

STUDENT HANDBOOK

WRITTEN BY
SIMON SMART



REVISED BY
PETER WILSON



A DOUBTER'S GUIDE TO WORLD RELIGIONS

A FAIR AND FRIENDLY INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY,
BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF THE BIG FIVE



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Christian Education Publications

Australia
PO Box A287, Sydney South NSW 1235
P +61 2 8268 3344
E sales@cepstore.com.au
W cepstore.com.au

New Zealand
P +64 27 613 4141
E sales@cepstore.co.nz
W cepstore.co.nz

Written by: Simon Smart

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Revised by: Peter Wilson
Project manager: Kenton Webb
Cover design: Zondervan
Internal design: Andrew Hope
Illustrator: Matthew Baker
Images: shutterstock.com

SIMON SMART

Simon is the author of a large number of Christian studies resources as well as books for the general market. He has had extensive secondary teaching experience in both Australia and the UK. His expertise lies in teaching history, English and Christian studies. Simon studied at Regent College, Vancouver, and is currently the Executive Director at the Centre for Public Christianity.

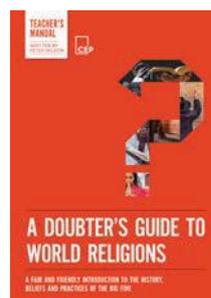
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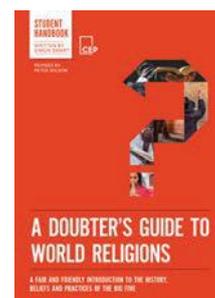
KEY TO ICONS

- Knowledge
- Analysis
- Discuss
- Create
- Personal response

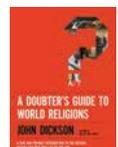
To be used with
A Doubter's Guide to World Religions
by John Dickson



Teacher's manual



Student handbook



Textbook



A WORD OR TWO
TO SPECTATORS





Johnson, TM and Grim, BJ (2020), *World Religion Database*, Brill, Boston, <worldreligiondatabase.org>

LARGEST HINDU POPULATIONS	
Country	Total Hindu Population
1. India	999,122,000
2. Nepal	19,173,000
3. Bangladesh	15,447,000
4. Indonesia	4,428,000
5. Pakistan	2,913,000
6. Sri Lanka	2,794,000
7. Malaysia	2,009,000
8. United States	1,603,000
9. South Africa	1,414,000
10. Myanmar	928,000
<i>World Total</i>	<i>1,058,245,000</i>

LARGEST BUDDHIST POPULATIONS	
Country	Total Buddhist Population
1. China	228,117,000
2. Japan	70,539,000
3. Thailand	60,846,000
4. Vietnam	47,334,000
5. Myanmar	40,469,000
6. Sri Lanka	14,559,000
7. Cambodia	14,380,000
8. South Korea	12,637,000
9. India	9,799,000
10. Taiwan	6,304,000
<i>World Total</i>	<i>532,657,000</i>

LARGEST JEWISH POPULATIONS	
Country	Total Jewish Population
1. Israel	6,215,000
2. United States	5,579,000
3. Palestine	667,000
4. France	442,000
5. Canada	361,000
6. United Kingdom	278,000
7. Argentina	180,000
8. Russia	136,000
9. Germany	127,000
10. Australia	108,000
<i>World Total</i>	<i>14,817,000</i>



RELIGION IS ...

A system of beliefs and practices, generally centred around a God or gods, that attempts to explain the meaning and purpose of life.

1. What function and influence do you think religion has in society today?

Raised as a Reform(ed) Jew but later identified as an atheist. In 2016 he said, 'I was raised Jewish and then I went through a period where I questioned things, but now I believe religion is very important'.¹

MARK ZUCKERBERG
THE FOUNDER OF FACEBOOK

2. In pairs, discuss the role that religion can play in coming to an understanding of:

- the meaning of life
- evil and suffering
- life after death
- whether there is a God or gods that can be known
- the value and worth of each person
- guidance on how to live and right and wrong.

3. What images or ideas come to mind when you think of religion or religious people?

4. What information sources, people and experiences have shaped your thoughts and feelings about religion?

5. An increasing number of Australians self-identify as having 'no religion', while others say that they are 'spiritual but not religious'. How would you describe yourself?

'The big questions addressed by the world religions are truly universal: Who are we? What is our worth? How should we live? Are we alone? ... It turns out that kids across different cultures tend to believe that someone (rather than something) is responsible for the operations of the universe.'

CHAPTER 2 'TIPS FOR READING THE RELIGIONS'

6. What big questions are important to you at the moment? Where have you been looking for answers?

Read Chapter 1, 'So you're going to write a book on religion'.

7. What particular danger does the author identify in being a Christian theologian and writing a book on world religions?



8. Why does the author suggest that ‘theology and history might not be completely useless perspectives’ when considering the religions of the world?

9. How convincing do you find the author’s argument regarding his bias in handling the topic? Is it possible to approach this topic in an unbiased fashion? What factors might make it difficult for even the most well-intentioned person to achieve an unbiased outcome?

‘It worries me about religion that it teaches people to be satisfied with not understanding.’²²

RICHARD DAWKINS
BRITISH EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGIST

10. Draw some symbols or pictures that reflect your current understanding of God. For example, you might choose images reflecting love, power and wisdom. On the other hand, your images might represent God as vague, uncaring or absent from the world.



11. Give each of the quotes below a ranking from 1 (I strongly relate to) to 5 (I do not relate to at all).

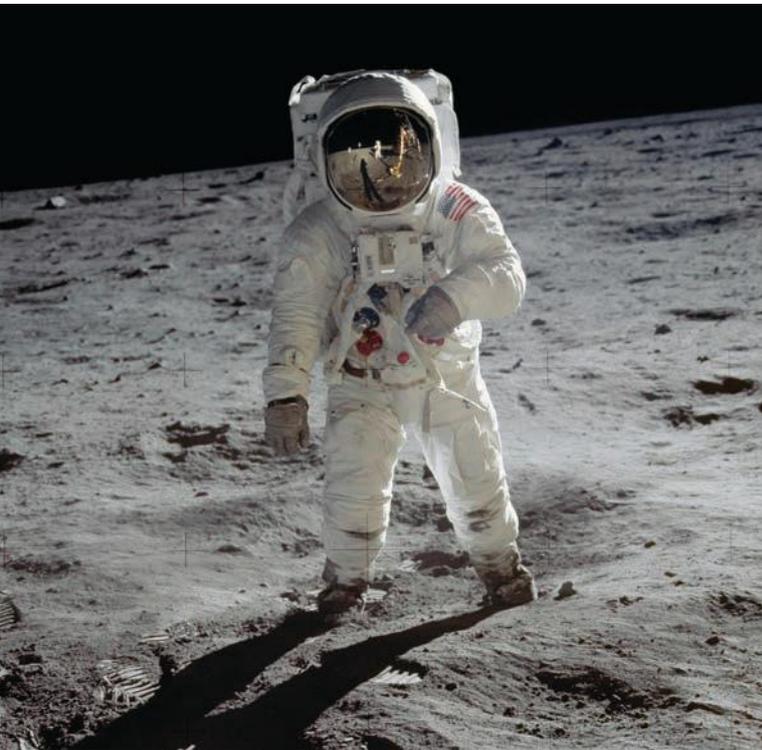
- ___ ‘God is dead.’ *Friedrich Nietzsche*³
- ___ ‘I love talking about what people believe in and hearing why they believe in it and what makes them believe in it ... And especially if I don’t agree, because I like to listen and I like to understand. And I think it’s really important to be supportive of all beliefs in the world and all opinions and not shoot people down for what they believe in.’ *Billie Eilish*⁴
- ___ ‘God is the name people give to the reason we are here ... But I think that reason is the laws of physics rather than someone with whom one can have a personal relationship. An impersonal God.’ *Stephen Hawking*⁵
- ___ ‘Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.’ *Albert Einstein*⁶
- ___ ‘You have created us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it comes to rest in you.’ *St Augustine*⁷
- ___ ‘All religions are basically pointing in the same direction. They just look at things from different angles.’
- ___ ‘Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that he is.’ *Blaise Pascal*⁸
- ___ ‘I’m not super tied-in to certain rules but I think it’s naïve to say nothing exists and there’s nothing above us or more powerful than us. I think that’s a little narrow-minded.’ *Harry Styles*⁹
- ___ ‘It doesn’t matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere and it doesn’t hurt anybody else.’



'I saw neither angels nor God [while in orbit].'¹⁰

GHERMAN TITOV

SOVIET COSMONAUT, THE SECOND MAN IN SPACE, 1962



'I felt the power of God as I've never felt it before.'¹¹

JAMES IRWIN

AMERICAN ASTRONAUT, WALKED ON THE MOON, 1971

🗣️ Listen to John Lennon's song 'Imagine' and then in groups discuss the lyrics using the questions below:

12. What attitudes towards religion do you think are expressed in this song?

13. What is your response to its views on religion?

GETTING READY

📖 Read Chapter 2, 'Tips for reading the religions'.

📄 14. What reasons does the author give for the significance of world religions?

15. Write a four-line summary of each of the 'tips for approaching world religions'.

Tip 1:

Tip 2:

Tip 3:



2

HINDUISM,
THE WAY OF
RELEASE



TIMELINE

3000–1500 BCE	○	Dravidic people settled in Indus Valley
1500–500	○	Compilation of oral Vedas
1000–300	○	Production of Upanishads
After 300	○	Romance of Ramayana and Mahabharata and Bhagavad-gita
200 CE	○	Compilation of the Laws of Manu
500	○	Hindu Tantric tradition established
1206	○	Muslim Sultanate established in Delhi
1483–1530	○	Reign of Babur, founder of Mughal empire
1556–1605	○	Reign of Mughal emperor Akbar
1757	○	British rule established in Kolkata
1772–1833	○	Life of Hindu reformer Ram Mohan Roy —founder of society of Brahman (1828)
1857–1858	○	Abolition of Mughal empire and establishment of direct British rule
1920	○	Gandhi launches anti-British campaign based on non-violence
1947	○	India granted independence from Britain
1948	○	Gandhi assassinated
1966	○	International Society for Krishna Consciousness founded in New York

GLOSSARY

As you read about Hinduism, write the term beside the correct definition.

TERMS

Sanatana Dharma / Moksha / Indra / Saivism / Smriti
 Dharma / Karma / Pantheism / Margas / Scruti / Samsara
 Vedas / Atman / Vaishnavism / Agni / Dvija

DEFINITIONS

- Everything is god _____
- Heard writings _____
- The twice-born ceremony _____
- God of fire _____
- Earliest Hindu writings _____
- Devotion to god Siva _____
- Release into the one ultimate reality _____
- The 'running around'—entrapment _____
- Devotion to god Vishnu _____
- Warrior and storm god _____
- The Soul _____
- Remembered writings _____
- Eternal law/religion _____
- Paths to salvation _____
- Duty _____
- Actions that determine future existence _____

PERCEPTIONS

Before reading the chapters on Hinduism ...

1. What experience, if any, do you have of Hinduism or Hindu people?

2. What information do you have about Hinduism, and how did you find it?

3. From that information, what would you say Hinduism is about?

4. What are your impressions of how Hindu people live?

Year	Numbers	Percentage of population
2001	95,473	0.5
2011	275,535	1.27
2021	684,000	2.7

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022, 'Religious affiliation in Australia', ABS, July 4 2022, <abs.gov.au/articles/religious-affiliation-australia>.

HINDUISM IN AUSTRALIA

ORIGINS OF THE 'ETERNAL RELIGION'

Read Chapter 3, 'Origins of the "eternal religion"'.
 5. What are the origins of the term Hinduism?

'Hinduism is not one neat, easily understood religious system. More than any other tradition discussed in this book, Hinduism is a cocktail of rituals, beliefs, practices and exercises (yoga, remember!).

