



Approaching Other Religions & Worldviews

Introduction

Shawn Nelson, 2024



Why should Christians study other religions/worldviews?

Cultural Reasons

- This is a time unlike any other in history.
- **Global industry/commerce.**
- **Global travel** (auto, airplane).
- **Global communication** (Internet).
- **Population increase.**
- We encounter people of all religious backgrounds in workplace, schools.

“Cultural diversity in the U.S. has created a melting pot. A **melting pot** refers to a society or community where different cultures, religions, races, traditions, and languages are present.”
(Cultural Diversity in the United States, Study.com)



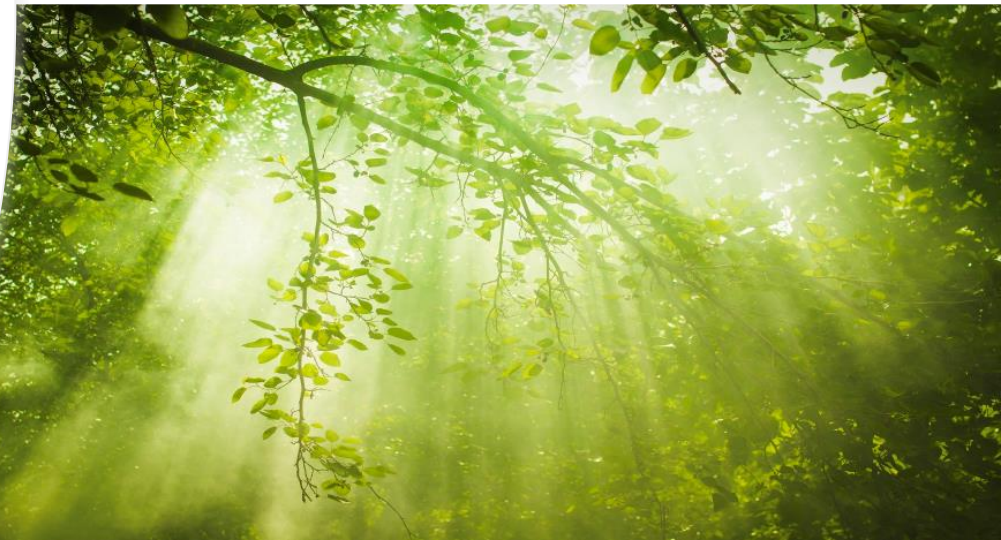
Biblical Reasons

We should want to join God in his plan of restoration

- Bible claims people **fell away from God** into other beliefs.
- Jesus came to restore fellowship with true God.
Luke 19:10 “The Son of Man (Jesus) came to **seek and to save the lost.**”
- God invites us in his plan.
2 Cor. 5:20 – “We are therefore **Christ’s ambassadors**, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”

Christians believe Jesus is the only way to heaven

- John 14:6 – Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. **No one** comes to the Father **except through me.**”
- Acts 4:12 – Peter said, “Salvation is found in **no one else**, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”



Biblical Reasons

We are commanded to be ready

- 1 Peter 3:15 – “Always **be prepared** to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”

We should follow the example of early church

- All gospel writers were reaching out to different audiences trying to convince them Jesus was the messiah.
- Entire **book of Acts** was written to convince.





Personal Reasons

- We learn about Christianity by comparing it to other beliefs.
- This builds my faith.



What are the Major Religions?

