



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?
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**Adult Bible Study World Religions**

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

7305 208<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - [www.lhlc.org](http://www.lhlc.org), [pastortodd@lhlc.org](mailto:pastortodd@lhlc.org)

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## Right Questions, Wrong Answers: A Study of World Religions

• Lesson One •

### Where Do We Find God?

1. God reveals himself to us in his Word
2. Only in the Bible do we find the truth about God

## Worship

A meditation based on Psalm 119\*

**Leader:** Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

*Group:* Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts. I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word.

**Leader:** I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me.

*Group:* How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

**Leader:** Your statutes are wonderful; therefore I obey them.

*Group:* The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

**Leader:** I open my mouth and pant, longing for your commands.

*Group:* Turn to me and have mercy on me, as you always do to those who love your name. Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me.

**Leader:** Redeem me from the oppression of men, that I may obey your precepts.

*Group:* Make your face shine upon your servant and teach me your decrees.

*All:* Teach me, O LORD, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end. Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart. Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.

\*verses 33-37,97-104,129-135

**Prayer:** Lord God in heaven, you surpass all human understanding. You have graciously chosen to reveal yourself to us in your Holy Word and sacraments. Speak to us through your Word, that we may grow in grace and knowledge and in the certainty of your love for us. Help us to make your Word our constant companion, for it alone enables us to see you. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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## Introduction

There are many “religious” people in our world. Some speak often about their spirituality and the joy they’ve experienced in “finding” God. Some meditate on the trees and mountains and claim to discover there the divine all around them. Some perceive a divine spark within and focus their energies on fanning it into flame.

But all that is called spirituality and religion is not necessarily God-pleasing or true. God has not told us to expect to meet him in the mountains and trees. He has not commanded us to find him within ourselves. Instead, he bids us to look outside of ourselves.

The world’s religions all ask the right question: Where do we find God? Only Christianity, however, gives the right answer.

## Studying God’s Word

### God reveals himself to us in his Word

[Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.](#)

1. What did the apostle Paul realize about the gospel message that he proclaimed? (verse 6)
2. In what sense is God’s wisdom “hidden”? (verse 7)
3. What proof does the apostle offer that God’s wisdom is hidden? (verses 8 and 9)
4. What’s wrong with this statement: Since God’s plan for the redemption of human beings is hidden, then no one can be saved? (verses 10-12)

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## How do other religions discover the truth?

**Islam:** Allah has revealed the truth through his prophets, the greatest of whom was Muhammad. A Muslim man would therefore seek the truth outside of himself and outside of his own meditation. He would find it in the word of Allah.

**Judaism:** The one true God has revealed the truth. Most Jews seek the truth outside of themselves, in Scriptures that came from God. There are some pockets of Judaism that are mystical and seek the truth by visions.

**Hinduism:** Hinduism teaches that each person is part of God. Through careful introspection and meditation on that, the individual will come to the truth. There is also an emphasis on meditating on nature to discover meaning in life.

**Buddhism:** Meditation will lead people to the truth because it frees them from the “things” of life. In some strains of Buddhism, repetition of a mantra is emphasized as a means of finding such freedom because it allows the individual to focus on spiritual things.

### His Word in My Life

Hindus say, “*He who knows himself will know God.*” Through careful meditation, the Hindu hopes to know himself as part of God. Then he will know God.

1. Evaluate the idea that through meditation we can get in touch with God within us.
2. Even Christians may be affected by this perverse idea. How might such an idea manifest itself in our thinking?
3. Formulate a positive Christian response to a person who thinks like this.

***In creation God certainly gives testimony to his existence. But from creation we can never learn to know about God’s personal love for us. In his Word, God introduces himself to us, so that we might know him and live. We meet him in his sacraments and learn anew of his love for us. Any other method of coming to know God ultimately deceives and leads away from God.***

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## Only in the Bible do we find the truth about God

Read [Jeremiah 23:16-32](#).

1. What message were false prophets proclaiming to the people of Judah? (verses 16 and 17)
2. What fault does the Lord find with these messengers and their message? (verses 18 and 21)
3. When is a message and messenger trustworthy? (verse 22)
4. How do false prophets seek to gain a hearing for their message? (verses 25-27)
5. Many in Judah thought the words of the false prophets were on an equal plane with God's Word. What does God himself say about that? (verses 28-31)
6. Many in Judah felt that they grew in their spirituality by listening to the dreamers. What was God's evaluation? (verse 32)

## What sacred writing do other religions use?

**Islam:** Muslims recognize the Law of Moses, the psalms of David, the Injil (gospel of Jesus Christ), and the Koran. The Koran supersedes the others, because it is the eternal word given by the angel Gabriel to Muhammad. Muslims believe that all other scriptures have been corrupted. Some Muslims also recognize the hadith and claim that it is on an equal level with the Koran because it contains the authentic sayings of Muhammad.

**Judaism:** The 39 books that Christians call the Old Testament are the sacred scripture of Judaism. Sometimes these books are called the *Torah* (divine teaching), emphasizing that they are God's guide for the life of his people. The designation *Torah*, though, is usually reserved for the books of Moses. Tanach is also a name for the 39 books. The Talmud is comprised of the Mishnah (the interpretations of the Torah made by the scribes and rabbis) and the Gemara (later commentary on the Mishnah). The Talmud is second in authority only to the Torah.

