

# Evangelism: Defending the Faith

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## Introduction

- We've been ministering for the past several weeks from the overarching theme of: **Evangelism**.
    - **Evangelize** – 1. Convert to Christianity 2. Be an advocate for a cause 3. To preach the gospel of Jesus Christ
      - We've spoken about:
        - The Power of Your Testimony
        - Sharing Your Testimony
        - Don't be Ashamed of Your Testimony
        - Benefits of Your Testimony
          - Assurance, Authority, Boldness, Strength, Victory & Power
  - As we progress to another level of understanding the importance of evangelism – we must know how to **Defend the Faith**.
    - **1 Peter 3:15-16** – *But **sanctify** the Lord God in your hearts, and always [be] ready to [give] a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear (**having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed**).*
      - **Sanctify (hä-gē-ä'-zō)** - to render or acknowledge, or to be venerable or hallow  
2) to separate from profane things and dedicate to God a) consecrate things to God b) dedicate people to God 3) to purify
    - **2 Timothy 2:15** - Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
      - **Study (spü-dä'-zō)** - to hasten, make haste 2) to exert one's self, endeavour, give diligence
- We want to dispel **Ignorance, Fear & Doubt** ~ so in order to do that we must be diligent in our study.
- Tonight we're going to discover what has been deemed as the **Top Five Religions** of the World.
- There are over seven billion people living in our planet and most of them are part of some religion.
- In the world today, there are five main religions which have the **largest number of followers**.
- These religions are **Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism**.

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The CIA's World Factbook gives the world population as 7,021,836,029 (July 2012 est.) and the distribution of religions as:

- Christian 33.35% (of which Roman Catholic 16.83%, Protestant 6.08%, Orthodox 4.03%, Anglican 1.26%)
- Muslim 22.43%
- Hindu 13.78%
- Buddhist 7.13%
- Sikh 0.36%
- Jewish 0.21%
- Baha'i 0.11%
- Other religions 11.17%
- Non-religious 9.42%
- Atheists 2.04% (2009 est.)



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## What Do We Believe?

### The Trinity

There is one God, eternally in three persons: (**Matt. 3:16-17**)

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (John 1:1-5)

Jesus Christ is both God and man. (John 1:14)

The Holy Spirit is a divine person. (John 14:26)

### Man and His Fall

Man is a created being, made in the likeness and image of God, but through Adam's transgression and fall, sin came into the world. (Gen. 1:27, Rom. 3:23)  
For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

### Redemption

Salvation is a gift of God to man, separate from works and the law is made operative by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. (John 3:16)

For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. 2:8)

### Salvation

Even in our sin God loved us and sent Jesus to die for us. If we confess Christ openly and believe that Christ died on the cross for our sins and was raised from the dead, we can be saved. (Rom. 10:9-10)

### Water Baptism & Communion

We believe in the two ordinances set forth by Jesus Christ:

Baptism by immersion in water and the celebrating of the Lord's Supper.

(Acts 2:38-41; I Cor. 11:23-26)

### Baptism in the Holy Spirit

It is God's will that every believer be filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:8; 2:4)

### Tithe and Offerings

The tithe and offering belong unto God (Malachi 3:10).

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## What is Religion?

- Is a set of beliefs and practices, often associated with a supernatural power that shapes or directs human life and death, or a commitment to ideas that provide coherence for one's existence.
- Adherence to a religion implies a belief in a divine force, as well as offering moral guidance for believers. Religions also bind people into communities with common goals and values.

## Origins of Religion

- People have always asked difficult questions about the nature of life and the universe. How did the world begin? Can we explain good and evil? What happens to us when we die?
- Religion may have begun as one of the ways of answering some of these questions.
- Some religions, such as **Hinduism, are founded on ancient myths that tell of creator gods and forces of destruction.** Early humankind worshiped these gods in an attempt to win their favor, because they believed gods controlled the forces of nature.
- Other religions such as **Christianity, Islam and Buddhism** developed because of the **work of important spiritual leaders or prophets** – those leaders: Jesus, Muhammad and Buddha.
- Most religions are founded on a belief in one or several gods and goddesses. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are known as **monotheistic religions**, because they believe **in and worship a single, all-powerful, creator God.**
- All of these religions developed in the Middle East. The Hebrew Bible became a major part of the Christian Bible.
- Whereas in Hinduism it can be described as a **polytheistic faith**, there are hundreds of gods and goddesses that have aspects of one absolute force – **Brahman.**
  - Buddhism does not include a belief in a supreme creator or god. **Buddhists follow the Buddha whom they regard as a teacher rather than a deity.**

## Sacred Places and Ritual

- Worship, most often an expression of devotion to a deity or religious teacher lies at the heart of most religions. Offerings and sacrifices, singing and chanting, preaching a sermon or reading from a sacred text **are all forms of worship.**

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- In most religions their form of worship equates to a meaning. For example, Communion – act of celebrating our Lord's death, burial and resurrection until He returns!
  - **I Cor. 10:24-26** - Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner [He] also [took] the cup after supper, saying, **"This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink [it], in remembrance of Me."** For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.
    - **Two Ordinances** – Baptism & Communion
- Sacred places can be sites of worship and pilgrimage.
  - Israel – Holy Land – sacred places within the History of the patriarchs in the Bible – The place where Jacob wrestling with the Angel.
  - The Via Delarosa - The Way of Suffering – where Jesus walked the road to his death
  - The tomb where Jesus was laid, Lazarus' tomb
- For Muslims, **Mecca (Saudi Arabia) s a sacred city that is linked to the founding and development of Islam.** Other places, such as the Roman Catholic shrine at Lourdes in France are the site of miraculous healings.