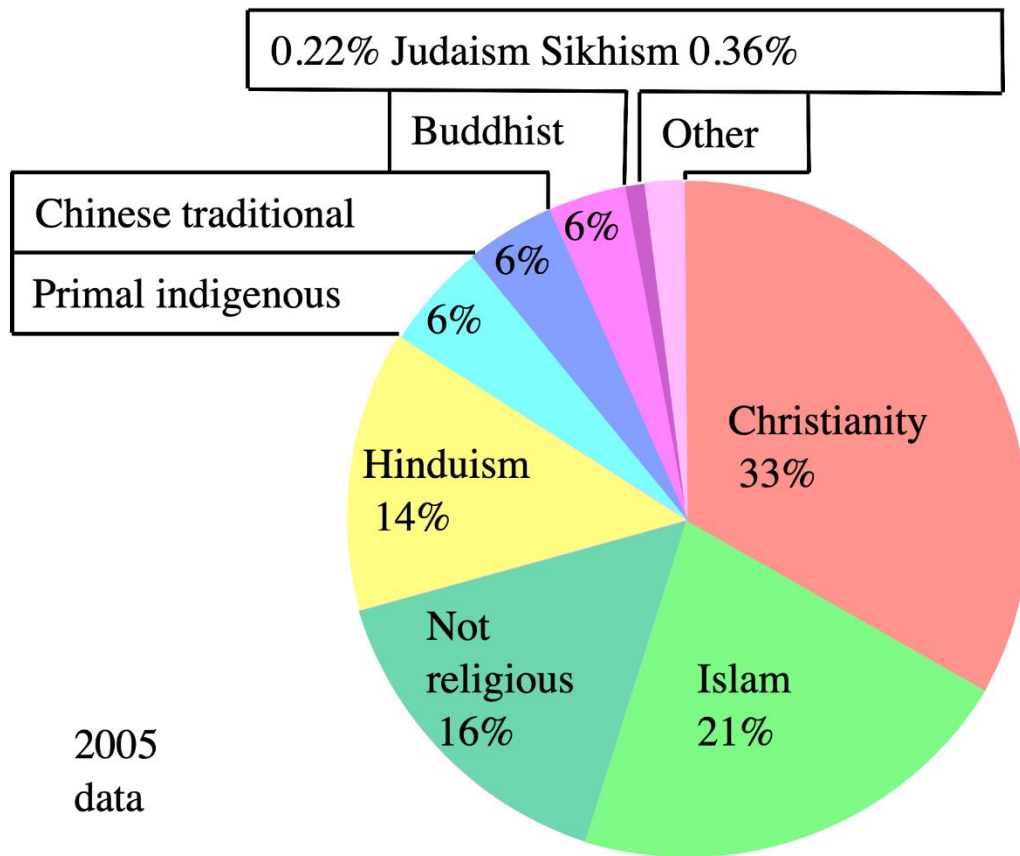


Major Religions

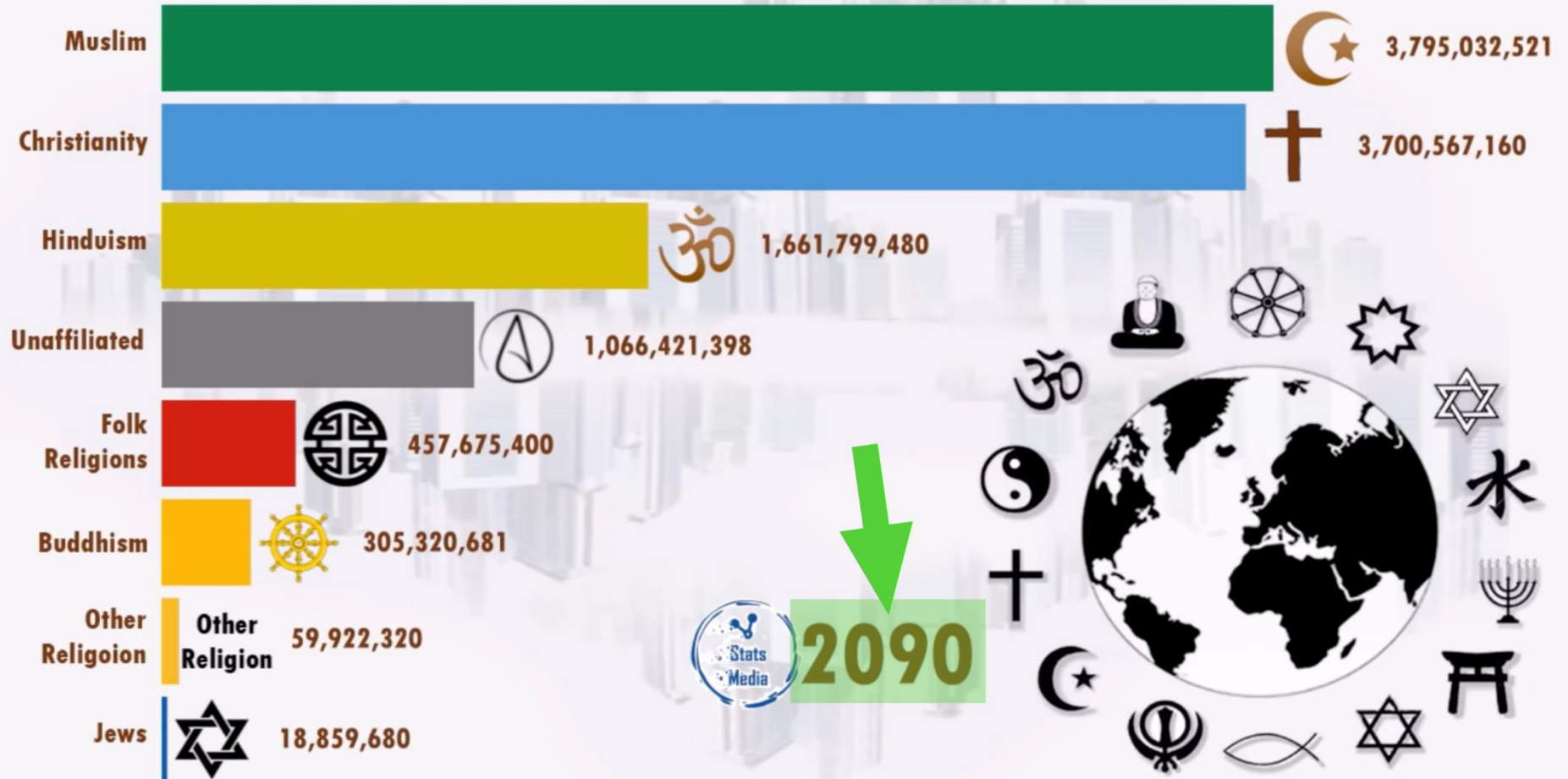
- Christianity
- Islam
- Hinduism
- Buddhism
- Judaism
- Zoroastrianism
- Taoism
- Shinto
- Jainism
- Confucianism
- Sikhism
- Baha'i

