

Sharing your Faith with People of Other Faiths

A Study on World Religions

Developed January 2015 for a Sunday School

By

Ryan M Marks

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Preface

Sharing your Christian Faith is important. One *must* depend on the Holy Spirit and be led by the Lord when sharing the Faith. Yet, one must also study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed but rightly divides the Word of Truth. Study is important, but not mere intellectual study. Understanding of another religion should further solidify one's Biblical worldview. The arena of this world and our War against the world, the flesh, and the devil is largely a battle of ideas, worldviews, and beliefs. Those *beliefs, ideas, and worldviews shape economies, political institutions, education, and even nations*. Jesus Christ told His followers to go forth and disciple the nations. Are we preparing to go forth and do so? **Are we preparing to teach others all that Christ has commanded us as He laid out in the Great Commission or are we only evangelism focused saying repent of your sin and receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord but not willing to walk alongside others for the long haul, teaching them the Word of God, bringing them up to maturity in Christ so that they will be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ themselves who are able and ready to go forth and disciple others?**

May we evangelize as well as do our part to disciple the nations for Jesus Christ!

Grace, Truth and Peace in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Ryan Marks

This curriculum is designed to be taught in 4-6 weeks with a class time of about 45 minutes. The curriculum can easily be adapted to go longer; however, to allow for more discussion and questions. Follow the Spirit as you lead and/or participate in a class! May the Lord's presence fill your times of fellowship and study and serve as a time to equip everyone there with tools to go out and do the work of the ministry.

Week 1-2 Introduce the class and look at Christianity from a religion perspective (yes Christianity is about a relationship and not a religion, but the majority of non-Christians are going to look at Christianity as a religion and honestly so do a lot of professed followers of Christ). Branches of Christianity—Church History Big Picture—Denominations

Week 2-3 Common Cults: What they Believe and Core Scriptures that disprove them: Mormons—7th Day Adventists—Jehovah's Witnesses—"Christian Science." In a Cult, you can't have a brain

Week 3-5 Major Religions: Hinduism—Buddhism—Islam

Week 6 Religions of Today: New Age—Secular Humanism

Note: in this study we have not included a plethora of lesser known religions including Judaism or Satanism/the occult. The Reason: Judaism is basically the Old Testament; minor religions often differ little from major religions except in their specific false teachings; and Satanism/the occult must be cautiously studied for it is very, very dark—caution should especially be exercised on this topic around new/immature Christians and young children.

Introduction to Sharing you Christian Faith with people of other Faiths

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

Matt 28:19-20 (KJV)

Sing to the LORD, bless His name;

Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.

Declare His glory among the nations,

His wonders among all peoples. Psalms 96:2-3 (NKJV)

Jesus is your model. The Bible is your ultimate textbook. Look through the Gospels at how Jesus always seemed to respond with such understanding and tact. He often answered with questions rather than straight out answers that forced people to come to the right conclusion for themselves. Yes, Jesus was the Son of God and divinely led, BUT the Bible says that Jesus is our example. We can learn to respond with tact as well, not to the extent of our Lord, but nonetheless with skill.

As you study other religions, seek reach a level of understanding to be able to understand their train of thought. If you can look at an issue or certain scriptural passage that a cult uses from the perspective of a Muslim, Jew, Biblical-Christian and or whatever then you can respond more wisely to those who are deceived.

Remember that ultimately, your battle is not with flesh and blood but with rulers, powers and authorities in high places, with the world, the flesh and the devil. The devil and his demons are behind all the “religions of the world.” There are only two religions in the world: *Satan is the author of all that teach DO something to be Saved (all the religions of the world).* **Jesus is the author of the one Way that says salvation is DONE, PAID FOR, COMPLETE when you trust Him as your Savior and Lord.**

All other religions than Christianity are of demonic origin:

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They stirred him [God] to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. **They sacrificed to demons** that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded. Deut 32:16-17 (ESV)

What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that **what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God.** I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. 1 Cor 10:19-21 (ESV)

Can I Share my Faith too much?

I've had professed Christians tell me I talk about the Bible too much. You may have had or will have this happen as well. The main reason that this is said is that people are convicted by God's Word and don't like it. The Word of God exposes the heart.

