

Grade 6	Lesson: The Importance of Religion in Ancient Civilizations' Culture.	Reference to English Interconnections Lesson New lesson
<b>Social Studies Standard(s): Standard 1, Objective 2</b>		
<b>Content Objective(s):</b>	<b>Language Objective(s):</b>	
<p>Students will be able to identify general beliefs from the religions; Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism and Islam and give examples of how they are represented through traditions, holidays, sacred texts and places by filling in a chart in small groups.</p> <p><i>Podré identificar las creencias generales de las religiones; budismo, hinduismo, cristianismo, judaísmo e Islam y daré ejemplos de cómo se representan a través de tradiciones, festividades, textos sagrados y lugares llenando una tabla en pequeños grupos.</i></p> <p><b>Essential Questions:</b> How has religion played a role in the history from ancient times through today?</p>	<p><b>Vocabulario académico requerido para el muro de palabras:</b></p> <p><b>Escuchar:</b> Budismo, hinduismo, judaísmo, cristianismo, Islam, orientación, sacerdote, rabino, pecados, vida eterna, sagrado, templo, iglesia, rechazado, compasión, creencias religiosas, sabiduría, la Verdad Definitiva, permanente, sufrir, último (a lo largo del tiempo), apego, sermón, enfoque, intención, sustento, conciencia, rituales y prácticas, bendiciones, meditación, Mantras, Mudras y peregrinaje, Tripitaka, las Cuatro Verdades Nobles, el Noble Sendero Óctuple, enseñanzas</p> <p><b>Hablar:</b> Budismo, hinduismo, judaísmo, cristianismo, Islam, pecados, vida eterna, sagrado, templo, iglesia, creencias religiosas, sufrir, rituales y prácticas, tradiciones, festividades, sagrado, rezar, meditar</p> <p><b>Leer:</b> Budismo, hinduismo, judaísmo, cristianismo, Islam, orientación, sacerdote, rabino, pecados, vida eterna, sagrado, templo, iglesia, rechazado, compasión, creencias religiosas, sabiduría, la Verdad Definitiva, permanente, sufrir, último (a lo largo del tiempo), apego, sermón, enfoque, intención, sustento, conciencia, rituales y prácticas, bendiciones, meditación, Mantras, Mudras y peregrinaje, Tripitaka, las Cuatro Verdades Nobles, el Noble Sendero Óctuple, enseñanzas</p> <p><b>Escribir:</b> Budismo, hinduismo, judaísmo, cristianismo, Islam, pecados, vida eterna, sagrado, templo, iglesia, creencias religiosas, sufrir, rituales y prácticas, tradiciones, festividades, sagrado, Torá, Biblia, Corán, Tripitaka, rezar, meditar, templo, iglesia, sagrado, rituales</p> <p><b>Oraciones modelo:</b>          Cuando necesito ayuda, pregunto / leo _____(abrir)          Los (grupo religioso) creen que _____.          El propósito de la vida es _____.          Los _____(grupo religioso) creen que en la vida eterna _____.          Los _____(grupo religioso) practican _____ como ritual.</p>	