Religions
with
most
followers
in 2005

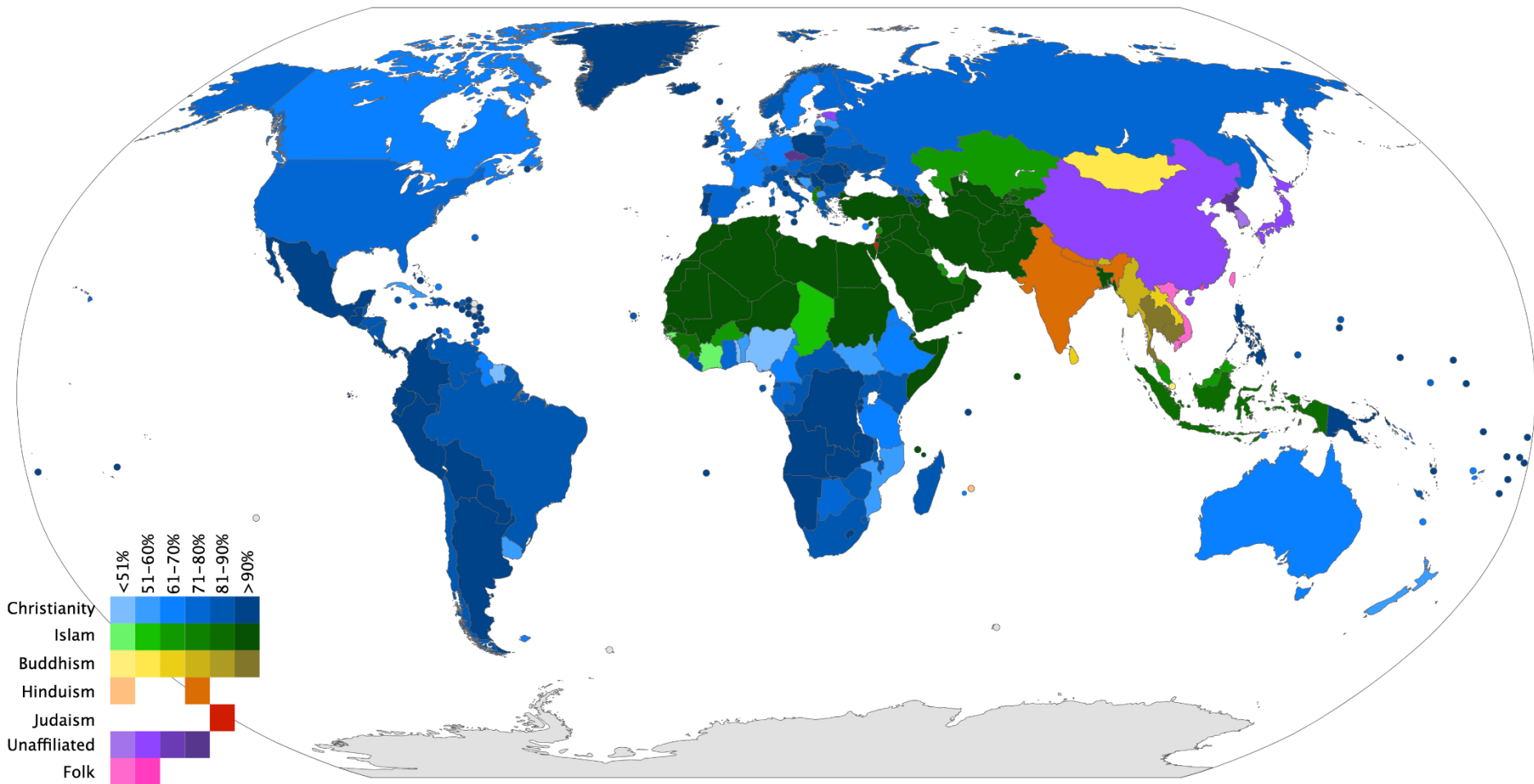
2005
data



Most followers by 2090



Prevailing Religion By Country



What is
Religion?

How some
academics define it

Religion...

... is the center of one's life

... gives one's life meaning
(ultimate commitment)

...





Transcendence

... religion involves transcendence (thirst for something more)

Transcendence is an aspect of religion that directs us beyond the mundane.

Woman at well (John 4).





External Features + Practices

- Religion also involves external features/practices. These features—called *cultus* of the religion—are unnecessary for the non-religious but have meaning for the religious.
- The *cultus* of the religion is “established or accepted religious rites or customs of worship.”
- Full definition of ‘religion’:
“A religion is a system of beliefs and practices that *by means of its cultus* directs a person toward transcendence and, thus, provides meaning and coherence to a person’s life.” (Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, 28).