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Heb 4:12 (ESV)

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit Eph 5:6-18 (ESV)

In Isaiah 55 **the Lord tells us that His Word WILL accomplish that purposes for which he has sent it forth** and in the book of Romans we learn that it is by the foolishness of preaching that men are saved.

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:14-17 (KJV)

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Romans 10:9-13 (KJV)

Yes, we need to be led by the Spirit and not by our own intellect, but don't stop sharing your Faith just because some "Christians" don't like it. Even Billy Graham has had many professed Christians angry with Him for talking about salvation and Jesus so much rather than other parts of the Bible. There are people who call themselves followers of Christ who are not; sadly, they believe another Gospel often one of legalism, cheap grace, seeker friendliness, or another false doctrine. **The true Gospel is that all mankind are sinners and Christ died for all that if they would but receive His gift of Eternal life and surrender to Him as Savior and Lord then they would be saved from the Fires of Hell. That is the Gospel. Christ crucified for me a sinner and you for sinner and for everybody for everybody is a sinner. May you turn to Messiah Jesus, dear Friend, and surrender to Him as your Savior and Lord and graciously receive the free Gift of Eternal Life in Jesus Christ alone!**

If you serve Jesus Christ, you are guaranteed persecution. The only way to escape persecution is to compromise.

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 2 Tim 3:12-14 (ESV)

If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John 15:18-20 (ESV)

Everyone who acknowledges me [Jesus] before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. Matt 10:32-33 (ESV)

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Mark 8:38 (ESV)

You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. James 4:4 (ESV)

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:7-10 (ESV)

In response the often misquoted passage of "don't judge others or you'll be judged" as a means to silence Christians speaking about Jesus being the one Way, I responded on social media once:

If it is judgmental to say that Jesus is the only Way, then, yes, all true Christians are judgmental. But in context the "do not judge" passage you mentioned teaches that we should not arrogantly judge someone else. Other passages clearly say test (put to the test, discern, try, judge rightly) all spirits and all things to see whether they be of God (1 Jn 4:1, 1 Cor 1:10, Rom 16:17-18, 2 Tim 3:5-6, Jer 5:1, Rom 12:1-2, Prov 24:23). The Bible is Jesus (John

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1) and **His Church (all who have received Jesus as Savior and Lord) are meant to be salt and light, the pillar and ground of Truth in society (1 Tim 3:15)**. Knowing the coming judgment, the terrible judgment that awaits all without Jesus we persuade men (2 Cor 5:11).

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6 (ESV)

“This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:11-12 (ESV)

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” Matt 7:13-14 (ESV)

As members of Jesus Christ’s Body, His Church we are meant to be salt and light in this world. **We are meant to be the pillar of truth in our nations.**

the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 1 Tim 3:15 (KJV)

Should people be afraid of Hell or overwhelmed with God’s love when saved?

Either one of those reactions can occur. One is not better than another. What must be present is that the person understands and admits (confesses) that they are a sinner and need Jesus Christ to save them. There is a lot of theological terms that could be listed here such as the fact that Christ’s substitutionary death must be understood. But the main point is this: there will one day be a Judgment Day. Every single person will stand before Jesus Christ and give an account for every word, deed, and thought. Hell is a real place and Heaven is a real place. Jesus Christ is the only Way to Heaven and a personal relationship with God. As the Apostle Paul said,

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or

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evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. 2 Cor 5:10-11 (ESV)

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Matt 10:28 (ESV)

But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! Luke 12:5 (ESV)

And **of some have compassion, making a difference**: And **others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire**; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Jude 1:22-23 (KJV)

Dear Friend, these are the questions that are eternally significant to you and those you study with and those you shall reach the Holy Spirit uses you to share the Gospel with others:

- Do you really own your Faith? Is your Faith who you are or just something on the side of your life? Be honest
- Jesus is Savior....but is Jesus really the Lord of your Life?
- How do you really know that you KNOW Jesus?
- How do you live a lifestyle of repentance? Obedience, humility
- What does exhort one another daily mean and why is it important?
- Dedication to always standing for and looking for the Truth of God's Word
- Stay in the Word and relationship with Christ (or you can be open to deception and cunning)
- Contend for the Faith—the book of Jude
- History repeats itself (Ecc 1:9)if you understand history of people's beliefs you'll be more equipped to share your Faith and identify the root error
- The Dark Ages ended when the Bible was printed and got into the hands of the common people

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Prayer as we Begin

Give us a pure heart that we may see Thee,
A humble heart that we may hear Thee,
A heart of love that we may serve Thee,
A heart of faith that we may live Thee.

