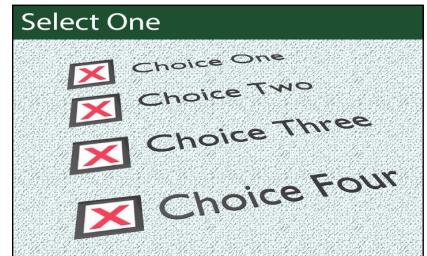


Engaging World Religions

Session 4: Engaging Eastern Religions

Where Christianity differs from ALL other religions:

Nature of God, Jesus (being God and man, His death and resurrection), Man, Sin, The Gospel (Salvation), Eternal Life, the Bible (our source of Authority)



Hinduism

- 3rd largest World Religion
- 900 million followers (1.5 million US)
- 1500-1100 BC

- Cultural religion
- Source of Authority: 4 Vedas plus countless commentaries and Bhagavad Gita (@200 BC, author unknown)
- God: Brahman: Ultimate source/Supreme essence (impersonal)
 - Vishnu and Shiva—2 primary manifestations
 - Millions of gods in the Hindu faith
- Man (atman) is a soul/essence or individual force
- Caste system: Brahmins (priests, scholars, teachers), Kshatriyas (rulers, warriors, admins), Vaishyas (merchants, traders, agriculturalists), Shudras (servant and laborers),
- Samsara: wheel of rebirths until release (moksha) into oneness with Brahman
- Dharma: duty. Whatever you do will affect your karma
- Karma: karmic debt is built up in this life and results in progression or regression in the next life.
- 3 ways to break the cycle:
 - Way of Works: dharma, total obedience to purify your soul
 - Way of Knowledge: total rejection and denial of oneself
 - Way of Devotion: to the worship of a particular god



Sikhism

- 24 million followers worldwide (700,000 in US)
- Founded in Punjab province (NW India), 1500s AD
- Origins in 1460s in attempt to establish religious faith that drew upon both Hinduism and Islam
- One God (from Islam), but does not name the god
- Softer form of reincarnation (human to human only)
- Cannot know god with a mediator (there have been 10 gurus. Last one declared guruship forevermore on the sacred text)
- Guru Granth Sahib: is the word incarnate, not in physical sense but directly into the human heart



Buddhism

- 4th largest World Religion
- 400 million followers (1.5 million US)
- Origins in India, mostly in China, Japan
- Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha—564-484 BC)
 - Rejected the caste system
 - 4 Noble Truths: of Suffering, of the Cause of Suffering, of the End of Suffering, of the Path to the end of Suffering
 - 8fold Noble Path to enlightenment
- No creator God, no enduring self.
- Our desire/craving/thirst brings about suffering



Taoism

- Traditional Chinese religion
- Yin/Yang: Not the same as dualism. 2 coexisting forces that are in harmony with one another (action/non-action, light/dark, hot/cold)
- Tao is not god or worshipped. It is the nature of the universe.
- The Taoist draws closer and closer to nature throughout their life, death is just the final step in achieving complete unity with the universe
- Belief in reincarnation is different from Buddhism



Jainism

- 50 million followers (50K in US)
- Origin @6th century BC in opposition to Hinduism
- Goal is to reach 'Nirvana' by breaking cycle of rebirths
- Perfection reached through asceticism (avoiding indulgences,/temptations), charity, and monasticism



Shintoism

- 4.2 million followers (purely Japanese)
- Japan's national religion. Superiority of Japan and its people
- Hard form of reincarnation
- Animism

Engaging:

- Often very open to questions but also may ask a lot of questions
- In some cases they know their sacred text no more than they know the Bible.
- Often become very interested in the Bible when shared

- Historicity of Jesus and other people/events in the Bible are new to them
- The personable nature of God is intriguing
- The uniqueness of Jesus is foreign to them
- The Bible's answers to sin (new to them) and forgiveness is of interest to them