	<p>Los _____(grupo religioso) practican rituales en _____.</p> <p>Los _____(grupo religioso) siguen las enseñanzas del texto sagrado llamado _____.</p> <p>Los _____(grupo religioso) celebran _____.</p>
<p><b>Materials:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worldbook online or other source for facts about religions</li> <li>• Buddhism Summary- included below, reference: <a href="http://www.religionfacts.com/buddhism/fastfacts.htm">http://www.religionfacts.com/buddhism/fastfacts.htm</a></li> <li>• Short, simplified readings on Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. These may be web-based from a Kid’s magazine or publication or from a text book.</li> <li>• Religion Matrix – student handout with sentence frames with blanks and enlarged chart</li> <li>• Sentence frame reference sheet for each group</li> </ul>	<p><b>Vocabulario adicional de la lección:</b></p> <p>Dolor, desesperadamente, señaló</p>
<p><b>Lesson:</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Instructional Time: 45 minutes</b></span></p>	
<p><b>Opening: ( 5 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post this question and read it aloud.</li> </ul> <p><b>T: “Quisiera que piensen sobre esto. ¿Alguna vez se han preguntado por qué están aquí? ¿O a dónde irán cuando mueran?”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pause and let them think for 10 seconds. Some may say yes or no.</li> </ul> <p><b>T: “¿A qué persona recurren para obtener orientación o ayuda con estas preguntas? ¿O a qué recurren cuando necesitan orientación o ayuda? Escriban la respuesta a esta pregunta usando la oración modelo en nuestra nota autoadhesiva y peguen la nota en el pizarrón.”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give the students 3 minutes to think and record their thoughts on a post-it note. Then post it on the board. As they post, arrange their post-its in groups. Some may say mom, dad or parents, some say counselor, priest, rabbi, bishop, the bible, the Koran etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>T: “Veo que algunos de ustedes recurren a un sacerdote o rabino, etc. Al igual que los estudiantes de esta clase, las personas de todo el mundo recurren a la religión para obtener orientación o ayuda, y respuestas a estas preguntas: ¿Por qué estoy aquí? ¿A dónde vamos cuando morimos? Lean en silencio los objetivos de hoy mientras yo los leo en voz alta.”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the objectives</li> </ul> <p><b>T: “Díganle a su compañero lo que podrán hacer al final de esta lección.”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wait 1 minute.</li> </ul> <p><b>T: “¿Quién quiere compartir lo que dijo su compañero?”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask 1-2 students to share.</li> </ul> <p><b>T: “Sí, podrán enumerar creencias generales de las religiones como budismo, hinduismo, cristianismo, judaísmo e Islam y dar ejemplos de cómo se expresan en diferentes aspectos de su cultura.”</b></p> <p><b>Introduction to New Material (Direct Instruction): ( 10 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show a video, present a power point or use pictures to introduce the five religions; Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and incorporate examples of the religion in the culture. Pictures may include architecture of sacred places, art, styles of dress, special foods or sacrifices or customs etc. (refer to suggested resources under the materials section)</li> </ul> <p><b>T: “Van a mirar un video (o escuchar una presentación, etc.) acerca de las cinco religiones: budismo, hinduismo, judaísmo, cristianismo, Islam. A medida que escuchan, levanten la mano cuando escuchen algo sobre las creencias. Por ejemplo, si escuchan ‘Los cristianos creen que Jesucristo murió por sus pecados’ levanten la mano. Entonces, sonrían si creen lo mismo.”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As you present the power point, pictures or show the video, stop when they mention a belief statement, wait for the students to raise their hands first but if they don’t stop the video and play it again. After you stop, repeat the belief statement that was in the video. Remember to use the sentence frame for each belief. Post the belief statements as you state each one. Check to see how many students are smiling.</li> </ul>	

T: "He observado que muchos de nosotros en esta aula tenemos creencias muy diferentes. Cuando completemos la lección de hoy, quisiera que piensen en esto: Las personas de todo el mundo tienen diferentes creencias religiosas."

**Guided Practice: (15 minutos)**

T: "Hoy vamos a trabajar en grupos para reunir más información sobre cada religión. Primero vamos a completar juntos la información sobre una de ellas."

- You will be modeling and then in independent practice, students will be using a strategy called Jigsaw
- Pass out religion matrix chart
- Depending on your resource, use the resource to model the activity. You may use a reading, web site, book etc. For this lesson, we will use a translation of a summary from the web page [www.religionfacts.com](http://www.religionfacts.com). Cut the reading into four sections or strips.

T: "Vamos a identificar las características clave de las principales religiones del mundo: budismo, cristianismo, hinduismo, Islam, judaísmo. Veamos juntos el budismo. Primero voy a leer. A medida que lea, tomen notas e identifiquen 2 ó 3 cosas en las que los budistas creen. Consulten su apunte y llenen los espacios en blanco en estas oraciones modelo."

- Point to these frames on the board.