Dag Hammarskjold

Week 1-2 Introduce the class and look at Christianity from a religion perspective (yes Christianity is about a relationship and not a religion, but **the majority of non-Christians are going to look at Christianity as a religion** and honestly so do a lot of professed followers of Christ). Branches of Christianity—Church History Big Picture—Denominations

We're giving a big picture of denominational distinctives, Church History, and how to focus on Christ despite our differences. 98-99% of doctrine Christians agree on. The 1-3% is what most fight over. We must emphasize that no denomination has it all right when studying this topic. May we never think (no matter what denomination we most closely adhere to) that we have it all right and are better than another Christian. The standard of Truth is the Bible and everything listed below in terms of denominational distinctives must be compared to the Bible for whether it should be considered "Christian" or not.

We have not covered every "nook and cranny" of denominations, but give a general overview in the order of the historical development of denominations and have included beliefs of those that are very common.

Catholicism

The word catholic means *universal* and it was first used of Christians in reference to the fact that we are all one in Christ. Thus, the Early Christian writers refer to the most holy catholic faith—meaning the most Christian faith and universal Body of Christ. Most unbelievers that study Christianity study Catholicism. In addition,

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Catholicism was the first mainline institutionalization and denomination of Christianity. Therefore, we start here.

Constantine

When Constantine came on the scene in the early 300s AD, he was a Roman General fighting a key battle that could destroy him and his army. He claimed to receive a vision of a cross and was told “by this sign conquer.” Well, Constantine won the battle and then “converted” to Christianity. But Constantine’s life does not seem to bear the fruit of true surrender to Jesus Christ but rather a political use of the Christian religion. Let’s look at the evidence.

Constantine forced some 10,000 of his troops to be baptized and convert to Christianity at the point to the sword following his victory. Constantine became emperor of Rome and prior to this time the Christians were mercilessly persecuted and martyred by the Roman Emperors. Christianity was largely made of underground churches and met in homes and in the catacombs (tombs and sewers under Rome) to worship. When Constantine became “a Christian” it was now popular to be a Christian because the emperor was. Soon magnificent cathedrals sprung up and Christianity became somewhat controlled by Constantine and soon the Catholic church was born.

Idolatry

Constantine led the way for the Catholic church to embrace idolatry. After all many flocking the churches now were not flocking because they truly believed on the Lord Jesus for salvation but because it was popular and became the state religion. The “Holy Roman Empire” was born.

Some key ways that Constantine led the way for idolatry in the Catholic church was by

- Prayer to the Saints—there was a Saint for everything (fertility, prosperity, health) just like the Greco-Roman gods that had been around for years.
- The dates of holidays were changed, notably Resurrection day which was renamed Easter and occurs with the Spring Equinox—a pagan festival time marked by fertility rituals such as bunnies, eggs, and more—items that were identified with pagan ritual for centuries. Christmas was established as a holiday—early Christians never celebrated it. The date of Christmas is not

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anywhere near the right month in which the census was taken when Christ was born, rather the date is based on winter pagan rituals and signs. One Christmas custom, Christmas trees, originated from the tree-worshipping druids in years to come.

- Mary became the goddess of the church. Jesus was a cruel judge (so the Catholic church taught) and the only way to get on His good side was to pray through Mary or a Saint that had lived an extra holy life and could get you a favor.
- The Pope was established. The name coming from the Latin word *papa* meaning father (regardless of the fact that Jesus clearly said because of the Pharisees not to call any man on this earth “teacher” or “father”, Matthew 23). Supposedly the first Pope was Peter because Jesus said in the Gospels “on this rock I build my church.” Jesus was referring to Himself as the Rock, not Peter. So to continue, the line of Popes is supposed to be unbroken; although, historically, it has been broken several times as European nations at odds each declared their own Pope to maintain political power. **The idolatrous factor of the Pope is that his words are to be the very words of God, God’s representative on earth or as evangelicals would say, his words are scripture.** As a side note, many theologians today believe that the Pope will be the false prophet that aids the antichrist in the end times.

