth, we put ourselves in the position to find it.

**Pray.** This can be difficult if you do not believe in God. Many agnostics however have prayed, “If there is a God, reveal yourself to me.” And it has happened! If you do believe in God, pray that he shows you which holy book and teachings reveal him and his way. If you don’t believe, why not ask God if he is real anyway?

**Compare the teachings and leaders** of the major religions. You will see that although most have similarities, they vary in significant ways. They can’t all be true. When you compare the leaders of world religions, you will clearly see that there is no one who compares to the Lord Jesus Christ. Even Muslims often recognize this, as we have been told by Muslims from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait even before they converted to Christianity.

### **The REALITY TEST for World Religions**

This was not discussed in the video lesson, but is very important. As time goes on, we recognize that **Reality is one of the strongest defenses of the Bible.** It is also an evangelistic tool with secular unbelievers, because it touches the discomfort they might already sense from their view of reality.

Jesus teaches us in John 4 that God wants to be worshipped in both **Spirit and Truth.** True religion must do both: meet spiritual hunger and provide practical truth.

Of all world religions, the **Bible, fit the best with reality.**

For example:

1. **PHYSICAL:** The Bible starts out with the creation of the physical, material universe by immaterial God. Eastern religions deny the **reality of the material**, physical world. Everything physical, they say, is illusion.
2. **SPIRITUAL:** The Bible recognizes **spiritual reality.** Scientific materialism recognizes only the physical. It denies a spiritual world. There are no souls or spirits, they say, including ours.
3. **EVIL and SUFFERING:** The Bible admits the **existence of evil and pain.** It explains how it arises, how to deal with it, and what will happen to it. Many other religions and philosophies either deny evil and pain, calling them imaginary, or only a result of neutral causes.
4. **GOODNESS:** The Bible also tells us that **good exists.** Love and beauty are real, not figments of our imagination.

Almost everyone feels that all four of these are real. They have a sense that the material world exists, that part of them is an immaterial soul or spirit, and that love and evil exist.

To believe a worldview besides the Bible’s (and Islam’s as it agrees with the Bible’s), you must deny one of the aspects of life which your senses tell you are real. Technically, this results in what is called ***cognitive dissonance*** – believing things which don’t fit comfortably within your experience.

**Jesus or Mohammed?** with Georges Housney

Who is the true prophet, Jesus or Mohammed? This is a question anyone who compares Christianity and Islam must ask. Houssey gives guidance for how we can determine who has the true message from God.

Muslims claim that both Jesus and Mohammed are prophets, yet they make opposite claims of what is true, how we should live, and how we get to heaven. Houssey tells us to

*look at what leaders claim about themselves*

Mohammed claimed to be “only a warner” (*Qur’an Surah 7:188 and 46:9*). Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and Savior. Although some Eastern religious leaders have claimed to be one of the many incarnations of god, none were like Jesus: he claimed to be equal to the one Creator God, and then proved it by rising from the dead.

The difference between these messages is extreme and impacts our eternal destiny. A sincere seeker of truth must decide which is true, Jesus, Mohammed, or another religious leader?

### **SHARING the GOSPEL with People of Eastern Religions**

Our lessons are mainly about Muslim evangelism and discipleship. But Christians working with Muslims will find some considering Eastern Religions, or already believing them. For that situation, here are **ideas that might help** you to build bridges for conversations, or to share the gospel with them.

**Who is God?** Saying “God loves you” has an entirely different meaning depending on who you think God is. Christians might take for granted that everyone has the same view of God. For example, that God is personal, not simply a detached power source, and that God is good. Eastern Religions see god as impersonal power of nature, possibly with some human incarnations, for example Krishna.

Bear this in mind when addressing the religions of East Asia. Although they differ on specifics, Christians and Muslims share the idea that God is outside as well as inside creation, and has personal aspects. So their concepts of God are closer to each other than the Far Eastern concept.

### **DISCUSSION TOPICS for Eastern Religions**

In case you are talking to someone who is favoring an Eastern Religion, here are a few things you can discuss:

1. **Compare:** *Ask* what they believe, listen well, and when it is your turn share how your faith is the *same and different*.
2. **Unique:** All religions are NOT the same
  - a. the **main difference** between Christianity and every other faith in the world, is that **God loves and reaches down to save us** (Romans 5:8)
  - b. through faith in Jesus’ finished work on the cross.
  - c. by faith saved to do good works, not by good works (Ephesians 2:8-10)
3. Use **symbolism and parables**. Like the people of Jesus’ day, those of Eastern Faiths like illustrations more than lists. Christians working with Eastern Religions have found it helpful to share concepts like: the Light, the Way, the Living Water, the Name, the Good Shepherd, the Truth
4. **Religious practices** – discussing theirs and ours

- Christian **meditation** also brings us peace; but not salvation points
    - For those attracted to Eastern Religions for the peace of meditation, let them know that Christian meditation, although somewhat different, produces the same “relaxation response” (Isaiah 26:3 & Psalm 131:2)
    - (Note: Christian meditation is focusing on a peaceful truth or verse in a relaxed state. Eastern meditation is mind-emptying, to “merge with the void.”)
  - Christian **practices**, like communion, fasting, worshipping, fellowshiping, and serving bring spiritual encouragement, not salvation points (Ephesians 2:8-10)
5. **Peace.** Reincarnation and has been described as spending your whole life pushing a large rock up the hill. Then it rolls down for you to push back up in the next life. Jesus promises us peace in this life and the next. (Matthew 11:28-30 & John 16:33)
  6. **Security.** In Eastern Religions there is no assurance what will happen to them when they die. It is good for them to know that they can walk with God here, and go to heaven after this one life. (John 6:47)
  7. **God’s character.** (See above discussion) These verses show that God is INSIDE creation, which Eastern Religions believe, but also OUTSIDE of it:
    - Colossians 1:17 – “**He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.**”
    - Romans 11:36 - “**For from him and through him and to him are all things.** To him be the glory forever! Amen.”
    - Ephesians 4:6,10 - “**One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all... He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.**”
    - Hebrews 2:10 – “In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that *God, for whom and through whom everything exists*, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.
    - Paul’s sermon in Athens is a good example of God’s character:

