

The Bible and the Challenge of Religious Diversity

Session 1

Outline

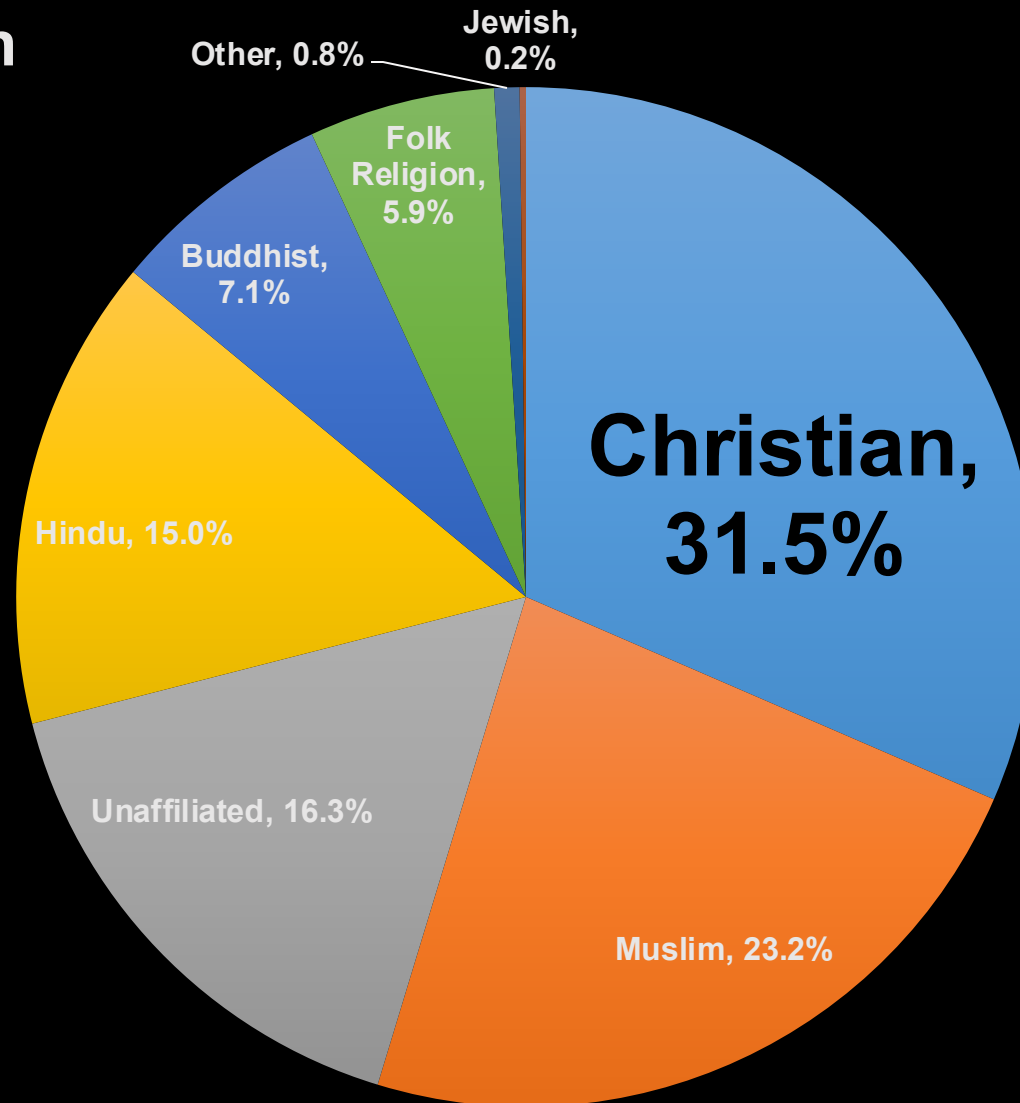
- I. Religious Diversity
- II. The Challenge
- III. A Bad Answer: Relativism
- IV. Outlining the Answers
- V. What Does the Bible Say?