Meet the "Spiritual but Not Religious"

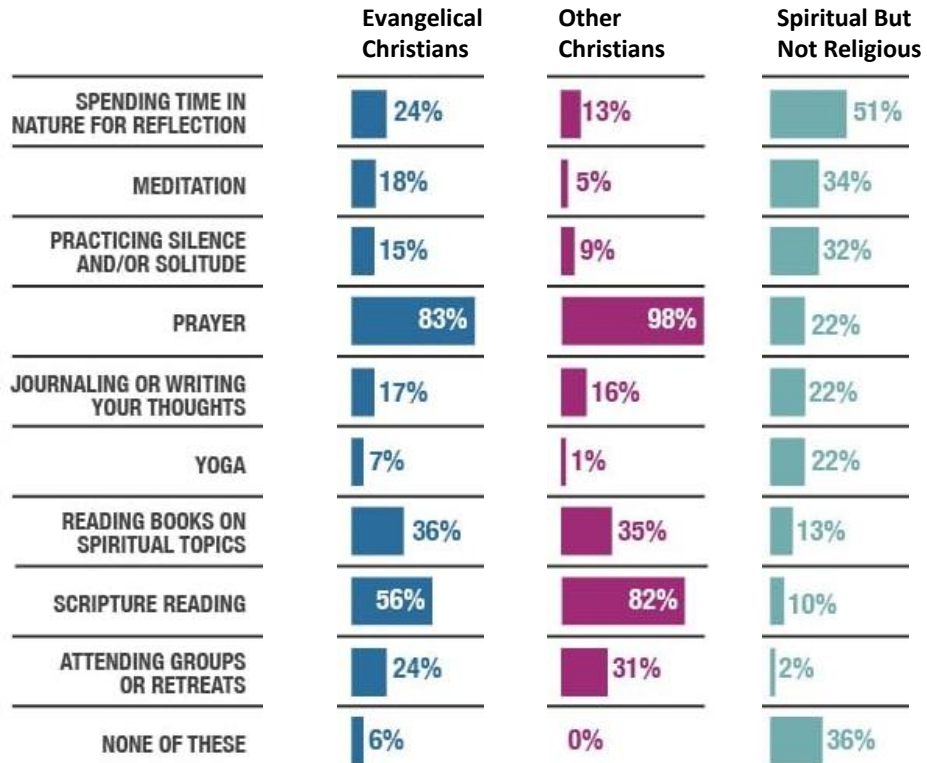
Research Releases in Faith & Christianity • April 6, 2017

"I m spiritual but not religious." You've heard it—maybe even said it—before. But what does it actually mean? Can you be one without the other? Once synonymous, "religious" and "spiritual" have now come to describe seemingly distinct (but sometimes overlapping) domains of human activity. The twin cultural trends of deinstitutionalization and individualism have, for many, moved spiritual practice away from the public rituals of institutional Christianity to the private experience of God *within*. In this conclusion of a two-part series on faith outside the church ([read the first part, on those who "love Jesus but not the church"](#)). Barna takes a close look at the segment of

Ever met someone
who is 'spiritual'?

Spiritual but Not Religious:

Those who self-identify as spiritual but **do not claim any faith** (atheist, agnostic or unaffiliated).