Los \_\_\_\_\_ (grupo religioso) creen/no creen que \_\_\_\_\_.

El propósito de la vida es \_\_\_\_\_.

Los \_\_\_\_\_ (grupo religioso) creen que en la vida eterna \_\_\_\_\_.

- 1) "La fe budista se centra en una comprensión de la naturaleza humana y la realidad. Al Buda lo llamaban 'el Iluminado'. Rechazó creencias sobre Dios, el universo y la vida eterna."

T: "El propósito de la vida es desarrollar compasión por todos los seres vivos y trabajar para su felicidad y la paz; y desarrollar la sabiduría que lleva a la *Verdad Definitiva*. El Buda enseñó que las sensaciones, los sentimientos y los pensamientos no son permanentes. En el budismo, el principal propósito de la vida es acabar con el sufrimiento. El Buda enseñó que los seres humanos sufrimos porque intentamos desesperadamente aferrarnos a cosas como los amigos, la salud, las cosas materiales que no duran, y esto causa dolor o tristeza. El Buda dijo que hay cosas en la vida que traen alegría o felicidad, pero señaló que no duran, y que nuestro apego a ellas causa más sufrimiento. Sus enseñanzas se dedicaron a este problema y su solución."

T: "Diríjense a su compañero y cuéntenle una creencia que escucharon. ¿Quién puede contarme algo en lo que creen los budistas en sus propias palabras?"

S: *Los budistas no creen en la vida eterna.*

S: *Los budistas creen que deben acabar con el sufrimiento.*

T: "¡Sí! Excelentes respuestas. Usemos estas respuestas para escribir las descripciones de las creencias usando las oraciones modelo. Los budistas creen que el propósito de la vida es tener compasión por todos los seres vivos y poner fin al sufrimiento. Ahora voy a registrar las dos descripciones de creencias en la tabla."

- Teacher writes five statements on the chart.

T: "Now I'm going to proof read what I wrote by reading it aloud. If we want, we can change what I wrote. Everyone should listen as I proofread."

- Teacher reads 1-2 out loud.

T: "¿Quisieran hacer algún cambio? Muéstrenme los pulgares arriba si está bien o los pulgares abajo si necesitamos hacer cambios."

- Wait until everyone shows you his or her thumb! If it's down, call on them for their suggestion.

T: "Ahora les leeré la parte 2. A medida que lea, tomen notas e intenten identificar tres cosas más en las que creen los budistas."

- Teacher reads:

T: "2) Las Cuatro Verdades Nobles

En su primer sermón, el Buda enseñó las 'Cuatro Verdades Nobles', que son la base de las creencias de todas las ramas del budismo:

1. Toda la vida está marcada por el sufrimiento
2. El sufrimiento es causado por el deseo y el apego.
3. El sufrimiento debe eliminarse.
4. La forma de eliminar el sufrimiento es seguir el Noble Sendero Óctuple."

"El Noble Sendero Óctuple

Se puede escapar permanentemente al sufrimiento si se sigue el Noble Sendero Óctuple. La palabra 'correcto' en estas ocho frases significa 'cierto' o 'verdadero'. No es suficiente obtener la comprensión: debe ser comprensión *correcta* (*cierta* o

*verdadera).*

1. Comprensión correcta
2. Determinación (propósito para hacer algo) correcta
3. Habla (formas de comunicarse) correcta
4. Acción correcta
5. Sustento (medio de vida) correcto
6. Esfuerzo correcto
7. Conciencia del momento correcta
8. Concentración (enfoque) correcta”

**T:** “Bien, cuenten a su compañero otras tres descripciones de creencias que escucharon.” Wait 30 seconds. “¿Quién puede decirme una creencia?”

*S:* 3. *El sufrimiento es causado por el deseo*

*S:* 4. *Se puede detener el sufrimiento siguiendo el Noble Sendero Óctuple.*

*S:* 5. *Se debe tener una comprensión correcta*

**T:** “Bien, anotemos en la tabla las tres creencias siguientes usando las oraciones modelo. Entonces, leeremos en voz alta para corregir nuestro trabajo.”