## Hinduism

- One of the most important things to learn about Hindus and Hinduism is that being religious has very little to do with what they think or believe – put another way – “ **orthodoxy** (the practice of observing established social customs and definitions of appropriateness)” or correct belief and doctrines. For Hindus **being religious has much more to do with behavior and action or what is sometime called “orthopraxy” – correct action.**

Hindus have basic duties and responsibilities:

- In terms of personal cleanliness (ritual bathing), eating habits (what kind of foods can be eaten, who prepares it, and with whom it can be eaten, family relations (obligations to siblings and parents, marital practices (when and whom one can marry), etc.
  - **In other words, Hindus are engaging in a kind of “religious”** talk when they tell you about their family, their occupations, the regions in India from which they come, the groups to which they belong by birth or choice, the native languages they speak, etc.
- In order to become a Hindu, you must be born in India into a Hindu family. Not all Asian Indians are Hindu. Sikhs refused to be absorbed into Hinduism as well as Indian Muslims.

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- Hinduism has no human founder and no datable beginning in time or history. The development of Hinduism occurs over many centuries. Through these centuries the religion evolved and developed within six fundamental time periods.
  - **Indus Valley Period – 3000-1500 B.C.E.**
  - **Brahmanical Period – 1500-600 B.C.E.**
    - Semi-nomadic warrior tribes begin to migrate west finding their way to Europe and became ancestors of the Greeks, Romans, Celts and Teutons.
    - Different sects begin to form and branch off
    - The functions of the Braham (**a spiritual guide**) priests begin to form along with an elaborate ritual system of sacrifice on open-air altars involving offerings of milk, honey, clarified butter (ghee) and animals together with imbibing a sacred drink that brought about hallucinogenic effects
    - In order to perform the ritual sacrifice, the Brahmins had to master an extensive body of what can be called sacred “utterances” including hymns, chants, and ritual instructions – **Vedas from the root work meaning to know.**
    - These rituals became more complex and expensive; therefore the Brahmin priests became more specialized in one or another aspect of the ritual process.
  - **Buddhist and Shramana Period – 600-300 C.E.**
    - Within this period we begin to see some reaction against the priestly religion of the Brahmins – ritual sacrifice – ascetic or disciplined meditation (yoga) and focused or single-minded devotion (bhakti) to a personal god.
    - Shramana is from the root Shram meaning to :“*exert oneself*”. The search for inner truth, the turn toward meditation and self-searching. Yoga was the vehicle for these avenues of searching oneself.
    - Throughout their developmental stages many Shramana groups developed two in particular eventually became independent in ancient India: Jains and Buddhists.
  - **Classical Hindu Period – 300-1200 C.E.**

## **Their gods & goddesses**

- There are many gods and goddesses in classical Hinduism but most Hindus think of the various gods and goddesses as manifestations of one ultimate truth.
  - Brahma – the creator god
  - Vishnu, the preserving god
  - Shiva – the destroying god
- Brahma, Vishnu & Shiva are referred to as the “three basic forms”: of the Ultimate or Absolute.

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- The Absolute or Ultimate assumes female forms
- Shri or Kalshmi is the goddess of abundance, often linked with Vishnu
- Durga or Kali is the awesome power of the Great Goddess, able to devour demonic and evil forces in the world – She often linked with Shiva.
- Sometimes the Absolute or Ultimate assume an androgynouse form - a composite of male and female – known as the Lord whose half is woman” (Ardhanarishvara)

## Cycle of Beliefs

- They believe in Karma – endless cycles of unfolding time and the boundless variety of living forms are controlled not by the gods and goddesses – BUT by a process of principles know as Karma.
- The term Karma means actions and refers to the simple principle that one’s life is governed by one’s own continuing behavior or practice.
  - In other words, what one does governs what one will become, not only from the perspective of human life but from the perspective of the entire hierarchy of living forms.
  - Just as one passes through various stages of life, death is only one more stage within this process
  - After death – there will be rebirth to be followed by another death to be followed by another rebirth and so forth.
  - These cycles are endless – depending upon one’s Karmic heritage – one might come to be embodied in any number of life forms.
    - There is a beginningless cycle of continuing transmigrations or rebirth (called samsara)
    - Based upon your disciplined devotion to the chosen deity of your choice can aid in a release from this endless cycle known as Moksha – this is a release from the endless cycles of the recurring transmigration and rebirth.

## **Four Purposes of Life, Four Stages of Life and Four Castes**

- Classical Hinduism involves a complex variety of rules and regulations regarding social life. These areas are set forth in the group of *smriti texts called “law books”*. Certain general principles or categories were devised that provide an overview of Indian social life as a whole.
  - **Four Proper Purposes of Human Life** – refer to certain basic activities that all people can or ought to pursue: 1) **Dharma** (law, duty, custom) the pursuit of one’s duty including all of the general and specific obligations related to one’s place in the family & community. 2) **Artha** (wealth, work, business) – the pursuit of worldly advantage – making a living, pursuing an occupation. 3) **Kama** (desire, pleasure) – the pursuit of one’s legitimate erotic and aesthetic activities including sexuality, play, recreations, the arts and literature 4) **Moksha** (release, salvation) – the pursuit of spiritual practices such as ritual meditation (yoga) and devotion in order to obtain release.