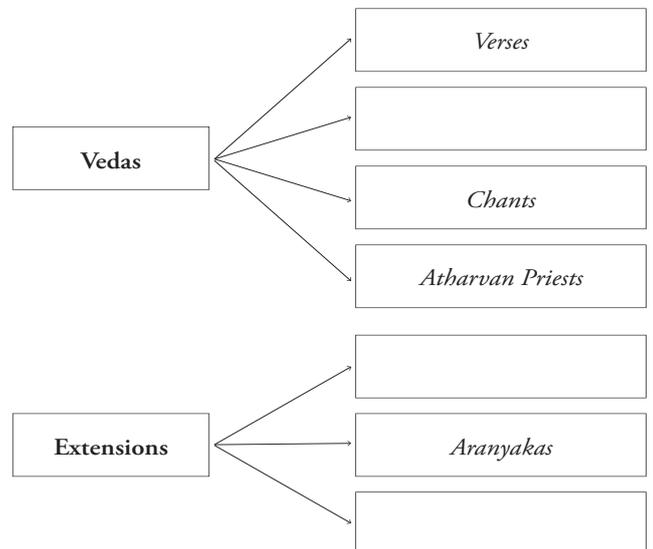
With no historical founder and no institutional hierarchy—there is no pope or Dalai Lama in Hinduism.'

CHAPTER 3 'ORIGINS OF THE "ETERNAL RELIGION"'

THE VEDAS

Read Chapter 4, 'Gods, drugs and sacrifice: the Vedas'.

6. Fill in the gaps in the diagram below.



7. Give a brief explanation of the diagram above.

When Shaini Sivagnanam migrated with her family to Australia from Sri Lanka, she always knew she would bring her Hindu faith with her. 'I can't even imagine not being a Hindu', she gasps. 'It is the thing that gives me direction in life. Without it I would be very confused', she adds.

Shaini is from a family of five who came to Australia under the Australian government's skilled migration program. Since arriving in Australia, Shaini has been to school and university and has thrown herself into life in Australia. She plays the Veena—a very large Indian instrument like a guitar, although very big. 'You have to sit down to play it', she explains. Shaini is also highly involved in the community. She teaches 'human values' at her local worship centre where the program focuses on character education—mainly truth, right conduct, love, peace and non-violence—and likes to be involved in voluntary services such as visits to nursing homes and teaching new migrants computer skills.

Her life is full and Hindu belief is an important part of who she is. So what does her Hindu faith mean to her? 'It explains and makes sense of life', says Shaini. 'Especially the idea of reincarnation helps to explain some

of the mysteries of life. It helps to understand the inequalities—why some people are disabled and others are poor.' 'Hinduism', says Shaini 'is about trying to live the right way'. She explains that it is her belief that there is a cosmic reaction to all actions in life. 'If I do the wrong thing, I will pay for it. There will be a cost', says Shaini. Right behaviour, according to Shaini's beliefs, will bring reward. Shaini says that the only way to escape reincarnation and the constant cycle of being born and re-born is to surrender to God's will—to merge with God. This is called self-realisation.

Escaping this life remains the ultimate goal. Shaini says that people from her faith want to be released from the suffering of the world. 'We are looking

for escape', she says. 'When you are merged with God you will experience bliss.' So what does Shaini make of the suffering that is so much a part of life? 'Suffering is a result of our karma', she suggests. 'Suffering is just perception. Great people are able to direct and control their thoughts and understand that suffering is merely a perception of the mind. Like ... when I didn't have a job, I was suffering. But it was more the way I perceived the situation ... a lot of it is about controlling your thoughts', she explains. So is there real suffering or is it all perception? 'It is perception', says Shaini.

*'Suffering is a result
of our karma, ...
Suffering is just perception.'*

Shaini says that her Hindu faith affects the way she views the world and especially other people. Shaini describes this as 'unity'. 'Everyone is the same in essence—there is the essence of God in everyone—this is the reason why we should treat people well.'

Shaini says that like other religions, Hindus also believe in one God. Contrary to how some people perceive Hinduism, Shaini says that it is not about idol worship. The idols are representative of different characteristics of the same one God. 'God allows us to relate to him in different forms—the idol [merely] represents aspects of God to us', says Shaini.

And what does Shaini make of other faiths? 'Even though they are different they all reach the same goal—just in a different way. It is up to the individual to follow whatever path to God they find. It might even be that God chooses your religion for you. There are many misunderstandings, and some people, although mistaken [about the exclusive claims of their religion], are still on the same path as the rest of us', says Shaini.

1. What evidence is there to suggest that Shaini's faith is very important to her?
2. Why do you think that reincarnation is perceived as a bad thing in the Hindu faith? How does Shaini explain the way people may escape the cycle of birth and re-birth?
3. How do you react to Shaini's assessment of suffering being essentially a perception?
4. How do you respond to the belief in all religions being on the 'same path' as Shaini puts it?
5. Write down questions you would have for Shaini regarding her faith and her beliefs. Discuss these in class.



INTERVIEW WITH
Shaini Sivagnanam

‘The world of the Vedas is full of powerful, unpredictable beings, usually called devas.’

CHAPTER 4
‘GODS, DRUGS AND SACRIFICE: THE VEDAS’

8. Explain how this view of the spiritual world is reflected in Hindu lifestyle, rituals and sacrifices.

9. What is your response to the concept of a multitude of gods in the universe?

UPANISHADS

Read the introduction of Chapter 5, ‘God, the soul and entrapment: the Upanishads’, up until ‘Brahmin: the One behind the many’.

10. Write a paragraph explaining what the term Upanishad means and what many Hindus claim Upanishads are.

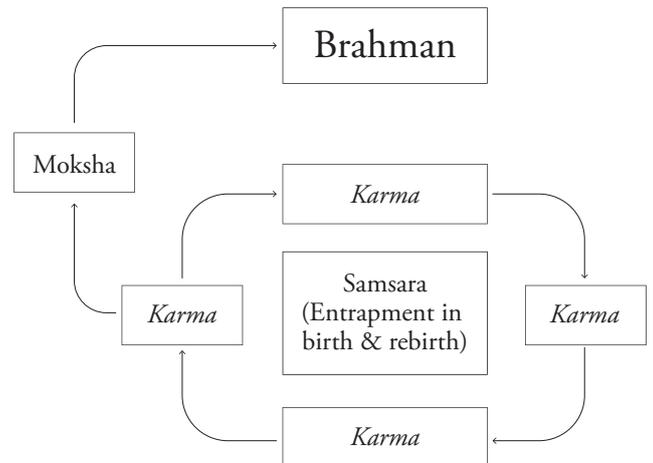
BRAHMAN: THE ONE BEHIND THE MANY

Read in Chapter 5 the section ‘Brahman: the One behind the many’.

11. What are your thoughts and feelings about the possibility that you are a ‘spark’ from a ‘flame’ that ultimately is reabsorbed into the flame?

THE HINDU UNDERSTANDING OF THE CYCLE OF LIFE

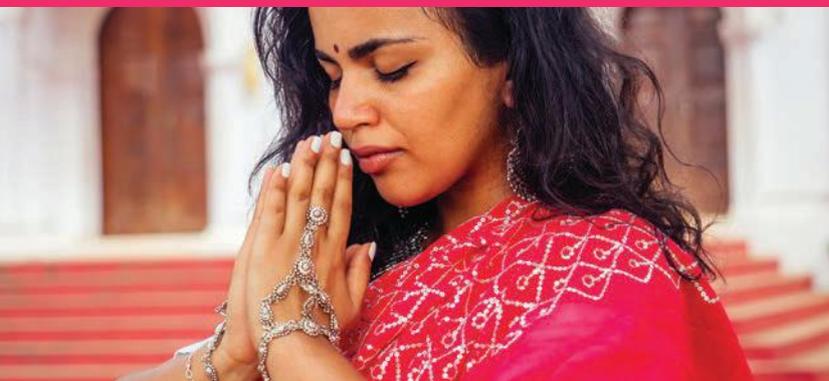
Read in Chapter 5 from the section ‘Atman: the soul and the Soul’ to the end of the chapter.



12. Describe and explain the Hindu concept of entrapment using the key components of the above diagram.

DID YOU KNOW?

The namaste gesture (hands together, bowing head) means ‘I bow to the divine in you’.





‘If you ask me how Brahman and Atman relate precisely, I would say in the same way as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit relate: mysteriously. But one thing is clear: Atman seeks to realise Brahman, to be united with the Absolute, and it travels in this life on a pilgrimage where it is born and dies, and is born again and dies again, and again and again, until it manages to shed the sheaths that imprison it here below.’¹

YANN MARTEL
AUTHOR OF *LIFE OF PI*

13. Martel describes the ultimate goal of Hinduism as being for *atman* to ‘shed the sheaths that imprison it here below’. Explain what he means by this, referring to the concept of entrapment.

‘The paths to liberation are numerous, but the bank along the way is always the same, the Bank of Karma, where the liberation account of each of us is credited or debited depending on our actions. This, in a holy nutshell, is Hinduism, and I have been a Hindu all my life. With its notions in mind I see my place in the universe.’²

YANN MARTEL
AUTHOR OF *LIFE OF PI*

14. What do you see as the positive and negative implications of karma as the path to liberation?



MAHATMA GANDHI (1869–1948)
Considered by some the father of the Indian nation, Gandhi was famous for his policy of nonviolent resistance, crucial in the fight for Indian independence. He was assassinated in 1948.

DID YOU KNOW?

Hindus are generally strong believers in astrology and take special religious significance from the movement of the sun, moon and various planets. Depending on the positions of the planets, various days are unsuitable for weddings and important business decisions.



‘The truth of life is that Brahman is no different from Atman, the spiritual force within us, what you might call the soul. The individual soul touches upon the world soul like a well reaches for the water table. That which sustains the universe beyond thought and language, and that which is at the core of us and struggles for expression, is the same thing. The finite within the infinite, the infinite within the finite.’³

YANN MARTEL
AUTHOR OF *LIFE OF PI*

☰ 15. The above quote is an example of Advaita teaching about the connection between Atman and Brahman. Define the two schools of Hinduism’s teaching on this issue.

Advaita school

Visist-advaita school

MOKSHA

16. What, according to Hinduism, is the 'goal of life'?

17. How do you feel about the ultimate goal of Hinduism? What does this mean for who you are?

18. What do you feel is the ultimate goal in being human?

19. Create a short presentation outlining the essential Hindu understanding of the life cycle. Design your speech so that a year 7 student could understand it. Present it to the class.

SMRITI LITERATURE

CASTE, DUTY AND SALVATION

Read Chapter 6 from 'The Bhagavad-gita, or Song of the Lord' to 'Back to the Bhagavad-gita'.

20. Write a paragraph on the Bhagavad-gita. Include:

- what the Bhagavad-gita is
- the major contribution of the Bhagavad-gita according to the author.

THE FOUR CASTES OF PEOPLE IN HINDU SOCIETY

21. Fill in the details of the table to explain the four levels of Hindu society.

The four levels of Hindu society

Brahmans (priests)
Kshatriyas (warrior-kings)
Vaisyas (common people)
Sudras (servants)



VLADIMIR MELNIK / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

THE THREE 'PATHS' TO SALVATION

 Read in Chapter 6 the sections from 'Path of duties (karma-yoga)' to 'Path of devotion (bhakti-yoga)'.

Path of duties (karma-yoga)

 22. What response do you have regarding dharma, detachment and karma-less action?

 23. What is the significance of performing actions with complete detachment?

 24. Do you think it is possible to act with complete detachment?

Path of knowledge (jnana-yoga)

 25. How appealing do you find the path of knowledge? How might someone become interested in this way of salvation?

Path of devotion (bhakti-yoga)

26. Why do you think this approach to Hinduism is so appealing to so many devotees?

DID YOU KNOW?

Every 12 years at the festival of Kumbh Mela, millions make the pilgrimage to meet on the banks of the Ganges River to bathe, pray and make offerings to the holy men. Hindus believe that the Ganges will wash away the sins of the pilgrims, along with those of previous generations.



DID YOU KNOW?