All students choral read:

*S:* 3. *Los budistas creen que el sufrimiento es causado por el deseo. Los budistas creen que el sufrimiento se termina cuando se sigue el Noble Sendero Óctuple.* 5. *Los budistas creen que la comprensión correcta es la comprensión verdadera.*

**T:** “¿Quisieran hacer algún cambio?”

*S:* No.

**T:** “Ahora, todos miren la tercera sección de la lectura. Escuchen y tomen notas a medida que yo les lea.”

- Teacher reads:

**T:** “3)El budismo incorpora una serie de rituales y prácticas, que traen bendiciones a uno mismo y a otras personas. La práctica de la meditación, la concentración mental y la conciencia son fundamentales para todas las formas del budismo. He aquí otros rituales y prácticas.

**Mantras:** Sonidos sagrados

**Mudras:** Gestos simbólicos con la mano

**Peregrinaje:** Visita a lugares sagrados.

Estos rituales y prácticas se ejecutan en lugares sagrados llamados templos o salones de meditación como el Templo Jokhang, en Lhasa, Tíbet o la sala de zazen (para meditación) en un templo Zen, Kioto, Japón.”

**T:** “Cuéntenle a su compañero algunos de los rituales, prácticas y lugares sagrados en la religión budista. Consulten las oraciones modelo como ayuda. ¿Quién puede decirme un ritual o práctica?”

- Wait 10 seconds, call on volunteers.

*S:* Meditación

**T:** “Bien, ¿otro?”

*S:* Mantras

**T:** “Sí, ¿algún otro?”

*S:* Mudras e ir en peregrinajes.

**T:** “¡Sí!”

**T:** “Anotemos los rituales, las prácticas y los lugares sagrados en su tabla usando las oraciones modelo. Consulten estas oraciones modelo.

Los \_\_\_\_\_(grupo religioso) practican \_\_\_\_\_ como ritual.

Los \_\_\_\_\_(grupo religioso) practican rituales en \_\_\_\_\_.”

- Either go ahead and model how to use the frame or if a student(or students) is confident, have them tell you how to write it.

**T:** “Write the following on the enlarged chart as students write it on their own. “Los budistas practican la meditación como ritual. Los budistas practican mudras como ritual. Los budistas practican mantras como ritual. Los budistas practican peregrinajes o visitan lugares sagrados como ritual. Los budistas practican rituales en templos. Los budistas practican rituales en salas de meditación.”

**T:** “¿Quisieran hacer algún cambio?”

S: *Sí, ¿podría escribir que los budistas hacen peregrinajes?*

T: **“¡Eso también es cierto! ¡Muy bien!”**

T: **“Miren la hoja de su compañero, lean sus respuestas en voz alta y, de ser necesario, sugieran cambios después de corregir sus respuestas.”**

- Wait 1 minute

**Independent Practice: (15 minutes) –**

Model Jigsaw procedure

- Post these roles on the board.

Round 1

Group member #1 Reads

#2 summarizes (spontaneous language)

#3 writes (sentence frames)

#4 checks the work

Round 2

2 reads

3 summarizes (spontaneous language)

4 writes (sentence frames)

1 Checks the work

Round 3

3 reads

4 summarizes (spontaneous language)

1 writes (sentence frames)

2 checks the work

Round 4

4 reads

1 summarizes (spontaneous language)

2 writes (sentence frames)

3 checks the work

- Refer to the board as you explain this procedure.

T: **“En sus grupos, cada uno de ustedes tendrá una sección de la lectura y las secciones están numeradas. El estudiante que tenga el número uno leerá su sección al resto del grupo. El estudiante número dos resumirá lo que se leyó en sus propias palabras, el estudiante número tres escribirá el resumen en la matriz usando las oraciones modelo y el estudiante número cuatro corregirá lo escrito. Entonces, el estudiante número dos leerá y se rotarán las tareas en el sentido de las agujas del reloj. Miren el pizarrón para ver cómo cambian las tareas.”**

T: **“Necesito cuatro voluntarios para mostrarles este procedimiento. Gracias, Tom, eres número 1, Bob número 2, Ann número 3 y Carly número 4. Veamos la cuarta sesión sobre budismo. Empieza, Tom. Bob, tomarás notas mientras escuchas, Ann y Carly también escucharán.”**

- Point to the board and refer to the roles.
- Point and refer to the sentence frames that should be used in this section.

