

Welcome to
Investigating Christianity

Xenos Christian Fellowship

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Investigating Christianity

Week One

- Course Overview
- Investigative Framework

Overview

- Goals

Overview

■ Goals

- Identify the key concepts of biblical Christianity
- Explore common questions and objections

Overview

- Goals
- Optional: Guided Reading
 - Short passages to read each week
 - Brief written response to the passages

Overview

- Goals
- Optional: Guided Reading
- Outline
 - Tonight: Investigative Framework
 - Week 2: Christianity and Other Religions
 - Week 3: Science and Christianity
 - Week 4: Why Believe the Bible?
 - Week 5: The Problem of Evil

Investigative Framework

- Worldviews: What are they and why do they matter?

Worldviews

- Worldviews are beliefs about basic reality

Is Reality Personal?	No	Yes	No	Yes	
Is Reality Infinite?	No	Yes	Yes	No	

	Naturalism	Theism	Pantheism	Polytheism	
Is Reality Personal?	No	Yes	No	Yes	
Is Reality Infinite?	No	Yes	Yes	No	

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Meaning of Human Life	Not significant	Very significant	Individuals not significant	Depends on the gods	

	Naturalism	Theism	Pantheism	Polytheism	Spiritual Relativism
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Does Truth Exist?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
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What is the best investment?

Who defines success?

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Does God exist?

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Is there an afterlife?

Does God exist?

WORLDVIEW

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- What impact does our worldview have on us?
 - Provides the answers to the most important questions in life
 - Pervasive filter

Worldviews

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Letter to the editor of the Westerville News,
11/15/00

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“Use the Force, Luke!”

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Does Truth Exist?	Yes	Yes	<div style="border: 2px solid yellow; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <p>“Use the Force, Luke!”</p> </div>			
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INTERVIEWER: How did your atheism begin?

SARTRE: . . . (at the age of eleven) I don't know where the thought came from or how it struck me, yet all at once I said to myself, "But God doesn't exist!" . . . I remember very well, it was on that day and in the form of a momentary intuition, that I said to myself "God doesn't exist." It's striking to reflect that I thought this at the age of eleven and that I never seriously asked myself the question again until today, that is to say for sixty years. . . even if one does not believe in God, there are elements of the idea of God that remain in us and that cause us to see the world with some divine aspects.

INTERVIEWER: What, for example?

SARTRE: . . . As for me, I don't see myself as so much dust in the world, but as a being that was expected, prefigured, called forth. In short, as a being that could, it seems, come only from a creator; and this idea of a creating hand that created me refers me back to God . . . (This idea) contradicts many of my other ideas; but it is there, floating vaguely. And when I think of myself I often think rather in this way, for want of being able to think otherwise.

INTERVIEWER: (Then) what is the benefit to you of not believing in God?

SARTRE: It has strengthened my freedom and made it sounder: at the present time this freedom is not there to give God what he asks me for; it is there for the discovery of myself and to give me what I ask of myself. That is essential...this life owes nothing to God; it was what I wanted it to be.

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Answers key questions for us; pervasive filter
- How do we get our worldview? Often by absorption and preference...
- As we investigate Christianity, it helps to be aware of the the role of worldviews

Investigative Framework

- Worldviews: What are they and why do they matter?

Investigative Framework

- Worldviews: What are they and why do they matter?
- How are we defining Christianity?

Defining Christianity

Defining Christianity

- The institutional/historical definition
 - Historically, wide variations in traditions
 - Search for truth requires objective standard

Defining Christianity

- The institutional/historical definition
- Our definition: the scriptures
 - “Biblical Christianity”: teachings of OT and NT
 - Interpret text via standard rules, not tradition

Defining Christianity

- The institutional/historical definition
- Our definition: the scriptures
- Key concepts of Biblical Christianity

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“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness... God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; He created them male and female.’”

Genesis 1:26-27

Defining Christianity

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“Be appalled, O heavens, at this, and shudder, be very desolate, declares the Lord. For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to make for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

Jeremiah 2:12-13

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“I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach each other again saying “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, ‘for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.’” Jeremiah 31:33-34

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“But your moral violations have made a separation between you and your God.”

Isaiah 59:2

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- Key concepts of Biblical Christianity
 - God is working in history to reconcile human beings to personal relationship with himself
 - Jesus Christ has provided the means for reconciliation through his death and resurrection

Defining Christianity

“He was pierced through for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon him, and by his scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the moral violations of us all to fall on Him.”

Isaiah 53:5-6

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“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a payment...that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Romans 3:23-26

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“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with me.”

Revelations 3:20

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 - God is working in history to reconcile human beings to personal relationship with himself
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 - The biblical scriptures are authoritative revelation from God of how God is working

Defining Christianity

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.”

2 Timothy 3:16

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Investigative Framework

- Worldviews: What are they and why do they matter?
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- Worldviews: What are they and why do they matter?
- How are we defining Christianity?
- Spiritual Truth: What is it and how can we know it?

Knowing Spiritual Truth

- Is there such a thing as absolute spiritual truth?

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- Is there such a thing as absolute spiritual truth?
 - Spiritual relativism says no

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- Is there such a thing as absolute spiritual truth?
 - Spiritual relativism says no, because
 - » Absolutism is oppressive and evil

As Easter and Passover approach, we are left to wonder, "What in God's name is going on?" Muslims killing Christians. Christians killing Muslims. Jews killing Muslims. Muslims killing Jews. Hindus killing Muslims. Muslims killing Hindus.

...

In Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, escalating violence against the Christian minority is spinning out of control. In India, Hindus and Muslims have been killing each other by the hundreds over plans to build a Hindu temple on the ruins of a 16th-century mosque torn down by Hindus in 1992. In Afghanistan, Muslim tribes battle each other, Islamic terrorists kill American soldiers of varied religious affiliations, and the American soldiers, in turn, kill Muslims.

Years ago, a lifelong friend stopped by to save me. A world-class hell-raiser in high school, he had been born again, he declared, and was worried about my soul. If you were to die today, he asked, would you be assured a place in heaven with God? I can answer that question with absolute certainty, I replied, only after I'm dead. Without doubt, he said, he knew he was going to heaven, and if I believed as he believed, then I, too, could be so assured. How unjust to the rest of humanity if it were true that one particular brand of religiosity is the only key to salvation.

...

The late Sydney J. Harris, a columnist and philosopher, wrote, "There can be no 'right religion' -- only right people."

Joe Hallett, Senior Editor, Dispatch, 3/24/02

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“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me.”

John 14:6

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The tolerance of spiritual relativism:

You must affirm all viewpoints as true

Traditional tolerance:

You must affirm each person's right to have their own viewpoint

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 - » True tolerance: freedom to respectfully disagree
 - » Historically, religious belief not correlated to evil

“And He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there with a withered hand. And they were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, in order that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man with the withered hand, ‘Rise and come forward!’ And He said to them, ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save a life or to kill?’ But they kept silent. And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. And the Pharisees went out and immediately began taking counsel... how they might destroy Him.”

Mark 3:1-6

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“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies...’”

John 11:25

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There are absolutely no absolutes!

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falsity: “I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth...and you may say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’ When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.”

Deuteronomy 18:18-22

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 - Consistency with observable reality

God

**Direction, Provision,
Protection,**

**Significance,
Security**



**Other
People**

Me

**Other
People**

**←
Wise
Love**

**→
Wise
Love**

God

**Direction, Provision,
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**Significance,
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