By the 19th century, Britain had assumed political control of virtually all Indian lands. Nonviolent resistance to British colonialism under Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru led to independence in 1947. The subcontinent was divided into the secular state of India and the smaller Muslim state of Pakistan. A third war between the two countries in 1971 resulted in East Pakistan becoming the separate nation of Bangladesh.

THE BIG FIVE TABLE

 Turn to the centrespread and fill in the table on 'What Hinduism has to say about ...'.

PERCEPTIONS

 27. In what ways have your perceptions of Hinduism changed through the study so far?

 28. Summarise the meaning and purpose of life as understood by Hindus.

 29. How compelling or appealing do you find these explanations personally? Discuss in pairs.



JULIA ROBERTS (1967–)

A famous Hollywood actress, Julia Roberts has won awards for her roles in Erin Brockovich, Pretty Woman and Steel Magnolias. While shooting Eat, Pray, Love in India, Julia decided to accept Hinduism as her religion.

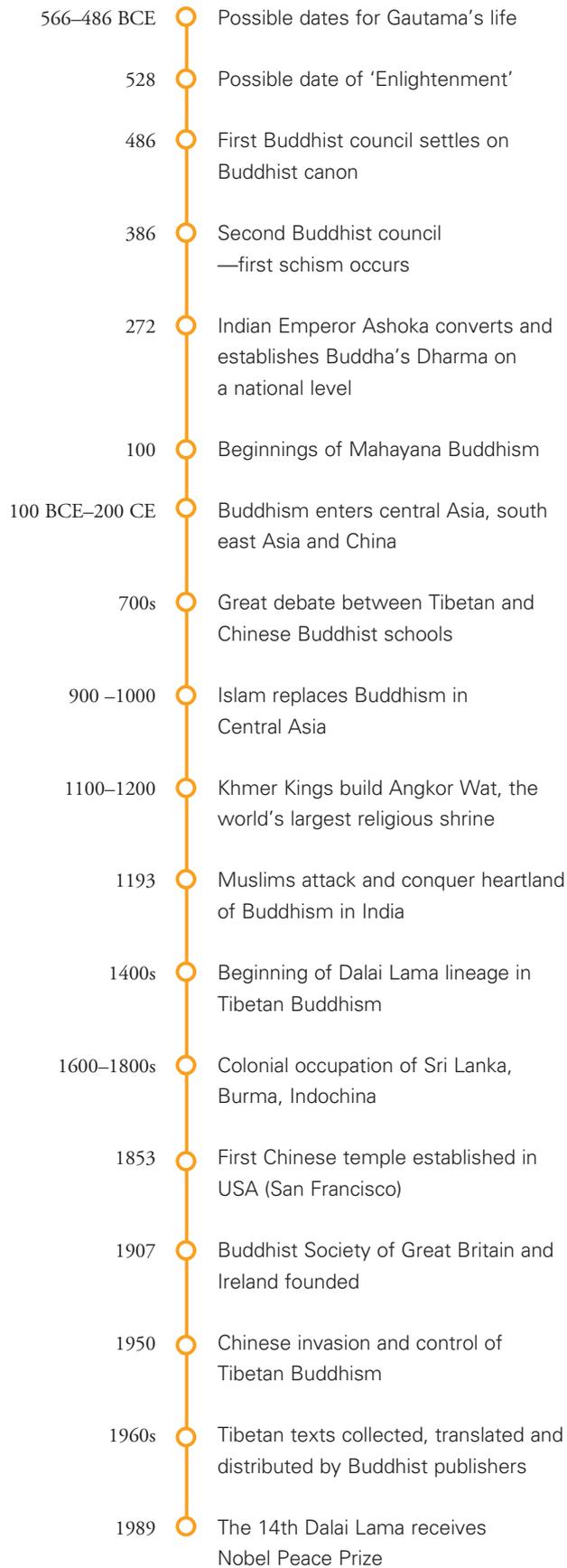


3

**BUDDHISM,
THE WAY OF
ENLIGHTENMENT**



TIMELINE



GLOSSARY

As you read about Buddhism, write the term beside the correct definition.

TERMS

Siddhartha Gautama / Dukkha / Nirvana / Samjna
 Karma / Buddhahood / Samskara / Asceticism
 Zen Buddhism / Rupa / Theravada Buddhism / Vijnana
 Majjhima Patipada / Bodhisattva / Vedana

DEFINITIONS

- Mental formations

- Denying all earthly comforts
—striving for mystic consciousness

- Suffering and transience

- School of the elders

- The Buddha
—the founder of Buddhism

- Consciousness

- Wilful action contributing to life's chain of cause and effect

- The middle path, rejecting the extremes of pleasure and pain

- The 'blowing out' or extinction of all desire

- Attaining the 'sphere of power of a Buddha'

- One whose essence is enlightenment or 'Buddha-to-be'

- Sensations

- Matter

- Perception

- Extension of the meditative tradition within Buddhism

PERCEPTIONS

Before reading the chapter on Buddhism ...

1. What experience, if any, do you have of Buddhism or Buddhist people?

2. What information do you have about Buddhism, and how did you find it?

3. From that information, what would you say Buddhism is about?

4. What are your impressions of how Buddhist people live?

ORIGINS OF BUDDHISM

 Read in Chapter 7 the section ‘The world’s most lovable religion’.

5. List three reasons the author gives that might earn Buddhism the title of ‘world’s most lovable religion’?

6. What popular misconceptions of Buddhism are identified by the author?

THE PRINCE WHO FELT PAIN

 Read in Chapter 7 from the section ‘The prince who felt pain’ through to the end of the chapter.

 7. Draw a sketch to depict the key elements of the Buddha’s life.

Year	Numbers	Percentage of population
2001	357,813	1.9
2011	528,978	2.4
2021	615,800	2.4

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022, ‘Religious affiliation in Australia’, ABS, July 4, 2022, <abs.gov.au/articles/religious-affiliation-australia>.

BUDDHISM IN AUSTRALIA



Kelsang Sudhana was born Gordon Young, but was given a new name by his spiritual guide when he was ordained as a Buddhist monk.

Prior to coming into contact with Buddhism, Sudhana studied philosophy at Uni. He spent his time surfing, hanging out with his girlfriend and going to the pub with his mates. 'I was doing what most people do', he says. 'I was trying to work out how to be happy in a world where it seemed that happiness was being promised by a lot of different things.'

A serious health scare at university had a big impact on Sudhana. 'I spent three months terrified that I had the illness, and really thinking about what life was about', he says. When tests came back that showed he was OK, Sudhana felt like he had been given a second chance at life. 'I thought, right, you've been given this life, what are you going to do with it?' says Sudhana, reflecting on this period. He found that he just couldn't return to his old way of living, pretending that it was enough.

The desire for inner peace, which he says was so lacking in his life, led Sudhana to a meditation centre. There he discovered the promise of peace and happiness through the training of the

mind. Meeting a Buddhist monk, who Sudhana describes as 'the most peaceful person I had ever met', proved to be a turning point. 'Pretty much that evening I made my decision', he says. A couple of weeks later he wrote to his friends and told them he was going to become a Buddhist monk. He faced years of training, but the decision had been made then and there. 'This was something of real beauty that I could actually have', he says of his decision.

Things changed very quickly once Sudhana entered into the practices of the Buddhist faith. 'I think one of the beautiful aspects of the Buddhist teaching is that they teach you to maintain a level of inner peace', he says. 'The more you get into that, you develop a kind of disinterest in what's going on around you—a completely different type of interest—no longer looking for beauty externally—you are looking for beauty in your own mind—and when you find that ... beauty is reflected everywhere.'

1. What was it about Sudhana's health scare that made it such a turning point in his life?
2. What did he mean by saying that as a Buddhist you develop a different kind of interest in what is going on around you? How do you react to this claim?
3. How has being a Buddhist changed life for Sudhana?
4. How do you respond to Sudhana's goal of attaining 'enlightenment' or spiritual perfection?
5. Write down questions you would have for Sudhana regarding his faith and his beliefs. Discuss these in class.

Today, every aspect of Sudhana's life revolves around being a Buddhist and he is constantly watchful of his mind, behaviour, body and speech. His life is dedicated to the long-term goal of 'Enlightenment', or spiritual perfection. Along the way are many short-term goals.

'I think one of the beautiful aspects of the Buddhist teaching is that they teach you to maintain a level of inner peace ...'

Buddhists claim that they can help eliminate sources of unhappiness. Followers are taught to overcome negative states of mind, such as greed, jealousy, miserliness, anger and anxiety, leaving the person peaceful and happy. Love, compassion, patience and wisdom are important spin-offs of a life that seeks to ultimately be of more good to others. The most appealing aspect of Buddhist teaching, according to Sudhana, is that people can overcome their troubles and find true happiness. The Buddhist faith, he says, is practical, and easy to understand. You can take as much or as little of it as you want.

So what are the hard things about being Buddhist? 'Being honest with yourself and truly willing to change', says Sudhana. Like any deep change, 'it comes with a sting', he says. 'If we truly want to help people, there are parts of our behaviour we need to let go of. It costs something to help people, and to go against our own selfish wishes.'

Sudhana clearly believes in the ultimate benefit that the Buddhist approach to life brings, and says that in Australia he has a receptive audience. 'Australians just want to have fun and enjoyment. We're not saying you have to be a Buddhist, we're just saying, "these teachings, they really work"'. People find that refreshing.'



INTERVIEW WITH
Kelsang Sudhana



- 8. Explain what was meant by the Buddha’s ‘moment of enlightenment’.

BUDDHA’S CRITIQUE OF HINDUISM

THE MIDDLE PATH

- Read Chapter 8 from its beginning to the end of the section ‘The role of the Brahmins’.
- 9. Explain Buddha’s teaching on the Middle Path.

- 10. How did his life experience shape his critique of Hinduism?

THE CASTE SYSTEM

- 11. How is the Buddha’s attitude towards people reflected in his rejection of the caste system?

THE ROLE OF THE BRAHMANS

- 12. Explain the connection between the Buddha’s attitude towards people and his critique of the Brahmins.

GOD, THE SOUL AND THE SELF

 Read in Chapter 8 the section 'God, the soul and the self'.

13. What was the Buddha's attitude towards 'teachings about God'?

14. What alternative teaching did he offer in its place?

15. 'The goal of Buddhism is to help people realise that they do not ultimately exist.' Reflect on this quote and your personal response to it. What do you think about the idea? How would you feel if this were true?



YAKO MEGUMI / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

THE FIVE AGGREGATES OF ATTACHMENT

 Read in Chapter 8 the section 'The Five Aggregates of Attachment'.

 16. Fill in the table below on the Five Aggregates of Attachment, explaining the key aspects of each.

Matter
Sensation
Perception
Mental formations
Consciousness

'In Buddhism, the term "illusion" means that phenomena do not exist independently of other phenomena, that their appearance of independent existence is illusory. This is all that is meant by "illusion" not that something is not really there.'

**DALAI LAMA
HIGHEST SPIRITUAL LEADER
AND HEAD OF THE COUNTRY OF TIBET**



An accident in a Sydney daycare centre horrified the community. While the children at the centre were playing innocently, an aged driver lost control of his car and crashed through the wall of the centre. The car burst into flames. Two of the children were trapped under the car where it came to rest. They were freed from the wreckage only after suffering the most horrendous injuries. Their recovery has been a very long one. They would both be scarred for life physically, and presumably emotionally as well.

17. What would the Buddhist faith have to offer in the way of comfort to the parents of these children regarding this suffering and what they were going through?

18. What is your reaction to the notion of the Buddha breaking the self into component parts?

19. What is your reaction to the notion of the self as understood by the model of the Five Aggregates of Attachment? Evaluate its plausibility as an explanation for human existence. Write down your response and discuss it with another student.

REBIRTH VS REINCARNATION

- Read in Chapter 7 from the section ‘Rebirth vs reincarnation’ to the end of the chapter.
- 20. Compare Hindu and Buddhist teaching on life after death. What did the Buddha say occurs when a person dies?