*Acts 17:24-31 "The God who **made the world and everything** in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and **does not live in temples** built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.*

*From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.*

*God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is **not far from each one of us.** 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring!' Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given **proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.**" (NIV)*

## Disillusion with Islam

In this video of “Dr. Cynthia’s Side,” she discusses how disillusion with Islam encourages Muslims to leave Islam and become Christians.

When Huda was a Muslim, she looked at the Muslim world, its trials and abuses, from the view that Islam was true.

“No country in the world practices true Islam,” she would say. The closest to true Islam, she felt was Iran under the Shah before the revolution, because of its more open attitude at that time.

However, BE, an Arab evangelist working with us challenged Huda that Islam actually teaches the abuses in the Muslim world that she hates. Then Huda looked into facts for herself. As she watched debates, testimonies, and commentaries in Arabic and English, Huda’s disillusion with Islam grew. She saw that principles of Islam underlay its practices.

Through travel, Huda had visited churches and already grown to love Jesus. She found him beautiful compared to what she had learned of Mohammed or seen in Islam. But, she told Dr. C a few weeks before her conversion, she was afraid to leave Islam. It could mean her death. Yet her discovery that the Principles of Islam teach the Practices of Islam, added to her love of Jesus, gave her the courage to leave Islam. Spirit and Truth had come together for her.

There is an urban legend that argument or debate does not bring anyone to faith in Jesus Christ. This is not true. It does not work fast, but it can work. It worked to open the eyes of Nabeel Qureshi when David Wood exposed the truth to him. Huda’s example is another. These and other examples confirm the teaching of BE that,

***It is so difficult for Muslims to leave Islam, that they must first know that it is wrong.***

This is why we teach that Muslim evangelism should:

**Build Bridges, Share Truth, and Expose Falsehood**, preferably in that order.

(Note: For more on this, see the study guides and video lessons on *Building Bridges with Muslims*, and *The Gospel for Muslims: the Path of the Prophets*.)

### Scripture References for this Lesson:

#### The Bible

II Corinthians 5:17

Luke 12:48

Matthew 25:14-30 & 16:15,16 & 26:63,63 & 27:42 & 3:16 & 11:28-30

John 14:6 & 11:25,26 & 6:51-53 & 16:33 & 6:47

Romans 5:8

Isaiah 26:3

Psalm 131:2

Ephesians 2:8-10 & 4:6-10

Colossians 2:3 & 1:17

I John 2:15

I Peter 1:22  
Romans 11:36  
Ephesians 4:6, 10  
Hebrews 2:10  
Acts 17:24-30

Qur'anic references:

Mohammed claiming to be “only a warner”- Surah 7:188 and 46:9  
Regarding Christians sharing with Muslims – Surah al Baqarah 2:111,170

**Study Questions:**

1. Regarding the reality video segment:

- Why do you think Huda says she would like to see all the mosques in America torn down?
- Do you think she really means this?
- What frustration with her past does Huda reveal?
- What does “Dr. Cynthia’s side” at the end of the lesson say about mosques?

2. Luke Price discusses logic concepts which go back to thousands of years to ancient Greece. The names are long, but their meaning makes sense.

- What does the “Law of Non-Contradiction” refer to? Could you state it in an easier way?
- What does the “Indiscernibility of Identicals” refer to? Could you state it in an easier way?
- Do you think all religions can be true if they contradict each other?

3. Price and Dr. C discuss some ways in which common world religions disagree.

- Can you remember any?
- What contradictions in world religions have you come across in your spiritual journey?  
(Consider: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Bahai, New Age, etc.)

4. We presents some important expectations you might face when comparing religions.

- Have you previously had the opportunity to compare world religions?
- Have you found any of these expectations to be true in your search?
- Is comparing religions a topic that you have any interest in?

5. Regarding truth in religions?

- How much truth does a religion need to be the Truth?
- How much falsehood would you allow for it to be True?
- Can you see a difference between the clear teachings of a religion and different interpretations of its holy book or practices?

6. What in other religions might be attractive to you?

- Does Christianity include something like that?
- Is it essential for a religion you believe to have that?

7. Reality is an important thing to consider when looking at religions. By this we mean that it fits with what we know or believe to be real. Looking at what religion fits best with what we know to be real is an important consideration.

- Do you believe that humans are both physical and spiritual?
- Which religions/philosophies believe the world is only physical?



- Which religions/philosophies believe that the world is only spiritual/unseen?
8. Rev. Georges Housney gives us three important keys for finding the truth.
- Can you recall what they are?
  - How important do you think sincerity is?
  - Do you think we can deceive ourselves that we are sincere when we aren't?
9. Housney says we should look at Jesus in comparison to the founders/leaders of other religions. Can you think of similarities and differences between Jesus and:
- Mohammed?
  - Buddha?
  - Krishna?
  - Hindu and Sikh Gurus?
  - Joseph Smith?
10. After taking this lesson, and thinking about it:
- Do you think all religions are the same?
  - Did you learn anything about comparing religions?
  - What religion do you think is true?
    - Give your reasons why?

by Christian from Muslim, 2020  
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