Los \_\_\_\_\_ (grupo religioso) siguen las enseñanzas del texto sagrado llamado \_\_\_\_\_.

Los \_\_\_\_\_ (grupo religioso) celebran \_\_\_\_\_

S1: (Lee la sección 4): *El Tripitaka (Tipitaka en idioma pali) es la colección de enseñanzas budistas más antigua del budismo Mahayana y más tarde se agregaron los Sutras.*

*Las festividades cambian por región, pero a menudo incluyen el nacimiento del Buda, la iluminación del Buda y las fases de la luna.*

S2: *El texto sagrado es el Tripitaka y los budistas celebran el nacimiento del Buda, la iluminación del Buda y las fases lunares.*

S3: (Lo anota en la tabla.) *El budista sigue las enseñanzas del texto sagrado llamado Tripitaka.*

*El budista celebra el nacimiento del Buda, la iluminación del Buda y las fases lunares. (Sé que esto suena extraño pero el verbo debe ir en la tercera persona del singular).*

S4: (Lee las descripciones en voz alta.) *El budista sigue las enseñanzas del texto sagrado llamado Tripitaka.*

*El budista celebra el nacimiento del Buda, la iluminación del Buda y las fases lunares. ¡Está muy bien!*

T: **“Ahora, cuando empiecen a leer la sección siguiente, ¿quién será el lector?”**

- Point to the board.

S: *Miembro del grupo n.º2*

T: **“¡Sí! ¿Quién hará el resumen?”**

S: *Miembro del grupo n.º3*

T: **“¡Sí! ¿Quién tomará las notas?”**

S: *Miembro del grupo n.º4*

T: **“¡Sí! ¿Quién hará las correcciones?”**

S: *Miembro del grupo n.º1*

T: **“Expliquen el procedimiento a sus compañeros. Pregunten si hay algo que no entienden.”**

- Wait one minute

T: **“¿Qué explicaciones necesitan todavía?”**

- Wait 7 seconds
- Give each group one reading on Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Islam

T: **“Bien, pueden empezar a trabajar con sus grupos. Tendrán 15 minutos para completar esta actividad y les daré una advertencia de un minuto. Pueden empezar.”**

- Circulate, offer content and language feedback. Refer to sentence frames and offer synonyms for unfamiliar words. Take notes on concepts or language students don't understand.

T: Cuando falte un minuto dígales **“Tienen un minuto para terminar de llenar la tabla.”**

**Closing: (5 minutes)**

T: **“Ahora, un voluntario de cada grupo va a leer lo que averiguaron sobre cada religión. No necesitan anotar lo que dijeron. Haremos eso en la lección siguiente. Escuchen y estén preparados para compartir una creencia, tradición, festividad, texto o lugar sagrado con la clase. Grupo 1, lea su lista sobre el cristianismo de su tabla.”**

- Wait as they read (or one student reads)

T: **“Cuéntenle a sus compañeros de grupo lo que han oído. Grupo 2, cuéntenle a la clase un aspecto del cristianismo.”**

S: *La Biblia es el texto sagrado.*

T: **“¡Sí! ¿Grupo 3?”**

S: *¡Correcto! Creen que Jesucristo es su salvador*

T: **“¿Grupo 4?”**

S: *Celebran el nacimiento de Jesús.*

T: **“Excelente. Ahora, el Grupo 2 nos contará lo que han aprendido.”**

- Repeat process with all groups

T: **“Write the objective in your journal, did you meet the objective for today? Why or why not? Write a 1-3 paragraph reflection on what you learned today for homework.”**

**Assessment:**

During independent practice and the closing, take notes and record areas of language or content where students are struggling.