‘Samsara is the whole round of existence, and it with its miseries is the true suffering.’²

**DALAI LAMA
HIGHEST SPIRITUAL LEADER
AND HEAD OF THE COUNTRY OF TIBET**

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

- Read Chapter 9, ‘The Four Noble Truths’.

THE FIRST NOBLE TRUTH: SUFFERING EXISTS

- 21. Explain what is meant by dukkha.

THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH: THE ORIGIN OF SUFFERING

- 22. Explain what is meant by the Buddhist teaching that ‘desire’ is the root of all suffering. What is your reaction to this?

- 23. Compare your experience of life with this view of reality. What makes sense and what doesn’t seem to fit?

THE THIRD NOBLE TRUTH: THE END OF SUFFERING

- 24. Based on an understanding of the first two Noble Truths, what does Buddhist teaching have to say about the way that suffering disappears?

Nirvana and the Third Noble Truth

- 25. Summarise in a sentence your understanding of the idea of nirvana.

- 26. Write an imaginary conversation between yourself as a dedicated Buddhist and a young Australian pursuing their individual freedom and pleasure. How might you as a Buddhist explain the positive benefits of nirvana? What questions, agreement or objections might the young person have?

THE FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH: THE PATH TO THE END OF SUFFERING

- 27. List the three categories of the essential Buddhist way of life. Can you identify any parts of life that don't fit into these categories?

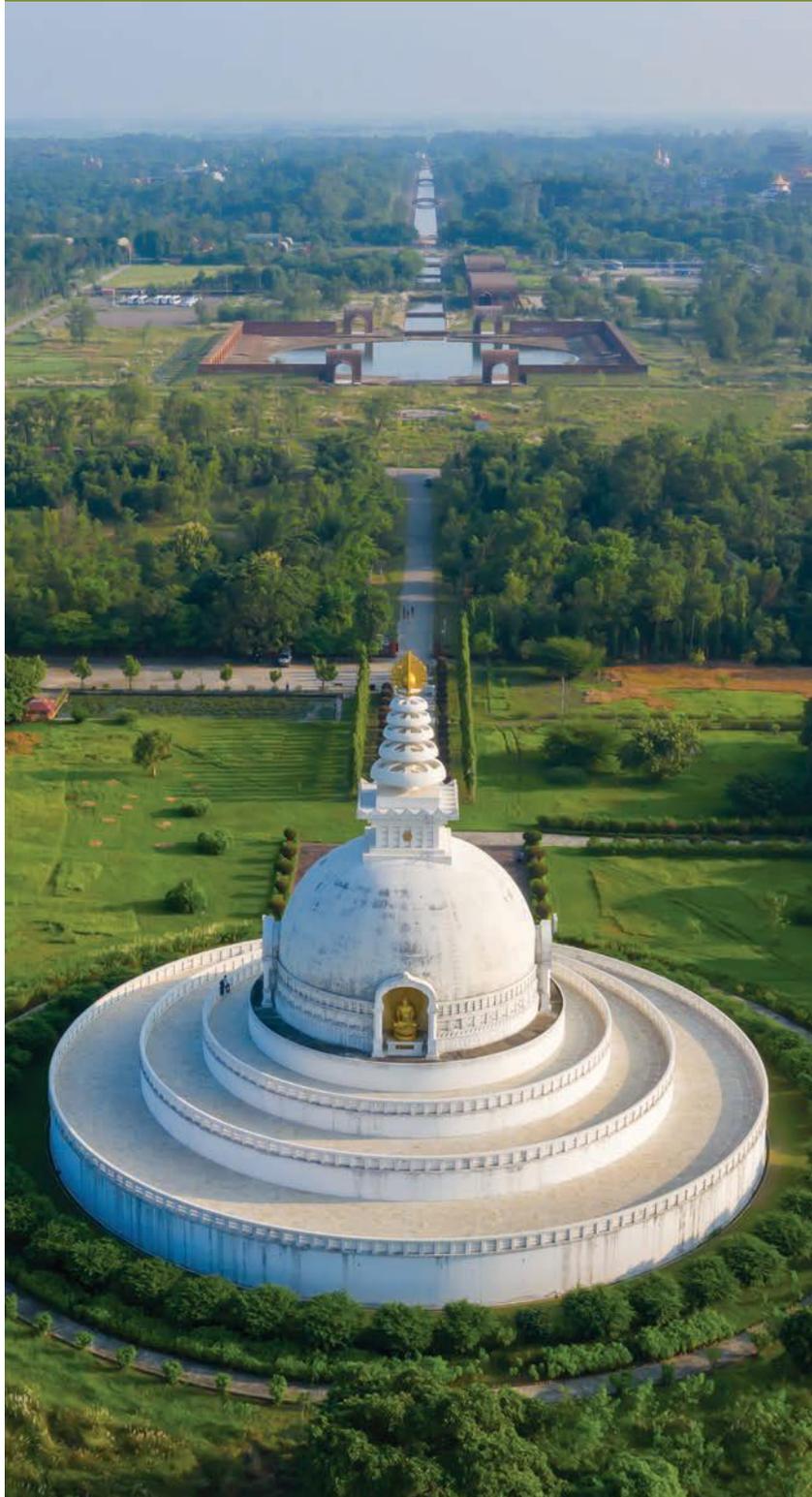
- 28. In groups of 3–5, discuss the following statement:

The first three Noble Truths speak of the problem of life—the fourth presents a solution.

- Firstly, how convincing do you find the problem identified?
- Secondly, how believable is the solution proposed?

DID YOU KNOW?

There are four holy places of pilgrimage for Buddhists. These are Lumbini, where the Buddha was born (pictured below); Bodh Gaya, where the Buddha was enlightened under the Bodhi tree in North East India; Sarnath, where the Buddha gave his first teaching of the Dharma; and Kushinagara, where the Buddha passed away.



THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

 Read Chapter 10, ‘The Eightfold Path’.

 29. What outcome does Buddhist teaching aim for in following the Eightfold Path?

 30. Reflect on the Eightfold path as a system for personal living. How effective do you think it would be in helping you to live well? Give supporting arguments.

TYPES OF BUDDHISM

 Read Chapter 11, ‘Types of Buddhism’.

 31. What factors contributed to the split in Buddhism?



TIGER WOODS (1975–)
American professional golfer Tiger Woods is one of the best-known athletes of all time. His 107 worldwide wins include an incredible 82 PGA Tour victories.

32. Summarise the differences between Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism in a table.

Theravada	Mahayana

 33. From your reading about Buddhism so far, explain the Buddhist conception of self.

34. Compare this understanding with a Western view of self.

35. How do you feel about the concept that the person 'you' is merely an illusion?

36. What is your reaction to the Buddhist notion of the aim of life?

'I have become more and more convinced of the fundamental need of all human beings to seek greater happiness and to avoid any suffering.'³

DALAI LAMA
HIGHEST SPIRITUAL LEADER
AND HEAD OF THE COUNTRY OF TIBET

THE BIG FIVE TABLE

Turn to the centrespread and fill in the table on 'What Buddhism has to say about ...'.

PERCEPTIONS

37. In what ways have your perceptions of Buddhism changed through the study so far?



DID YOU KNOW?

When the Buddha shaved off his long hair, he was reacting against the symbol of vanity that long hair was in India at the time. This subsequently became a standard Buddhist practice.

38. Summarise the meaning and purpose of life as understood by Buddhists.

39. How compelling or appealing do you find these explanations personally? Discuss in pairs.



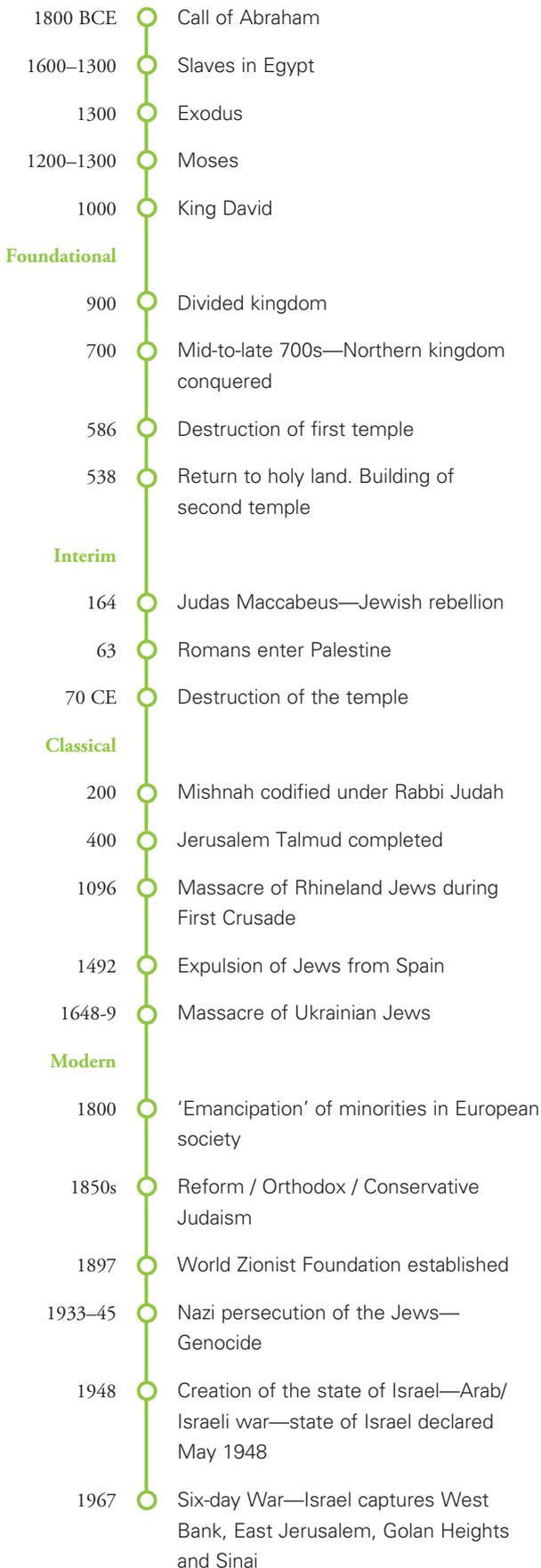
AUNG SAN SUU KYI (1945–)
A campaigner for democracy in Myanmar, she was awarded the Noble Peace Prize in 1991. Recently, she's been criticised for silence over the persecution of the Rohingya people.



JUDAISM,
THE WAY OF
THE TORAH



TIMELINE



GLOSSARY

As you read about Judaism, write the term beside the correct definition.

TERMS

Exodus / Passover / Atonement / Judas Maccabeus
 Sadducees / Essenes / Zealots / Pharisees
 Synagogue / Mishnah / Talmud / Messiah
 Sabbath (Shabbat) / Bar/Bat Mitzvah / Torah

DEFINITIONS

- Ultra-devout apocalyptic holy men
- Israel's constitution—instruction regarding legal, environmental, religious and social matters
- Jewish meeting place outside Jerusalem
- Spoken Torah—second holy book of Classical Judaism
- Sacrifice of an animal symbolising the shift of God's judgement away from the sinner
- Celebration of God's rescue of Israel from Egypt
- Rabbis who developed intricate rules for personal piety/purity
- Leader of victorious Jewish rebellion 164 BC
- Violent opponents of Roman dominance
- Interpretation of Mishnah
- The Jewish escape from Egyptian slavery
- Awaited promised King from the line of King David
- Weekly holy day
- Ceremony marking transition from childhood to adulthood
- Conservative 1st century Jews—cooperated with Romans

PERCEPTIONS

Before reading the chapters on Judaism ...

1. What experience, if any, do you have of Judaism or Jewish people?

2. What information do you have about Judaism, and how did you find it?

3. From that information, what would you say Judaism is about?

4. What are your impressions of how Jewish people live?

MANY JUDAISMS

 Read Chapter 12, 'Many Judaisms', until the end of 'Which Israel?'

 5. Explain the differing uses of the terms 'Jew' and 'Israel'.

FOUNDATIONAL JUDAISM

 Read Chapter 13, 'Foundational Judaism'.

