



Right Questions, Wrong Answers:
A Study of World Religions
by Earle D. Treptow

- Lesson One—Where Do We Find God?
- Lesson Two—Who Is God?
- Lesson Three—What Is God Like?
- Lesson Four—Who Is Jesus?
- Lesson Five—What Must I Do to Be Saved?
- Lesson Six—Who Am I?
- Lesson Seven—How Am I to Worship God?
- Lesson Eight—What Will Happen to Us When We Die?

All rights reserved.

Purchase by a congregation: Purchase of these student copy masters by a congregation gives Bible study leaders of that congregation permission to adapt and copy this material for use in one or more groups within that congregation. (Dual parishes may purchase one copy for use in both congregations.)

Purchase by a pastor or other Bible study leader: Purchase of these student copy masters by an individual gives the buyer.

Scripture is from THE HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION.
© 1999 Northwestern Publishing House. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Adult Bible Study - World Religions

Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Class 9am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org



Right Questions, Wrong Answers: A Study of World Religions

• Lesson Three •

What Is God Like?

1. God is holy; he demands perfection
2. God is love; he has shown his love to all

Worship

A meditation on Psalm 130, a psalm that emphasizes the holinesses and love of God

Leader: Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;

Group: O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

Leader: If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins,

Group: O Lord, who could stand?

All: Lord, to you I make confession: I have sinned and gone astray; I have multiplied transgression, Chosen for myself my way. Led by you to see my errors, Lord, I tremble at your terrors. (CW 302:1)

Leader: But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.

Group: I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope.

Leader: My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning,

Group: More than watchmen wait for the morning.

All: Your love and grace alone avail To blot out my transgression. The best and holiest deeds must fail To break sin's dread oppression. Before you none can boasting stand, But all must fear your strict demand And live alone by mercy. Therefore my hope is in the Lord And not in my own merit; It rests upon his faithful Word To them of contrite spirit. That he is merciful and just—This is my comfort and my trust. His help I wait with patience. (CW 305:2,3)

Leader: O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.

Group: He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

Adult Bible Study - World Religions

Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Class 9am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org



All: Lord, on you I cast my burden—Sink it in the depths below! Let me know your gracious pardon; Wash me, make me white as snow. Let your Spirit leave me never; Make me only yours forever. (CW 302:4)

Prayer: Lord God, Father in heaven, we praise you for your mercy in leading us to know the truth about you. Help us, through the portions of your Word that we study today, gain a firmer grasp on your grace. Fill our hearts with a sense of awe so that we, your dear children, marvel at your holiness, humbly rejoice in your love, and gladly offer ourselves to your service. Amen.

Introduction

Some blind men examined portions of an elephant and were asked to describe what an elephant looked like. The man who had examined the elephant's leg said that the elephant must look like a tree. The one who had felt the elephant's torso said that the elephant must look like a wall. Another had felt its trunk and thought it must look like a snake. They all were wrong, of course. Because they knew only one part of the elephant, they had distorted images of it. People can have a distorted picture of God if they know and emphasize only certain characteristics of God to the neglect of others.

What would happen if we thought only of God as holy and hating sin?

What would happen if we thought only of God's love and mercy?

All God's attributes are important for us. The two that are most critical to our faith are his holiness and his love. Neglect God's holiness and become blind to God's standard of right and wrong. Neglect his love and become hopeless. If we understand how they work together, though, we will understand Scripture. We will know exactly what God is like. In Scripture, God tells us what he is like and leads us to an accurate picture of himself.

Adult Bible Study - World Religions

Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Class 9am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org



Studying God's Word

God is holy; he demands perfection

Read Romans 2:1-16

1. Human beings are very good at justifying their sins. How do some reason their sin away? (verses 3 and 4)
2. There is one sin that ultimately will bring God's judgment. What is it? (verse 5)
3. How does God demonstrate his holiness? (verses 5-10)
4. Explain the words of the apostle: "God does not show favoritism." (verse 11)
5. What proof does Paul offer that no one can claim to be ignorant of God's holiness? (verses 14 and 15)
6. Many claim that as long as they do the right things and avoid hurting others, they will not offend God. How does the last verse refute that claim?