Outline

I. Religious Diversity

Religious Diversity

**World Religious Population
(6.9 billion)**



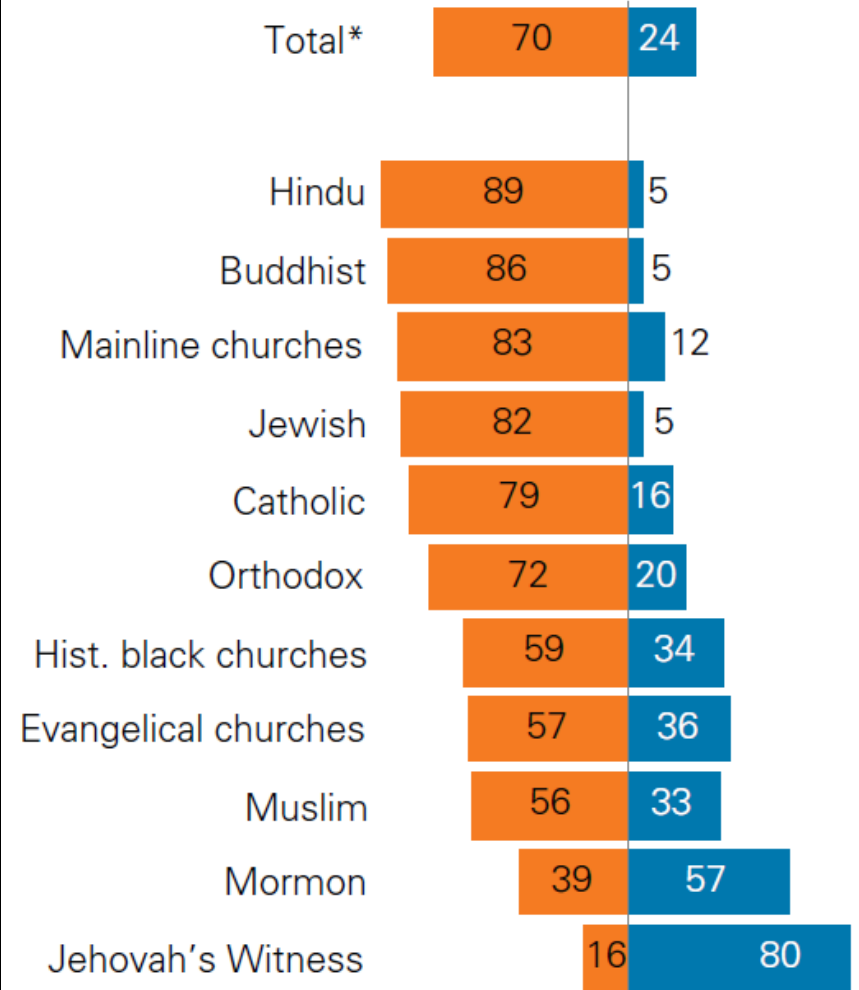
Religious Diversity

“[The survey results show that] Seven-in-ten Americans with a religious affiliation say that many religions can lead to eternal life. In fact, majorities of nearly every religious tradition take the view that many religions can lead to eternal life...”



Religious Exclusivity

- % who say many religions can lead to eternal life
- % who say my religion is the one true faith leading to eternal life



Outline

I. Religious Diversity

II. The Challenge

The Challenge

- Truth
- Confidence
- Evangelism
- Salvation

The Challenge

“... there is no reason to suppose that lack of universal distribution of a particular... [belief system] calls its outputs into question. How many people engage in the practice of forming beliefs by the use of mathematical proofs? That the answer is "not many" does nothing... to suggest that mathematical practice is... unreliable.”



Paul Griffiths

The Challenge

- Truth
- Confidence
- Evangelism
- Salvation

The Challenge

What is the fate of the unevangelized?

Outline

I. Religious Diversity

II. The Challenge

III. A Bad Answer: Relativism

A Bad Answer: Relativism

“Relativism is a knowledge-denying claim: i.e., that truth-claims are really just opinions or culturally shaped perspectives. Facts, moral precepts, or values can be “true for you” and at the same time “not true for me.” Relativists stoutly deny that objective universal truth exists.”



Paul Copan

A Bad Answer: Relativism

“People tend to be relativists for personal reasons: They want to be in charge of their own lives.

Philosopher John Searle notes the “much deeper reason” for relativism’s appeal: “it satisfies a basic urge to power. It just seems too revolting, somehow, that we should have to be at the mercy of the ‘real world.’””



Paul Copan

A Bad Answer: Relativism



“That’s true for you, but not for me.
It’s all relative”

“Is **relativism** true for everyone?”



A Bad Answer: Relativism



“There is no truth.”

“Is **that** true?”



A Bad Answer: Relativism



“There is no **absolute** truth.”

“Is **that** absolutely true?”



A Bad Answer: Relativism



“You can’t **know** the truth.”

“How do you **know** that’s true?”



A Bad Answer: Relativism



“**Opposites** can both be true.”

“Is the opposite of **that** true?”



A Bad Answer: Relativism



“You can’t say others’ views are wrong.”

“Is my view that others are wrong, wrong?”



A Bad Answer: Relativism



“You have no right to convert others to your view.”

“Are you trying to convert me to your view?”



A Bad Answer: Relativism



“Truth about God isn’t objective.”

“Is that an objective truth about
God?”



A Bad Answer: Relativism



“If you’d grown up in Iran, you’d be a Muslim. So your Christianity is false.”

“If you’d grown up in Iran, you’d be a Muslim. So is your Relativism false?”