CIRCUMCISION AND THE FAMILY OF ABRAHAM

 6. Explain the significance of circumcision to Jewish people and its link to Abraham.

EXODUS AND THE PASSOVER

 7. In pairs, discuss what is meant by the author when he says, 'Today, Jews recall this Exodus event as a microcosm of their entire history and as a symbol of their future ...' Briefly summarise your discussion.

Year	Numbers	Percentage of population
2001	83,993	0.44
2011	97,336	0.45
2021	99,956	0.39

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022, 'Religious affiliation in Australia', ABS, July 4 2022, <abs.gov.au/articles/religious-affiliation-australia>.

JUDAISM IN AUSTRALIA



A summer spent in Israel for Simona Barukh confirmed her appreciation of the Jewish religion. 'I learnt more there in six weeks than in the whole of high school', she says. 'I guess I was looking for more—trying to understand why we do the things we do. I want to be able to share the things I learned with others younger than me, and hopefully my [own children] one day', she adds with enthusiasm.

Being Orthodox Jewish is the key to who Simona is. 'It sort of is me', she says of her faith. 'All the things that I think, all the things that I do are centred around the fact that I am Jewish'. This means that a strict code of dress, eating and behaviour is part of her everyday existence. 'I get up early every morning to pray; the foods I eat are different', she says brightly, as she explains the supervision of Kosher foods. All food has to be checked by a Rabbi, and meat has to be cut in a particular way. The way she dresses is regulated as well. 'For ladies you always have to have your elbows covered, we always have to have our knees covered, and we have to wear skirts. Ladies have to have their collarbones covered, and for men they have to have a head covering'.

All of this provides something of a challenge, but for Simona, it is not such a big deal. 'I think when you have grown up with it, you don't think of it as a restriction'—although she admits her

friends do not always understand the reasons for her decisions.

Simona aims to be guided in her life by her Jewish teachings, and finds such a guide gives her an advantage in life that she feels not everyone has. 'Nowadays everything is so materialistic—everything is about possessions and money', she says. This, believes Simona, breeds jealousy and bitterness, and competitive and complex relationships. She feels that the wisdom of Jewish teaching, drawn from a time when life was much simpler, continues to be a good guide to living now.

Looking around her at the society at large, Simona is grateful for her faith. 'Perhaps I feel that I have a bit more direction than others. I know that I want to raise my kids and have my home a certain way—I think for some people who don't have any religion—they

are just open to anything that comes to them', she says. One of the best things about being Jewish, according to Simona, is the strong sense of family and community and togetherness. Having gone through a small school from kindergarten to year 12 with the same group of girls provided a special bond. 'Everyone is still very close—that is very nice', she says. 'In the Jewish community we have a lot of festivals that promote family time. There is lots of food and fun times. Every Saturday everyone has to stop everything', she explains in reference to the Jewish practice of Sabbath. 'It forces you to have time together as a family—I don't know how people survive who don't have that enforced rest', says Simona.

'We believe that each person is created for a specific purpose and I aim to fulfil that ...'

So what are the motivating forces in Simona's life? 'I guess I want to be the best person I can be. We believe that each person is created for a specific purpose and I aim to fulfil that', says Simona. Simona says that since Adam and Eve in the garden, God's presence is not as obvious, and that the role of people is to create a place where the presence of God will return to earth in a much more tangible and direct way. 'If I am being the best person I can be, then maybe I am doing my part ... in the big picture', she suggests.

And what about other faiths? Does Simona see room for other expressions of religion? 'I definitely don't think that everybody has to be Jewish. We don't think that if you don't follow the same path that you are doomed to hell or something like that. I think at the end of the day we all believe in God and whether people believe in a different pathway to God, I don't know why it has to be who's right and who's wrong, if ultimately we all believe in the one creator', she says.



INTERVIEW WITH Simona Barukh

1. What are the practical ways in which Simona's faith impacts her life?
2. What do you think are the most valuable things that Simona's faith gives her?
3. How much of a burden do you think creating a 'place where the presence of God will return to earth' places on the life of a Jewish believer?
4. How do you respond to Simona's belief that her faith gives her 'a bit more direction than others'?
5. Write down questions you would have for Simona regarding her faith and her beliefs. Discuss these in class.

THE TORAH AND JEWISH LIFE

8. Explain how the constitution of the people of Israel was given to them. What areas of life were covered in this 'law' or constitution?

9. Explain the significance of Torah.

KING DAVID AND THE FUTURE MESSIAH

Read 2 Samuel 11 and Psalm 51:1–10 from the Old Testament.

10. What do they record about David's failings and his prayer to God?



ANNE FRANK (1929–1945)
was a German-born Jewish girl who kept a diary in which she documented life under Nazi persecution while hiding in her family's Amsterdam attic.

11. What is significant about the reporting of David's failings in the Jewish Scriptures? Discuss in pairs.

12. Explain why David came to occupy such an important place in the life of the Jewish people. Discuss in pairs.

13. What is your understanding of the term 'Messiah'?

TEMPLE, FORGIVENESS AND WORSHIP

14. What was the significance of the great temple to Jewish people and why was it so important to them?

15. Explain the symbolism and importance of 'Yom Kippur', the Day of Atonement.

16. What does Yom Kippur reveal about the Jewish understanding of both human nature and God's character? How does this view of God and humanity fit with your understanding of life?

THE BIG FIVE

What each religion has to say about ...	HINDUISM 	BUDDHISM 
The universe		
Who God is and what he/she/it is like		
Me—who I am and individual personality		
This life —what it means —what it's about		
Suffering —its cause —the solution		
Salvation		
Death		
The poor		
Where hope comes from		



Woe to the sinful nation,
 a people whose guilt is great,
 a brood of evildoers,
 children given to corruption!
 They have forsaken the LORD;
 they have spurned the Holy One of Israel
 and turned their backs on him.

ISAIAH 1:4

This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

In the last days
 the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established
 as the highest of the mountains;
 it will be exalted above the hills,
 and all nations will stream to it.

Many peoples will come and say,
 ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
 to the temple of the God of Jacob.

He will teach us his ways,
 so that we may walk in his paths’.

The law will go out from Zion,
 the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

He will judge between the nations
 and will settle disputes for many peoples.

They will beat their swords into ploughshares.
 and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation,
 nor will they train for war anymore.

ISAIAH 2:1–4

DESTRUCTION OF THE FIRST TEMPLE (586 BCE)

17. How do you respond to the author’s comment that, ‘The Tanakh is strange in its honesty about God’s people’. In your response, refer to the Isaiah quotes or similar passages from the Tanakh.

18. Identify aspects of the prophet Isaiah’s message that reflect both warning of judgement and the promise of hope.

INTERIM JUDAISMS

THE DRAMAS OF THE SECOND TEMPLE

Read in Chapter 14 the section ‘The dramas of the second temple’.

The Greeks

19. Outline the events in Israel from the Hellenistic King Antiochus IV Epiphanes to the coming of the Romans.

DID YOU KNOW?

There were eight Jewish convicts on the first fleet.



The Romans

☞ 20. What does the author suggest was the lasting significance of Roman rule? Why?

DIFFERING VISIONS OF HOPE

☞ Read Chapter 14 from 'Sadducees: Aristocrats and priests' to 'Followers of Yeshua: heretics of a false Messiah'.

☞ 21. Write a three-minute speech assuming the character of a follower of one of the four groups outlined. Explain the appeal of this group's vision to its followers in contrast to the others.

CLASSICAL JUDAISM

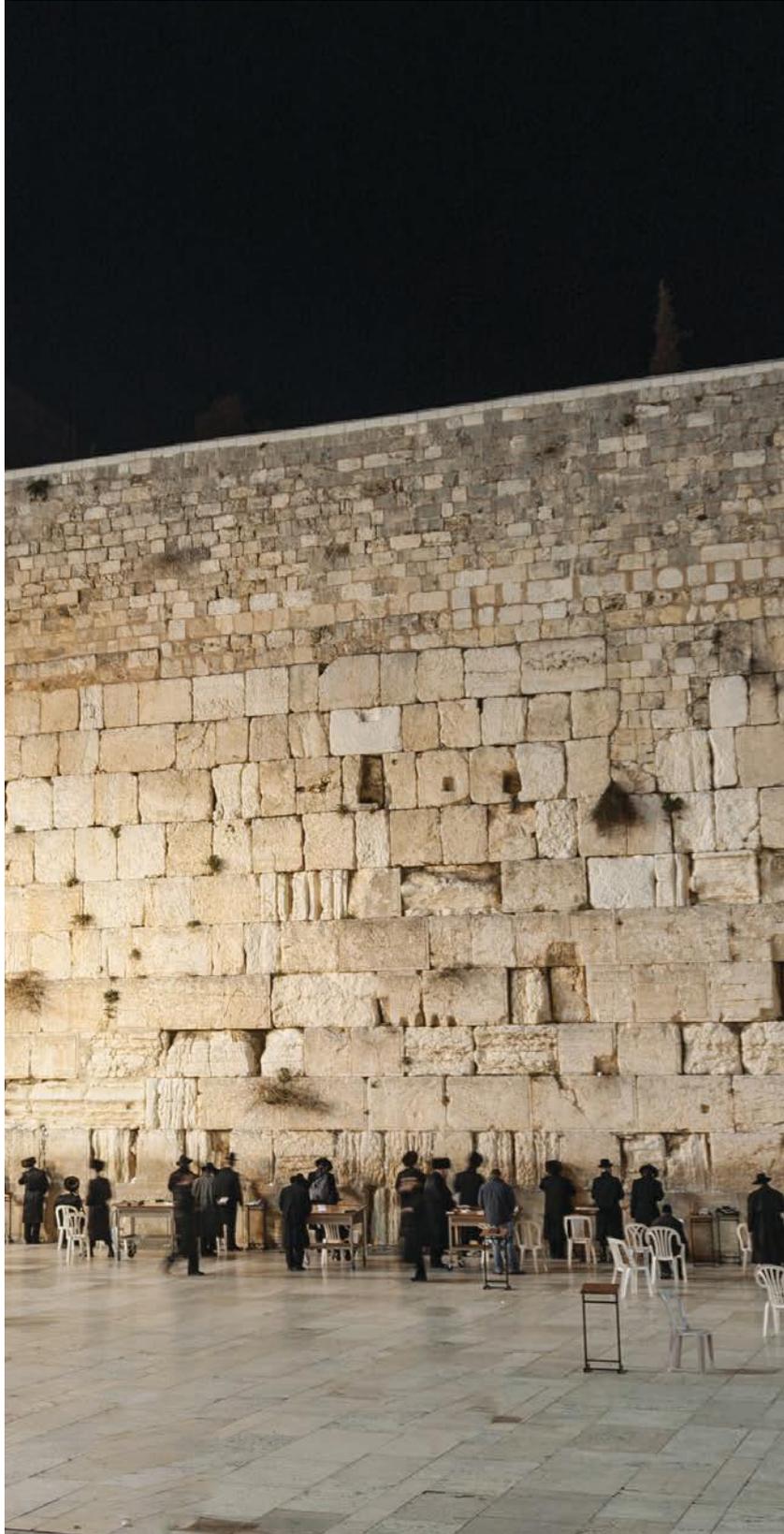
THE PHARISEES, THE TEMPLE AND THE SYNAGOGUES

☞ Read Chapter 15 until the end of 'The Pharisees, the temple and the synagogues'.

☞ 22. Briefly describe the rise of the Pharisees as a dominant group in Jewish life. Explain the role of the destruction of the temple and the emergence of synagogues in the development of this movement.

DID YOU KNOW?

All that remains of the Second Temple today is a 100-metre section of the western wall, known as the Wailing Wall, where modern Jews cry out to God for the restoration of his temple.





DID YOU KNOW?

Melbourne's first synagogue was opened in 1847. Between 1881 to 1920 following massacres and pogroms in Russia, around 10,000 Jews came to Australia. The largest immigration occurred after World War II. Since the 1960s there have been three main groups of Jewish immigrants: Russians, Israelis and South Africans.