How do the other religions deal with their god's justice?

Islam: Allah is perfectly just and holy and will ultimately judge all at the end of the world. Yet Allah's justice is not the same as the absolute justice of the one true God because Muslims contend that it is possible to find acceptance with Allah by doing more good than evil.

Judaism: With an emphasis on the works that human beings are to perform in this world and with the idea that God will come to judge the world, Judaism would seem to come down on the side of a holy God who expects perfect obedience. However, since forgiveness can be found through works, the God of Judaism is not absolutely just.

Hinduism: Brahman, the Absolute Being, is without attributes. He is not holy and just, the way the God of the Bible is. Some of the lesser deities may be considered holy and just, but perfect obedience is not demanded. A person's misdeeds in life simply dictate the place of his or her next incarnation.

Buddhism: Because strict Buddhism has no god, it is not right to speak of a just god. However, with its emphasis on karma and reincarnation, Buddhism does have an idea of justice. If people do wrong, they accrue bad karma, which negatively impacts the situation in which they will find themselves in their next incarnations.

Adult Bible Study - World Religions

Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Class 9am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org

His Word in My Life – Option 1

Hinduism teaches that Brahman, the Supreme, is without attributes. He is not described as being absolutely holy. Though there are many individual deities to whom Hindus turn, they are all lesser deities. None of them demand perfect obedience from all. For a Hindu, the damage done via misdeeds (there is no real concept of sin as we know it) is not all that severe. Misdeeds simply hinder the Hindu's progress in life, and he may be forced to come back in another life to try again.

1. Why would this concept of God be appealing?
2. Christians are not immune to such theology. How does this thinking show up in our lives?

His Word in My Life – Option 2

Islam teaches that Allah is holy and that he desires people to submit to him. In fact, the name Islam means "submission," and a Muslim is one who submits to Allah. To submit to Allah you must submit to the Five Pillars. The Five Pillars are as follows:

- 1) Confessing that "there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet"
 - 2) Ritual prayer, five times each day facing Mecca
 - 3) Almsgiving—giving 1/40 of possessions to those who need it most
 - 4) Fasting—abstaining from food, drink, and sexual relations from sunrise until sunset in the month of Ramadan
 - 5) Pilgrimage to Mecca and to Muhammad's tomb in Medina at least once in life
1. How does this concept of God differ from Scripture's picture of God?
 2. How might such thinking enter into our hearts and lives?

A god who isn't all that concerned with obedience certainly appeals to sinful human beings. But such a god doesn't exist. The true God is holy and demands perfection in action and in thought. He continually searches hearts and judges attitudes. He demonstrates his holiness by punishing unbelief with the fires of hell. To see God as anything but holy is to invite his wrath and punishment.

But the one true God is not only absolutely holy; he is also perfectly loving.



God is love; he has shown his love to all

Read Romans 3:21-31

1. When it comes to love, talk is cheap. How did God show his love for all? (verses 21-26)
2. In spiritual matters God acts, and human beings simply receive. Pick out the words in verses 21-24 that prove this.
3. What's wrong with this, albeit well-intentioned, statement: God turned a blind eye to our sinful thoughts and actions? (verses 25 and 26)
4. How does God's loving action change us? (verses 27 and 28)
5. To "uphold the law" means to obey it. In what way does our Christian faith "uphold the law?" (verse 31)

How loving is the god of these other religions?

Islam: Allah, throughout the Koran, is called the Merciful and Compassionate. Allah's mercy and compassion show in ways that do not directly pertain to human beings entering paradise. Allah's mercy is evident in creation and in preservation and in all the good things of life, but there is no mention of Allah providing a sure and certain substitute who has borne the sins of all. Muslims cannot be sure that Allah will be merciful to them when judgment day arrives, for they cannot be sure that their actions will satisfy Allah's justice.