A Bad Answer: Relativism



Outline

- I. Religious Diversity
- II. The Challenge
- III. A Bad Answer: Relativism
- IV. Outlining the Answers

Outlining the Answers

- **Pluralism**: all religions lead to salvation.
- **Universalism**: all the unevangelized are saved.
- **Inclusivism**: most of the unevangelized are saved.
- **Restrictivism**: none of the unevangelized are saved.
- **Accessibilism**: all of the unevangelized can be saved, but only some are.

Outline

- I. Religious Diversity
- II. The Challenge
- III. A Bad Answer: Relativism
- IV. Outlining the Answers
- V. What Does the Bible Say?

Outline

- I. Religious Diversity
- II. The Challenge
- III. A Bad Answer: Relativism
- IV. Outlining the Answers
- V. What Does the Bible Say?

What Does the Bible Say?

There is a God

Isaiah 44:6

⁶ Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.

1 Timothy 2:5

⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

What Does the Bible Say?

Mankind's Condition

Romans 3:23

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 6:23a

For the wages of sin is death

What Does the Bible Say?

General Revelation

What Does the Bible Say?

General Revelation in Nature

Psalm 19:1

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Acts 17:28-29

[Paul addresses the Areopagus, saying] 28 for “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we are indeed his offspring.” 29 Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

What Does the Bible Say?

General Revelation in Nature

Acts 14:16-17

¹⁶ In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways.
¹⁷ Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.”

Romans 1:18-20

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

What Does the Bible Say?

General Revelation in Nature

- There is a God.
- He created the world.
- He has great majesty.
- He is kind and loving.
- God is a living being like us, not one made of metal or stone.
- He is eternal.
- He is powerful.
- He possesses those properties normally associated with deity.
- God has a just wrath against wickedness.
- And the recognition that certain sins deserve God's judgement.

What Does the Bible Say?

General Revelation in Conscience

Romans 1:32

[Speaking of wicked people, Paul says] 32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Romans 2:14-15

¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

What Does the Bible Say?

General Revelation in Conscience

- There is a moral law to which people are held accountable.
- People fail to live up to it. They break the moral law.
- People know their sins are wrong.

What Does the Bible Say?

Where is Salvation to be Found?

Luke 12:8-9

⁸ “And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, ⁹ but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

John 3:16-17

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

What Does the Bible Say?

Where is Salvation to be Found?

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 1:12

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

What Does the Bible Say?

Where is Salvation to be Found?

Acts 4:12

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Acts 16:30-31

Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

What Does the Bible Say?

Where is Salvation to be Found?

- In his letters to the early churches, Paul repeatedly points to Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:13-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:9).
- The other authors of the New Testament agree with Paul. (Hebrews 7:25; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 4:9)
- Like Jesus, the apostles teach that only Jesus saves. (1 Timothy 2:5-6; 1 John 5:11-12)

What Does the Bible Say?

Who Will Be Saved?

Matthew 7:13-14

Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Matthew 7:21

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

What Does the Bible Say?

Who Will Be Saved?

Galatians 5:19-21

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

What Does the Bible Say?

Romans

What Does the Bible Say?

Romans 1:18-21

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

What Does the Bible Say?

Romans 1:22-25

²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

What Does the Bible Say?

“Far from being a preparatory stage in the human quest for God, these religions represent a descent from truth and are evidence of man’s deepest corruption.”



Douglas Moo

What Does the Bible Say?

Romans 3:9-12

- ⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written:
- “None is righteous, no, not one;
¹¹ no one understands;
no one seeks for God.
¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;
no one does good,
not even one.”

What Does the Bible Say?

Romans 3:21-24

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

What Does the Bible Say?

Romans 5:17

For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What Does the Bible Say?

Romans 2:6-16

⁶ He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.

What Does the Bible Say?

Romans 2:6-16 (cont.)

¹² For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

What Does the Bible Say?

1. God exists and is the creator of all things.
2. All people fail to meet God's moral law and are justly condemned.
3. Salvation from just punishment and reconciliation with God is only possible through Christ's atoning death on the cross.
4. Acceptance of Christ as Lord and Savior leads to life, but rejecting Him keeps men condemned.

What Does the Bible Say?

5. None can excuse themselves because all have access to basic knowledge of God through his General Revelation in nature and conscience.
6. Rejection of God's revelation leads to futile idolatry.
7. God will judge everyone fairly.
8. Most will not fare well.

What Does the Bible Say?

“A hard teaching, no doubt; but the logic of the New Testament is simple and compelling: the universality of sin and the uniqueness Christ's expiatory sacrifice entail that there is no salvation apart from Christ.”



William Lane Craig

What Does the Bible Say?

Missions

Matthew 9:36-38

³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Luke 10:1-3

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.
² He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.
³ Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

What Does the Bible Say?

Missions

Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

What Does the Bible Say?

Missions

Romans 1:16

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Matthew 24:14

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Outline

- I. Religious Diversity
- II. The Challenge
- III. A Bad Answer: Relativism
- IV. Outlining the Answers
- V. What Does the Bible Say?

Next Week

Pluralism: All Religions Lead to Salvation