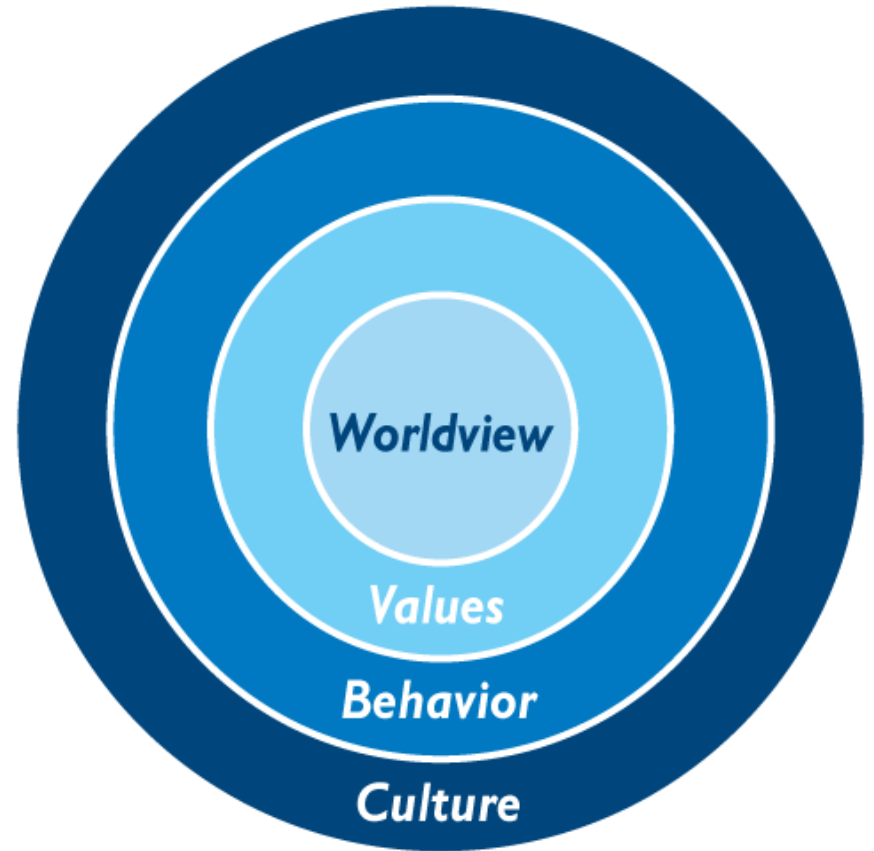


What are Worldviews?