ZIONISM

31. What is your response to the Zionist Movement? Consider its positive and negative impact on both Jews and Palestinians.

32. How did the movement gain such momentum after 1945?

THE BIG FIVE TABLE

Turn to the centrespread and fill in the table on 'What Judaism has to say about ...'.

PERCEPTIONS

33. In what ways have your perceptions of Judaism changed through the study so far?

34. Summarise the meaning and purpose of life as understood by religious Jewish people.

35. How compelling or appealing do you find these explanations personally? Discuss in pairs.



JERRY SEINFELD (1954–) is an American stand-up comedian, actor, writer and producer. He is best known for playing a semi-fictionalised version of himself in the sitcom *Seinfeld* (1989–1998).



**CHRISTIANITY,
THE WAY OF
THE CHRIST**



TIMELINE

- c. 5 BC ○ Birth of Jesus of Nazareth
- c. 33 AD ○ Crucifixion of Jesus
- c. 40–64 ○ Ministry of Paul
- c. 60–100 ○ New Testament Gospels written
- 313 ○ Edict of Milan ends persecution of Christians in Roman Empire
- 325 ○ Council of Nicea asserts doctrine of Trinity
- 354 ○ Theologian Augustine of Hippo born
- 451 ○ Council of Chalcedon 590–604. Rule of Pope Gregory the Great
- 638–56 ○ Arabs conquer Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia
- 800 ○ Charlemagne crowned Holy Roman Emperor
- 1054 ○ Eastern and Western Churches split
- 1095–99 ○ First Crusade to the Holy Land
- 1378 ○ Great 'Schism' in Western Church
- 1414–17 ○ Council of Constance; end of Schism
- 1453 ○ Constantinople falls to the Turks
- 1517 ○ Martin Luther posts opposition to Church corruption
- 1534 ○ Church of England established. Ignatius Loyola founds Jesuit movement
- 1545–63 ○ Council of Trent
- 1618–48 ○ Thirty Years War
- 1726 ○ Evangelical 'Great Awakening' begins in North America
- 1738 ○ John Wesley begins preaching to the industrial working class
- 1948 ○ World Council of Churches established
- 1963–5 ○ Second Vatican Council

GLOSSARY

As you read about Christianity, write the term beside the correct definition.

TERMS

Baptism / Messiah or Christ / Church / Orthodox
 Apostle / Grace / Eucharist / Pope / Catholic
 Gospel / Trinity / Transubstantiation / Apocrypha
 Indulgences / Kingdom of God

DEFINITIONS

Act of buying atonement for sin

Meal of remembrance

Cleansing ritual/Spiritual bath

Gathering

Correct opinion or belief

Change of substance
 —Christ's body and blood

Unmerited gift of God's pardon

Universal

Anointed one/
 The king of God's kingdom

Bishop of Rome

God's rule over all things

'Hidden away' documents

One who is sent out by Christ
 to proclaim the gospel

Grand news

One God in three persons

PERCEPTIONS

Before reading the chapters on Christianity ...

1. What experience, if any, do you have of Christianity or Christian people?

2. What information do you have about Christianity, and how did you find it?

3. From that information, what would you say Christianity is about?

4. What are your impressions of how Christian people live?

Year	Numbers	Percentage of population
2001	12,764,342	67.27
2011	13,150,670	60.42
2021	11,148,800	43.9

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022, 'Religious affiliation in Australia', ABS, July 4 2022, <abs.gov.au/articles/religious-affiliation-australia>.

CHRISTIANITY IN AUSTRALIA

JESUS AND THE SOURCES OF CHRISTIANITY

 Read Chapter 17, 'Jesus and the sources of Christianity'.

 5. What is the significance of the title 'the Christ'?

NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCES ABOUT JESUS

 6. What importance are you able to discern in the number of non-Christian sources about the life of Jesus?

CHRISTIAN SOURCES ABOUT JESUS

 7. Complete the dates for the Christian sources of the life of Jesus.

Gospel of Mark. Date:
Gospel of Luke. Date:
Gospel of Matthew. Date:
Gospel of John. Date:
The letters of Paul. Date:

 8. How well does Christianity compare with other faiths in terms of reliability of sources, the use of oral tradition, and the time gap between oral tradition and sources being written down?

Talking to Nic Gilmour, the impression you get is of someone who is living out his passion. His biggest passion is clearly his Christian faith, or 'following his king' as Nic puts it. He also loves the surf, and so the job he is in, working for Christian Surfers, looks like a meeting of two great loves.

Growing up mainly on a farm in country Western Australia, south of Perth, Nic has lived a life rich in experience. He's done everything from farm hand to delivering pizzas, to working in gold mines, building jetties, painting, and various trades before finding himself in his current job. And surfing all the while.

To really get Nic excited you just have to get him talking about his love for Jesus and his desire to serve him. For Nic, his faith is very real and the primary motivating force in his life. His parents became Christians when Nic was around 11, and the difference he perceived in their lives made a powerful impression. 'Kids are smarter than we think', says Nic. 'I could see the difference. In terms of their motivations and the way they lived their lives, it was completely different. I could see this was very real.'

Nic's Christianity was something that he grew into: a growing awareness rather than an overnight change. So what does it mean for him to be living as a Christian now? 'To know God and to be known by him—as one of my mates put it',

says Nic. 'I'd describe it as a joy that transcends all our circumstances—it is not determined by the context we are in and it comes from knowing true forgiveness for selfishness and all the other things that separated me from God', he adds. 'Things might be going well or badly, but the joy that I have is connected to my relationship with God, and that remains a constant regardless of how other things are going.'

Community has been a big part of Christian experience for Nic also. He has a sense of belonging to God that is also expressed in relationship to other Christians. 'In Church community or in the organisation Christian Surfers that I work for, there is a living, breathing, human expression of God's love', explains Nic. 'It is the fact that this community has its roots in something of eternal consequence, that makes it different from other communities I have been involved in—footy clubs and board rider's clubs and stuff like that focus more on something that is transient

and will pass. They can't have the same depth of meaning and significance.'

So how would Nic explain his faith in a nutshell? 'I think the Christian walk is defined by the fact that there is nothing I can do myself to satisfy God. It's not a matter of me doing something to appease God, because he has already done it for me through Jesus when he died on the cross. As a Christian I don't have to earn "brownie points" with God, but I want to serve my king in thankfulness for what he's already done for me.'

'The concept of grace—that is the one thing that makes friendship with Jesus so fulfilling.'

It is this aspect of 'grace' that makes Christianity unique in terms of world religions according to Nic. 'I have friends of other faiths with deep convictions. But I can say this—in all the religions I have looked into and spoken to people about—I am yet to come across one that has this concept of grace, or unmerited favour. Something that is shared among a lot of religions is the sense of a personal journey towards being a better person, and Christianity has that, with the singular difference that my motivation is after grace rather than trying to make ourselves better to appease a god, or to reach a higher consciousness', explains Nic. 'The concept of grace—that is the one thing that makes friendship with Jesus so fulfilling.'

So if he were to leave Christianity behind, how would life look? 'I think it would be very hard', suggests Nic. 'To go from living with this eternal perspective and to go from living with this higher purpose—to go back to just living for yourself, that would be a very lonely and unsatisfying existence. It's like when you have surfed perfect eight-foot reef-breaks it's hard to go back to surfing a one-foot dribbling beach break!'



INTERVIEW WITH Nic Gilmour

1. What evidence is there that Nic's faith is the 'primary motivating force in his life'?
2. Describe the perspective on life that Nic's faith provides for him.
3. How do you respond to Nic's description of Christian community and the meaning this community provides for him?
4. What, according to Nic, is the defining thing about Christianity that makes it distinct from other faiths?
5. Write down questions you would have for Nic regarding his faith and his beliefs. Discuss these in class.

THE LIFE OF JESUS OF NAZARETH

 Read Chapter 18, ‘The life of Jesus of Nazareth’.

CARPENTER AND KING

‘The idea that there’s a force of love and logic behind the universe is overwhelming to start with, if you believe it. Actually, maybe even far-fetched to start with. But the idea that that same love and logic would choose to describe itself as a baby born in s*** and straw and poverty is genius, and brings me to my knees, literally. To me, as a poet, I am just in awe of that. It makes some sort of poetic sense. It’s the thing that makes me a believer, though it didn’t dawn on me for many years.’¹

BONO
LEAD VOCALIST OF THE ROCK BAND U2

-  9. What is the importance of the link between Jesus and Israel’s King David?

PREACHER OF THE ‘KINGDOM OF GOD’

-  10. What, according to the author, was the most significant aspect of Jesus’ teaching? Why was this such an ‘explosive’ message?



DR MARTIN LUTHER KING JNR
(1929–1968)
was an American Baptist minister and one of the most prominent leaders in the civil rights movement from 1955 until his assassination.

ANTHONY CORREIA / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



DID YOU KNOW?

Evangelist Billy Graham spoke to more people in live audiences than anyone else in history—over 210 million people in over 185 countries and territories.

THE ‘FRIEND OF SINNERS’

-  11. What does Jesus’ attitude towards tax collectors tell us about the type of kingdom he claimed to be bringing?

-  12. How did Jesus respond to the criticism he received for associating with ‘tax collectors and sinners’?

FORGIVENESS AND THE TEMPLE

-  13. What was so outrageous about Jesus’ claim to be able to forgive sins?

BAFFLING DEEDS

14. The author notes that even Jesus' ancient opponents and modern critics acknowledge that 'Jesus performed deeds which everyone (including opponents) believed to be miraculous'. How would you explain this? How do you respond to the idea?

MESSIAH COMES TO TOWN

15. In pairs, write the script for a two-minute television news report on Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem. Highlight the actions of Jesus and the various emotions expressed by the differing groups of onlookers.

DID YOU KNOW?

By the Middle Ages, only priests and the educated could read Latin, the language of Western Christianity. Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German sparked a revolution of Bible translation and printing. The emphasis of the Protestant church on the Scriptures being read by all people has led to the Bible being translated into over 2000 languages.



THE JEWISH PASSOVER AND THE DEATH OF JESUS

16. In what way did Jesus give new meaning to the Passover meal? Explain the way Jesus recast the themes of blood and forgiveness and applied them to himself.

17. Summarise the implications of the author's statement: 'According to the New Testament, Jesus died as a sacrifice for sins. He was the lamb for a worldwide Passover'. What does it imply about the nature of Jesus and the need of humanity?

18. How do you respond to this idea personally?

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

19. Create a list of the people that 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 claims were witnesses of the resurrected Jesus.

20. In pairs or small groups, create a list of points for and against the likelihood of the Bible's account of the resurrection being reliable.

FROM CHRIST TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

 Read Chapter 19, 'From Christ to the New Testament'.

FROM JUDAISM TO CHRISTIANITY

 21. What was the importance for the Gentile (non-Jewish) world of the decision of the Jerusalem council of 48 AD?

 22. What was it about Christianity that caused it to spread so quickly and become a genuine world religion?

When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look', he said, 'I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God'.

At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit'. Then he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them'. When he had said this, he fell asleep.

ACTS 7:54-60

LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES

 23. How was early Christian teaching recorded and distributed to the first churches?

WHOSE NEW TESTAMENT?

 24. Outline the process followed to review the expanding body of Christian literature and determine what was 'sacred and authoritative' and thus to be considered Scripture.

 25. How does this impact your view of the New Testament as a reliable record of early Christian teaching?

MAJOR TEACHINGS OF CHRISTIANITY

 Read Chapter 20, 'Major teachings of Christianity'.

TRINITY: ONE GOD IN THREE PERSONS

'Without embarrassment or any hint of contradiction, the Bible teaches that God is three persons sharing one divine nature.'

CHAPTER 20
'MAJOR TEACHINGS OF CHRISTIANITY'

 26. What are some of the implications of this doctrine for Christians, especially as it relates to Jesus?

 27. What do you personally find hard or helpful about it?



THE 'KINGDOM COME': CHRISTIANITY AND THE FUTURE

☰ 28. Outline the three central aspects of the kingdom of God as explained by the author.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

‘Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.’²

DR MARTIN LUTHER KING JNR
AMERICAN PREACHER AND CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST

GRACE: SALVATION AS A GIFT

☒ 29. Explain the meaning of ‘grace’ as used in Christian teaching using everyday, non-religious language.