Judaism: God is merciful and compassionate. The Tanach is filled with references to the Lord's mercy and love. Yet the Lord's love is reserved for those who obey him. For some that means following to the letter all the laws of the Torah. For others that means loving God above all and loving their neighbor. The Lord's love is conditioned upon the proper action and attitude of the people.

Hinduism: The lesser gods are generally portrayed as loving in the sense that they provide something for human beings. But they do not provide deliverance from the wheel of karma into the state of bliss. They do not act at cost to themselves for the good of all people.

Buddhism: There is no loving god in Buddhism who acts on behalf of people. The only way for someone to find release from suffering is to follow the proper lifestyle.

Adult Bible Study - World Religions

Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Class 9am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053



His Word in My Life – Option 1

Allah, in the Koran, is frequently described as being merciful and compassionate. But Allah cannot reach out to the world and redeem it by grace. That would be an insult to his righteousness. The burden, then, falls upon human beings. They must rescue themselves by piling up more good deeds than bad. Your Muslim friends can only hope that they will have done enough to please Allah so that they can avoid hell.

1. In what way is the Christian faith far superior to Islam?
2. Muslims can only hope that they will have done enough to please Allah so that they can avoid hell. How does knowing that affect the way in which you might witness to a Muslim friend?

His Word in My Life – Option 2

Judaism, like Islam, proclaims a merciful and compassionate God. The Old Testament is, after all, filled with pictures of God's love. Yet Jewish people do not see God acting on their behalf to rescue them from the punishment their sins deserve. Your Jewish coworker thinks that God will show his love to those who demonstrate themselves worthy of it by obeying the will of God. For some Jews that means following the Old Testament law to the letter. For others it means loving God and loving their neighbor.

1. Why does Judaism, given its less-than-comforting message, have such a large group of adherents?
2. How might strains of Judaism enter our thinking?

His Word in My Life – Option 3

Respond, in a respectful way, to a Hindu who says, "Do your best in life, and everything will be all right."

Though many religions speak of a merciful and compassionate God, only the God of the Bible demonstrates himself to be truly loving and compassionate. God laid the world's sins on Jesus and credited Jesus' righteousness to the world. God is absolutely holy and perfectly loving at the same time. This is the reason we can face our dying days with confidence.

Adult Bible Study - World Religions

Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Class 9am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org



Summary

It seems to be a contradiction. It seems that God can be either holy or loving, not both. Only in Jesus can we understand those two attributes of God. At the cross it all comes together. There God's holiness exacts a severe punishment. There the sin-covered Son of God endures hell itself. But there God shows his love for sinful human beings. There he graciously forgives the sins of the world. There God, through his Son's innocent death, grants life to all. Other religions have no such event in which to base their hope of God's love and eternal life with him.

Life with God

During the week, read the following passages, which talk about God's holiness and love.

Day 1: Psalm 5—Notice the absolute holiness and perfect love of God standing side by side.

Day 2: Exodus 34:1-7—The Lord reveals himself as compassionate and holy at the same time.

Day 3: Isaiah 53:3-6—The Lord promised to put our sin on Jesus so that we might be healed.

Day 4: Matthew 27:45-49—At the cross the holiness and love of God come together.

Day 5: Romans 10:25-36—His holiness and love are beyond our understanding and the powers of reason.

Day 6: Psalm 115:1-8—All glory be to God for preserving us from the folly of idol worship!

Scripture is from THE HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION.

© 1999 Northwestern Publishing House. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Adult Bible Study - World Religions

Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Class 9am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org



Lesson 3 Readings – What is God Like?

Romans 2:1-16

New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

God's Righteous Judgment

¹ You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. ² Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. ³ So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? ⁴ Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

⁵ But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ God "will give to each person according to what he has done." ⁷ To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. ⁸ But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. ⁹ There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; ¹⁰ but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹¹ For God does not show favoritism.

¹² All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. ¹⁴ (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, ¹⁵ since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) ¹⁶ This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

Romans 3:21-31 – God is love; he has shown his love to all

New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

Righteousness Through Faith

²¹ But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

²⁷ Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. ²⁹ Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, ³⁰ since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. ³¹ Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

Adult Bible Study - World Religions

Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Class 9am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053