We're exploring
religions *and*
worldviews

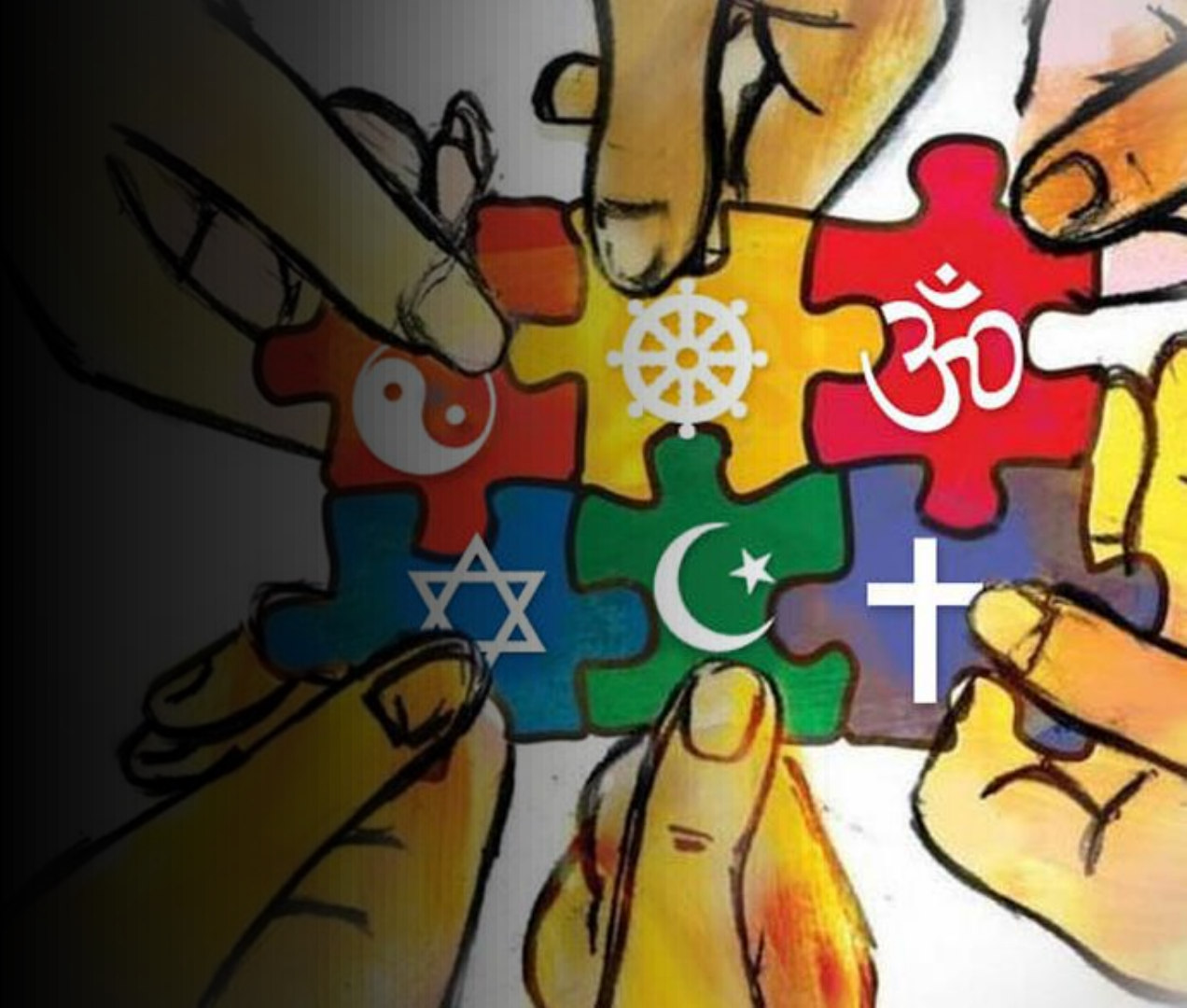
Worldview

- “A collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group.”
- “The overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world.”
- Each person’s worldview is typically affected by their culture.



21st Century culture includes many worldviews

- **Atheism**
There is no God.
- **Theism**
There is a God.
- **Deism**
There's a God but no miracles.
- **Polytheism**
There are many gods.
- **Pantheism**
All is God.





We have many philosophies

- **Naturalism** Everything came from *natural causes*; no supernatural
- **Relativism** Knowledge and morality are **relative**
- **Nihilism** There's **no objective meaning**, purpose, or value to life
- **Existentialism** Focuses on individual **freedom and choice**
- **Humanism** Focuses on **human values** over divine or supernatural

2024 American Culture





Challenges in evangelism today

Postmodern culture

- We are living in the **'Postmodern era.'**
- People hold a **mix** of many non-Christian beliefs.
- More people today believe that **truth is relative** (relativism), there are **many truths** (pluralism) and **morality is a personal preference** (subjectivism).



If you say,

**“Believe in
God, Jesus,
the Bible...”**

- I **don't believe** in God!
- That's **true for you** but not for me!
- I **believe in science** instead of religion!
- There are **no moral absolutes!**
- I believe **all paths** lead to God!



Testing Worldviews

How can we know which worldview is true?

1. Logical consistency

- A true worldview will not contradict itself.
- Is the world view without contradictions in its essential points?

2. Explanatory power

- Does the world view adequately explain the data of reality?
- A true worldview will fit the facts.

3. Livability

- Can a person live consistently within the worldview?

4. Existential power

- Does the worldview provide a sense of meaning in life?
- Does it make sense of our moral and rational experience?
- Does it meet our emotional and societal needs?

5. Societal Impact

- Does it enhance freedom, order, and human rights?

Goal of **comparative religious apologetics** is to examine religions and shows that only Christianity meets these criteria.

Review



Introduction

- Why should Christians study other religions?
- What are the major religions?
- What is religion?
- What are worldviews?



8 Week Class Schedule

- DONE** Introduction
- Mar 10 Hinduism & Yogananda
- Mar 17 New Age Movement
- Mar 24 Judaism
- Mar 31 Easter (no class)*
- Apr 7 Islam, Part 1
- Apr 14 Islam, Part 2
- Apr 21 Jehovah's Witnesses
- Apr 28 Latter-day Saints & Mormonism



Questions

1. Do you think Christianity is a religion? Why or why not?
2. What is your experience with other religions or worldviews?
3. How would you describe to somebody how Jesus is different than any other religious figure?
4. What are you hoping to get from this class?



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