**Hinduism:** The Vedas are the earliest Hindu scriptures. These books of wisdom include hymns, prayers, and rituals. The Upanishads are based on the Vedas and center on the relation of the individual to the Absolute Being. Two great epic poems are also considered useful for stimulating thought: The Ramayana and The Mahabharata. The Mahabharata includes "Bhagavad Gita," which has been called the Bible of Hinduism because of its popularity. These sacred writings are not authoritative for the Hindu, nor are they the only way to know God. They are merely the means to the end of finding release from the cycle of reincarnation.

**Buddhism:** The Tripitaka (triple basket) is the primary scripture for the more traditional Buddhists (Theravada Buddhism). It is 11 times larger than the Bible. The more liberal Buddhists (Mahayana Buddhism) have many more authoritative texts. Some of the writings are geared toward common piety; others are more philosophical in nature. These books do not have the authority in Buddhism that the Bible does in Christianity.

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### His Word in My Life—Option 1

Muslims acknowledge all religious scriptures to be the Word of God but contend that most sacred writings have been corrupted. Though Muslims also turn to the hadith (the sayings of Muhammad), they ultimately rely on the Koran. Only the Koran can be trusted. Only the Koran, a compilation of the visions that Muhammad received and recited to his followers, provides the truth about God.

1. Agree or disagree: We can benefit from reading the Koran or, for that matter, from reading the sacred writings of other religions.
2. How would you try to convince a Muslim friend that the Bible alone reveals the true God? Where would you start?

### His Word in My Life—Option 2

Most Jewish people accept the Old Testament as the Word of God. They reject the New Testament, however, as the foolish dreams of false prophets. They might even point to the passage in Jeremiah in which the Lord’s Word is compared with the false prophets’ dreams. How would you respond?

*Many in our religiously pluralistic society revere the sacred writings of all religions equally. But we cannot, because the dreams of false prophets cannot be placed on a par with God’s Word. Only in the Bible does God reveal himself to us. Only there does he tell us of his great love for fallen human beings. There he points us to the sacrifice of his Son on Calvary’s cross and gives us forgiveness and life. There he assures us that we are his dear children. There he strengthens faith and excites our hearts for service.*

### Summary

If you want to grow spiritually, you need to do something more exotic and exciting than turn to the Bible—or so says the world. The idea that God comes to human beings in the Lord’s Supper and Baptism is nonsensical, says human reason. Though foolish in the eyes of the world, the message of the cross is God’s wisdom and his unending means for blessing. Look at the final result. The gospel in Word and sacrament accomplishes far more glorious things than any ritual or practice proposed by the world or the world’s non-Christian religions.

### Life with God

Day 1: Read Psalm 119:1-32.	Day 4: Read Psalm 119:97-128.
Day 2: Read Psalm 119:33-64.	Day 5: Read Psalm 119:129-160.
Day 3: Read Psalm 119:65-96.	Day 6: Read Psalm 119:161-176.

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## Lesson 1 Readings - Where Do We Find God?

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### 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 – God reveals himself to us in his Word

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#### Wisdom from the Spirit

<sup>6</sup> We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. <sup>7</sup> No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. <sup>8</sup> None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. <sup>9</sup> However, as it is written:

"No eye has seen,  
no ear has heard,  
no mind has conceived  
what God has prepared for those who love him—

<sup>10</sup> but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. <sup>11</sup> For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. <sup>13</sup> This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. <sup>14</sup> The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>15</sup> The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:

<sup>16</sup> "For who has known the mind of the Lord  
that he may instruct him?

But we have the mind of Christ.

### Jeremiah 23:16-32 – Only in the Bible do we find the truth about God

New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

<sup>16</sup> This is what the LORD Almighty says:

"Do not listen to what the  
prophets are prophesying to you;  
they fill you with false hopes.  
They speak visions from their own minds,  
not from the mouth of the LORD.

<sup>17</sup> They keep saying to those who despise me,  
'The LORD says: You will have peace.'

And to all who follow the  
stubbornness of their hearts  
they say, 'No harm will come to you.'

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18 But which of them has stood in the  
council of the LORD  
to see or to hear his word?  
Who has listened and heard his word?

19 See, the storm of the LORD  
will burst out in wrath,  
a whirlwind swirling down  
on the heads of the wicked.

20 The anger of the LORD will not turn back  
until he fully accomplishes  
the purposes of his heart.  
In days to come  
you will understand it clearly.

21 I did not send these prophets,  
yet they have run with their message;  
I did not speak to them,  
yet they have prophesied.

22 But if they had stood in my council,  
they would have proclaimed my words to my people  
and would have turned them from their evil ways  
and from their evil deeds.

23 "Am I only a God nearby,"  
declares the LORD,  
"and not a God far away?"

24 Can anyone hide in secret places  
so that I cannot see him?"  
declares the LORD.  
"Do not I fill heaven and earth?"  
declares the LORD.

25 "I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, „I had a dream! I had a dream!“ 26 How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds? 27 They think the dreams they tell one another will make my people forget my name, just as their fathers forgot my name through Baal worship. 28 Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?" declares the LORD. 29 "Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"

30 "Therefore," declares the LORD, "I am against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from me. 31 Yes," declares the LORD, "I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, „The LORD declares.“ 32 Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," declares the LORD. "They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least," declares the LORD.

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