☒ 30. How do you respond to the statement that, ‘God’s mercy can be experienced here and now, not as a reward for religious and moral effort, but as an act of God’s favour, his grace’.



MOTHER TERESA (1910–1997)
The ‘Saint of the Gutters’, she founded the Missionaries of Charity and served the poorest of the poor in Calcutta for 50 years.

THE LOVE ETHIC: HOW CHRISTIANS ARE TO LIVE

☰ 31. What was new about Jesus’ teaching regarding the command to love your neighbour?

32. Explain the way Jesus’ command to ‘love your neighbour’ made such an impact on the world.

33. Research two welfare and/or humanitarian organisations that have Christianity as their base. Write down what they aim to do.

☒ 34. What were some of the negative impacts of Christianity that occurred once it came into power?

RITUALS AND CELEBRATIONS

☒ 35. Outline and explain how the rituals of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, plus the celebration of Easter, express the foundational beliefs of Christianity.

THREE BRANCHES OF CHRISTIANITY

 Read Chapter 21, 'Three branches of Christianity'.

 36. Write a one-sentence summary for each item below, explaining the distinctive elements of each branch of Christianity.

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Authority of the Pope

Mary, the mother of Jesus

Jesus' presence in the Lord's Supper

The Old Testament

PROTESTANT CHURCH

Authority in the Protestant Church

Emphasis on grace

Jesus' presence in the Lord's Supper

ORTHODOX CHURCH

Authority in the Orthodox Church

Salvation

Use of images in worship

THE BIG FIVE TABLE

 Turn to the centrespread and fill in the table on 'What Christianity has to say about ...'.

PERCEPTIONS

 37. In what ways have your perceptions of Christianity changed through the study so far?

 38. Summarise the meaning and purpose of life as understood by Christians.

 39. How compelling or appealing do you find these explanations personally? Discuss in pairs.



ISLAM,
THE WAY OF
SUBMISSION



TIMELINE

- 570 CE ○ Prophet Muhammad born in Mecca
- 610 ○ Muhammad visited by angel Gabriel
- 629 ○ Conversion of Mecca
- 632 ○ Death of Muhammad
- 632–656 ○ First three Caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman)
- 656–661 ○ Rule of Ali—unrest among Muslims
- 661–680 ○ Islamic empire expands into the rest of North Africa and Spain
- 680 ○ Split between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims
- 711 ○ Conquest of Spain
- 750–1258 ○ Abbasid Caliphate
- 1071 ○ Jerusalem taken by Seljuk Turks
- 1095–1099 ○ First Crusade
- 1147–1149 ○ Second Crusade
- 1187 ○ Capture of Jerusalem by Saladin
- 1189–1192 ○ Third Crusade
- 1202–1204 ○ Fourth Crusade
- 1350–1918 ○ Ottoman Empire
- 1453 ○ Constantinople (now Istanbul) conquered
- 1520–1566 ○ Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent expands Ottoman Empire to south-eastern Europe, North Africa and the Near East
- 1857 ○ Direct British rule in India ends the Mughal Empire
- 1932 ○ Foundation of Saudi Arabia
- 1947 ○ Foundation of Muslim state of Pakistan
- 1948 ○ Establishment of state of Israel and first Arab-Israeli war
- 1949 ○ Independence of Indonesia
- 1967 ○ Second Arab-Israeli war
- 1973 ○ Third Arab-Israeli war
- 1979 ○ Islamic Revolution in Iran
- 1991 ○ Independence of former Soviet republics of central Asia
- 1993 and 1995 ○ Oslo Accords grant Palestinian political entity in Gaza and the West Bank

GLOSSARY

As you read about Islam, write the term beside the correct definition.

TERMS

Umma / Kaaba / Shahada / Sharia / Quran
Allah / Medina / Salat / Sunna / Islam
Hadiths / Hajj / Jihad / Caliph / Muslim

DEFINITIONS

Pilgrimage to Mecca

Leaders in Islam

One who submits (to Allah)

Reports of Muhammad's words and deeds

Muslim name for the one God

Holy book of Islam

Declaration of Faith

Daily prayer

God's law revealed in the Quran

First Muslim state

Building in Mecca that housed idols of the gods of Arabia

Submission

Struggle/striving for Allah

The Muslim community

'Example' of the prophet

PERCEPTIONS

Before reading the chapters on Islam ...

1. What experience, if any, do you have of Islam or Muslim people?

2. What information do you have about Islam, and how did you find it?

3. From that information, what would you say Islam is about?

4. What are your impressions of how Muslim people live?

Year	Numbers	Percentage of population
2001	281,578	1.48
2011	476,290	2.19
2021	813,400	3.2

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022, 'Religious affiliation in Australia', ABS, July 4 2022, <abs.gov.au/articles/religious-affiliation-australia>.

ISLAM IN AUSTRALIA

THE LIFE OF MUHAMMAD

 Read Chapter 23, 'From merchant to messenger of God: the life of Muhammad'.

FROM MERCHANT TO MESSENGER OF GOD

 5. Use the information in chapter 23 to construct a timeline of the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Include a brief explanation of the important events in Muhammad's life.

THE SOURCES ABOUT MUHAMMAD'S LIFE

 6. Summarise the debate about the accounts of Muhammad's life and teaching, giving reasons for and against their reliability.

Majde Fanous's expectations of Australia when he left his home in Jordan were very different to what he found when he arrived. 'I imagined all white blond people—all Anglo-Saxon people', he says. 'When I arrived to find such a multicultural country I was very surprised. I was taken to the Belmore/Lakemba area [in Sydney]; things were written in Arabic, there was Arabic food—I didn't expect this at all. I had been on a plane for two days!'

Coming from a family of nine children, it was a big decision for Majde to come to Australia. 'There was lots of publicity for Australia after the Olympics', he says. Majde came here to do a Masters in Accounting at the University of Western Sydney.

Raised in a Muslim country, Majde is a committed follower of Islamic faith. 'For me, being a Muslim touches all areas of my life', he says. 'Without it I would be lost'. It is from the Quran and from the Hadiths (what the Prophet said), that Majde receives guidance on how to live. 'Islam talks about all areas of life, including relationships with family, and the respect I must have for other people. I learn about the respect I need to have for my neighbour, and how I need to be careful about the way I treat people', he says.

'Following Muslim practice, such as prayer five times a day, puts us in contact with God', says Majde.

For Majde, it is a reminder of God's goodness to him, along with the need to remember that God is watching all that he does. The prayers are like a 'washing of the soul', he says. Majde explains that, 'for a Muslim there is both the love of God, and the fear of God.' Both of these help the Muslim to live the way God would want them to, and to avoid falling into wrong behaviour.

For Majde, a commitment to Muslim practice such as prayer, and help for the poor along with the reminder to treat people equally, represents a set of rules that are not only a guide for life, but a motivation for reward in heaven. 'Some things about being Muslim are difficult, especially in Western countries where the culture is so different', says Majde. 'As Muslims we are not allowed to drink alcohol ... also you are not allowed to have sexual relations with a woman if you are not married to her.

Sometimes this is hard, but it is one of the rules for being a Muslim. It comes from God and he asks us, "are you going to cope with this in order to win in the end?"'

So, the promise of heaven helps? 'Yes', says Majde. 'But it is also very much about the way we live our lives now.'

Majde is in no doubt about his commitment to his new country. 'Being a Muslim is all about the belief, not the country you are from', he says. 'Muslim Australians need to accept an Australian identity—otherwise they risk belonging nowhere, and being very lost. I aim to be loyal to the country; to be a good citizen, and to be Muslim', he states. What are the most appealing things about Australia? 'In Australia, people are able to voice their opinion freely', says Majde. 'Here I can have a discussion with an atheist, and we can have a debate. In a Muslim country, if someone said they didn't believe in God, it would be big deal. That person might be neglected or mistreated', says Majde.

The prayers are like a 'washing of the soul', Majde says. 'For a Muslim there is both the love of God, and the fear of God.'

And what of the differences between the Islamic faith and Christianity? 'Well', says Majde, 'as Muslims we believe many of the same things as Christians. We believe in Moses, and Abraham, and Jesus. But we don't think that Jesus was the Son of God. We believe that Jesus was a Prophet, and like Muhammad he was a messenger sent to the people'. And what if he were to be convinced that Jesus was in fact, the Son of God? 'That would be the day I would convert', says Majde.



INTERVIEW WITH Majde Fanous

1. What surprised Majde about Australian life and culture?
2. Describe some of the ways in which Majde expresses his faith. What motivates his devotion and commitment to his faith?
3. What are some of the challenges for Majde in living as a Muslim in Australia?
4. How does Majde's final comment reflect the teaching of the shahada and the distinction between Muslim and Christian beliefs?



SENER DAGSAN / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

FROM ORPHAN TO PROPHET

- 8. How do you respond to the traditional Islamic claim that Muhammad was visited by the angel Gabriel? What questions do claims like this about supernatural ‘revelation’ raise for you?

REJECTION IN MECCA

- 8. Outline the two-fold threat that Muhammad’s message posed to the government officials of Mecca.

THE QUEST FOR MECCA

- 9. What point does the author make about the relationship between Muhammad’s role as a prophet and his role as a political leader?

- 10. Why was the ‘battle of Badr’ regarded as so important for Muslims?

- 11. Reflect on the ‘conversion’ of Mecca. What problems do you see in such a conversion?

DID YOU KNOW?

Islamic culture looks to celebrate beauty and so the visual arts, architecture, painting, textiles, metalwork, calligraphy and ceramics have traditionally been promoted. Pattern and decoration, inspired by a love of geometry is widespread. Poetry and music are also emphasised.



JIHAD: STRIVING FOR ALLAH

12. Describe the impact that the concept of jihad had on the success of Islam in the Middle East.

13. What were the three options given to people who came into contact with the Islamic forces?

14. In pairs, explain and discuss the spiritual understanding of jihad outlined by the author.

15. How does it compare with your previous understanding and that portrayed in the media?



WALEED ALY (1978–)
an Australian broadcaster, author and academic who has written extensively on matters such as politics and conflict in the Middle East and the issue of terrorism.

DID YOU KNOW?

When referring to Muhammad, and other prophets, Muslims usually say, *alayhi s-salām* (peace be upon him).



16. Reflect on the importance of this understanding of jihad in the life of Muslim people today. How might it influence their personal lifestyle and community engagement?

17. Research some current examples of how Muslims fight 'against sin and injustice'.

THE DEATH OF MUHAMMAD AND THE LEADERSHIP OF ISLAM

18. Outline the roles held by Muhammad at the time of his death.

TYPES OF ISLAM

📖 Read Chapter 24, 'Types of Islam'.

SUNNI, SHI'ITE AND SUFI

📖 19. Summarise the debate within Islam about who should lead it.

📖 20. Outline the people and processes resulting in the split of Islam into Sunni and Shi'ite traditions.

21. Describe the distinctives of the three types of Islam.

THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

📖 Read Chapter 25, 'The Five Pillars of Islam'.

THE QURAN AND THE EXAMPLE OF THE PROPHET

📖 22. Explain the importance of the Quran and the example of the Prophet in the life of Muslims.

SUBMISSION TO GOD'S LAW: THE HEART OF ISLAM

🗣️ 23. Discuss the author's statement that 'the faith of the Muslim is a comprehensive way of life more than a wide-ranging set of beliefs'.

✍️ 24. Imagine you are a Muslim seeking to promote your religion. Write a letter to a sceptical friend, explaining why the central concept of Islam—'submission to God'—is a good one to adopt in life. Support your argument using Muslim beliefs and ideas.





DID YOU KNOW?

Before a prayer a Muslim must prepare by removing distracting thoughts from the mind and cleansing the body. Ritual washing is usually performed using the water from a fountain at the Mosque or a tap and basin at home.

THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

Declaration of faith (shahada)

 25. Describe the implications of the first part of the Muslim declaration of faith ‘There is no God but Allah’ for the polytheism of 7th century Arabia.

 26. In pairs, discuss the author’s assertion that ‘the statement “There is no God but Allah” is set against Christian beliefs as much as pagan ones’.



MALALA YOUSAFZAI (1997–)

An outspoken activist for education rights for women and children in Pakistan, she won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 when she was only 17.

 27. Outline the three implications highlighted by the author of the second part of shahada, ‘Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah’.

Daily prayer (salat)

 28. Describe the essential aspects of Muslim prayer.

 29. What do you consider to be the attractive elements of Islamic prayer?

 30. What might be the challenges or disadvantages of such a prayer life?

Tax for the poor (zakat)

 31. What does Sharia law state about where the tax for the poor is to be spent?

 32. How might this tax reflect and support the spiritual understanding of jihad?

The fast of Ramadan (saum)

 33. What is the focus of the fast of Ramadan and how is it practised?

Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)

 34. Outline the key elements of the Hajj pilgrimage and their symbolism?

35. The author states that 'submitting to these five demands [Pillars] ensures God's favour, say both Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims. It makes one ready for the day of judgement, when Allah will condemn evildoers and reward the righteous'. Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of relating to God in this way.

THE BIG FIVE TABLE

 Turn to the centrespread and fill in the table on 'What Islam has to say about ...'.

PERCEPTIONS

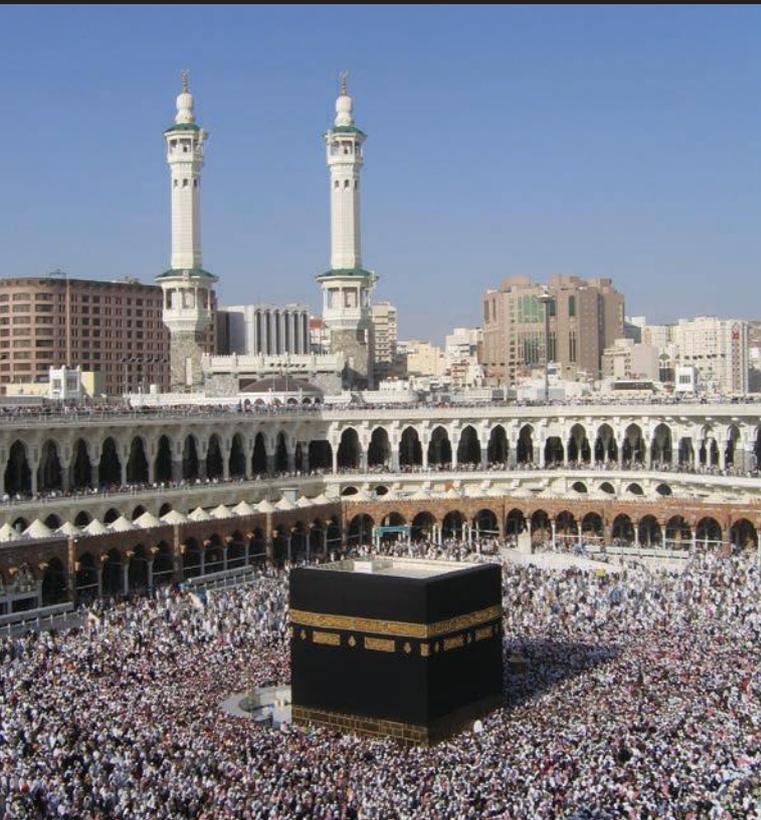
 36. In what ways have your perceptions of Islam changed through the study so far?

 37. Summarise the meaning and purpose of life as understood by Muslims.

 38. How compelling or appealing do you find these explanations personally? Discuss in pairs.

DID YOU KNOW?

In Mecca at the place of the Kaaba, pilgrims circle seven times around the Kaaba and then pray near the station of Abraham. The pilgrims run back and forth between two small hills known as Safa and Marwa in memory of Hagar, the mother of Abraham's eldest son Ishmael.





**LETTING THE
RELIGIONS HAVE
THEIR SAY**



WHAT'S WRONG WITH JESUS?

 Read in Chapter 26 'No dimming the lights' and 'They all look the same to me'.

 1. How successful do you think the author has been in fulfilling his aim 'to see the great faiths as works of art worthy of display in the best light'?

 2. How do you respond to the author's claim that 'stressing the sameness of the world's religions gives honour to none of them'? Explain your answer.

WHY RELIGIONS DIFFER

 3. What three reasons does the author give to explain why religions are, in fact, different?

1.

2.

3.

'If you are a Christian you do not have to believe that all the other religions are simply wrong all through. If you are an atheist you do have to believe that the main point in all the religions of the whole world is simply one huge mistake. If you are a Christian, you are free to think that all those religions ... contain at least some hint of the truth ... But, of course, being a Christian does mean thinking that where Christianity differs from other religions, Christianity is right and they are wrong. As in arithmetic, there is only one right answer to a sum, and all other answers are wrong; but some of the wrong answers are much nearer being right than others.'¹

CS LEWIS
ENGLISH WRITER AND CHRISTIAN APOLOGIST

 Read in Chapter 26 from 'What's wrong with Jesus: Hinduism' to the end of the chapter.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH JESUS: HINDUISM

 4. Identify the areas of Christianity that Hindu belief would contradict.

 5. What is your response to the Hindu criticisms of Christianity?

IS IT ALL DUCKS AND RABBITS?

 Read Chapter 27, 'Ducks, rabbits and the elephant: pluralism'.

 13. Define pluralism and give your own version of a saying to summarise it.

THE BIG TRUTH AND LITTLE FALSEHOODS

 14. What, according to the author, is the response of pluralists to the contradictions between the beliefs of the major faiths?

15. What, according to the author, is Chris McGillion's explanation for the overarching idea behind people's religious quests?

THE DUCK-RABBIT EXPERIMENT



 16. What is the essence of the argument of Professor Hick in using the duck-rabbit experiment?

'My conclusion, then, is that the differences between the root concepts and experiences of the different religions ... are compatible with the pluralistic hypothesis that the great world traditions constitute different conceptions and perceptions of, and responses to, the Real from within the different cultural ways of being human.'²

JOHN HICK
PHILOSOPHER OF RELIGION

17. The author states that 'John Hick's analogy succeeds in highlighting an often-overlooked assumption at the heart of the pluralistic perspective'. Identify this assumption and discuss its implications.



PROFESSOR JOHN HICK (1922–2012)
John Hick was arguably one of the most important and influential philosophers of religion of the second half of the 20th century.

THE PRESUMPTION OF PLURALISM

18. The author says that pluralism is significantly more presumptuous than the world religions. What reasons does he give for this conclusion?

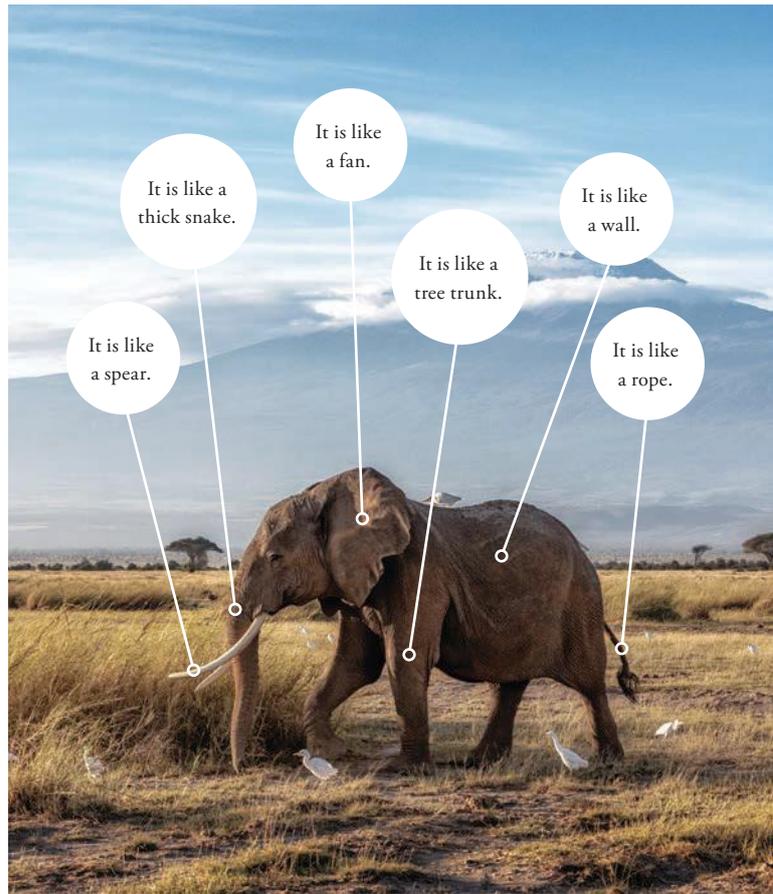
19. The author suggests that ‘the chief argument of pluralism seems to be *psychological*, as I say. It is put forward as a more polite and tolerable way to approach religious differences. If you say that religious doctrines are just a matter of perception, no-one can be said to be right or wrong’. In groups discuss the difference between ‘perceptions’ and ‘truth’. According to the author, why is this important?

TRUE TOLERANCE

‘Modern toleration is really a tyranny. It is a tyranny because it is a silence. To say that I must not deny my opponent’s faith is to say I must not discuss it.’³

GK CHESTERTON
ENGLISH WRITER, PHILOSOPHER AND CHRISTIAN APOLOGIST

20. What definition of tolerance does the author provide?



21. A letter to the editor complained that ‘tolerance’ used to mean that you could disagree with the opinion of another person and still maintain respect for them while acknowledging their right to hold that opinion. Now, said the writer, it has come to merely be a term of political correctness that means that we have to pretend that all opinions are equally valid, and those who don’t think so have no right to speak.

22. How well does this letter sum up the way ‘tolerance’ has come to be interpreted?

22. In groups, discuss what makes it hard to be truly tolerant of other people?

ECONOMY OF EFFORT

23. What point is made about the 'economy of effort' in accepting an 'all religious roads lead to Rome' approach to religion?

24. How much does the 'economy of effort' factor play a part in your own approach to checking out the claims of world religions?

25. Consider the following propositions as outlined in Chapter 27 under 'Economy of effort'.

- a) Hinduism says there are many gods; Judaism says there is only one.
- b) Buddhism says that I possess within myself the ability to live by the truth and merit salvation; Christianity says this can only come from the gift of God's grace.
- c) Christianity says that Jesus was crucified and then rose from the dead; Islam says Jesus did not die and did not experience a resurrection.

For each of the above contradictions, is it possible that both are true? Explain your answer.



26. The author concludes that 'whether because of the fear of intolerance or because of the temptation to take the easy option, the vague affirmation of all religions has the potential to leave us without any clear convictions'. Discuss this statement and your personal response to it.

'To insist that all religions are equally true, even if they contradict each other, is a trivialisation of religious claims ... If the Quran says that Jesus lived but did not die and the Christian Bible says that he lived and did die, anyone who respects both religions can investigate whether one or the other or neither is right at this point. But to say that both religions are equally true is disguised disrespect. It means that what they are saying is not important enough to seriously consider ... Religious belief cannot be reduced to pure subjectivism.'⁴

REV DR JOHN WOODHOUSE
FORMER PRINCIPAL OF MOORE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE, SYDNEY

27. How do you respond to the argument presented here?

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A DOUBTER'S GUIDE TO WORLD RELIGIONS

A FAIR AND FRIENDLY INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY, BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF THE BIG FIVE

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STRUCTURE

Lesson 1—A word or two to spectators

Lesson 2—Hinduism, the way of release

Lesson 3—Buddhism, the way of enlightenment

Lesson 4—Judaism, the way of the Torah

Lesson 5—Christianity, the way of the Christ

Lesson 6—Islam, the way of submission

Lesson 7—Letting the religions have their say

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