So the Catholic church was born. Christianity supposedly went from an underground movement to mainline institution overnight. As history continues, the Catholic church in the “name of Christendom and Jesus Christ” definitely was a political tool.

- The Crusades were launched. They were wars supposedly Holy wars (sounds like Muslim Jihad or the Conquest of Canaan by Joshua). Many unbelievers mock Christianity to scorn because of this supposed Christian act.
- Mass (church services) were conducted for hours in Latin every Sunday. The common person could not understand that. Only the intellectually elite who were mostly priests. Education was taken away and the Catholic church caused the dark ages.
- Excommunication—was a coercive tool. Excommunication is a biblical teaching in certain instances, but the Catholic church changed it. The sacraments (communion) saved you, the Priest could take your salvation

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away if you angered Him by withholding communion. You did not have to confess your sin to the Lord but go to the confessional booth and say, do, or pay whatever the “man behind the box” told you in order to be saved.

- Creeds were created and recited as truth. Creeds had the authority many times more than the Scriptures.
- Indulgences were created. For a fee, you could buy a pardon for your sin or even get uncle Harry’s purgatory time shortened. There is one funny story in regards to this. One catholic leader was traveling around selling indulgences a man came up to him and asked if he could purchase an indulgence for a sin he wanted to commit. The catholic leader replied sure and sold him one. Later on as that leader was walking back to his base of operations with a chest of gold a band of robbers jumped out and took the gold. They ended up getting caught and put on trial and when asked what they had to say for themselves the leader of the robber band stepped forward and showed the indulgence that he had bought to commit his robbery. He and his robber band were let go!
- Purgatory teaching developed—there was a place between Heaven and Hell where you suffered pain and torment by fire until you could be made holy and pure enough for heaven. You could be hear upwards of 7 years. That simply is not biblical and likely originated from paganism.
- Tradition became exalted as important much as it was by the Pharisees.

What Changed it all? The Reformation

Reformation simply means back to the Bible movement. When Martin Luther stepped forward in 1517 with his 95 theses he began a movement of getting back to the Scriptures. Soon many left the church and new denominations sprang up like wildfire—the Lutherans, the Baptists, the Pietists, the Puritans, the Quakers, and so on.

When the Bible was printed (the first book off of Gutenberg’s press) the Dark Ages ended and the common person could now read the Scriptures (though they had to be smuggled for some time). In response to so many getting the Bible and beginning to raise questions the Catholic church put together the Apocrypha and declared it part of their “scripture” to try to justify their teachings (**the Apocrypha**

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was not considered to be scripture by the Catholic church prior to the reformation).

Catholicism's political power gradually began to wane and the reformation brought some key changes to the Church:

- Preaching became based on the Bible and in the common language of the people
- It was understood that Scripturally all Believers had priesthood (could enter into God's presence)
- Jesus was the only high priest, no earthly man
- Scripture was the sole Authority of Faith and practice

Lutheranism

Martin Luther began to lead the Body of Christ back to the Bible and the denomination ended up bearing his name (though it is believed he didn't want this). The Lutheran church was formed.

The Lutheran church is very formal and appears to most to be like Catholicism. In many ways it is in the sense that it is liturgical, that is that God is worshipped solemnly, creeds and catechisms are repeated and worship is a serious and solemn matter. In addition, Lutheranism's teachings on communion are more closely aligned to catholic teaching than the Biblical teaching that the Lord's Supper is a symbolic act (not one that saves you or is literally Christ's blood and Body. **Early Christians attested that communion was symbolic when they were accused of cannibalism because of Christ's statements of His blood and Body prior to the Catholic church's formation.**)

The Lutheran church Baptizes infants as the Catholic church does, claiming that the Apostles did so based on the testimony of the Early Church Fathers. The problem is that practice does not occur in Scripture. The only Scripture that perhaps could validate the practice is when Acts says that whole households were baptized. Yet, no scriptural mention of children being baptized exists much less sprinkling. The word for baptism means immersion in water and every instance in Scripture an adult is baptized by immersion.

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