**Extra Ideas:**

Here are adaptations of text from the website [www.religionfacts.com](http://www.religionfacts.com)  
Buddhism

1)The faith really centers on correct understanding of human nature and reality. The Buddha was called the "Enlightened One.". He rejected beliefs about God, the nature of the universe, and the afterlife. He taught the concept of "no-soul". Buddhists believe in karma or good energy passed to others and reincarnation, after you die, you return to this life in a different body.

The purpose of life is to develop compassion for all living beings and to work for their good, happiness, and peace; and to develop wisdom leading to the realization of Ultimate Truth. The Buddha taught that sensations, feelings, thoughts and consciousness are not permanent. In Buddhism, the primary purpose of life is to end suffering. The Buddha taught that humans suffer because we desperately try to hold on to things like friends, health, material things that do not last, and this causes sorrow. The Buddha did say there are things in life that bring joy, but pointed out that they don't last and our attachment to them causes more suffering. His teachings were focused entirely on this problem and its solution.

## 2) The Four Noble Truths

In his first sermon after attaining enlightenment, the Buddha taught the "Four Noble Truths," which form the foundation of belief for all branches of Buddhism:

5. All of life is marked by suffering.
6. Suffering is caused by desire and attachment.
7. Suffering can be stopped.
8. The way to end suffering is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path.

## The Noble Eightfold Path

According to the fourth Noble Truth, one can permanently escape suffering by following the Noble Eightfold Path. The word "right" in these eight items designates "true" or "correct," to distinguish the Buddhist way from others: It is not enough to gain knowledge; it must be right(true or correct) knowledge.

9. Right knowledge
10. Right intention
11. Right speech
12. Right action
13. Right livelihood
14. Right effort
15. Right mindfulness
16. Right concentration

3)Buddhism incorporates a variety of rituals and practices, which aid in the journey to enlightenment and bring blessings on oneself and others. The practice of meditation is central to nearly all forms of Buddhism. Here are the rituals and practices.

- Meditation - Mental concentration and mindfulness
- Mantras - Sacred sounds
- Mudras - Symbolic hand gestures
- Prayer Wheels - Reciting mantras with the turn of a wheel
- Pilgrimage - Visiting sacred sites

These rituals and practices are performed in sacred places called temples or meditation halls like Jokhang Temple, Lhasa, Tibet or Room for zazen (sitting meditation) in a Zen temple, Kyoto, Japan.

4)The Tripitaka (Tipitaka in Pali) is the earliest collection of Buddhist teachings Mahayana Buddhism adds to it the Sutras.

The holidays vary by region, but often include Buddha's birthday, Buddha's enlightenment, and lunar quarters.

## Hinduism

1) Hinduism originated in India, Hinduism, from the Persian word hindu (in Sanskrit it is sindhu), literally "river." But the meaning of the word is "Indian." Hindus call their religion sanatama dharma, which means "eternal religion" or "eternal truth." It is the third largest religion in the world.

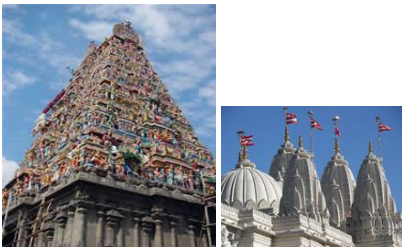
Hinduism embraces a great diversity of beliefs, a fact that can be confusing to westerners. One can believe a wide variety of things about God, the universe and the path to liberation and still be a Hindu. However, there are some beliefs common to nearly all forms of Hinduism that can be identified. These fundamental Hindu beliefs include: the authority of the Vedas (the oldest Indian sacred texts) and the Brahmins (priests); the existence of an enduring soul that travels (transmigrates) from one body to another at death (reincarnation); and the law of karma that determines one's destiny both in this life and the next.

2) Note that a specific belief about God or gods is not considered essential, which is a major difference between Hinduism and religions like Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Most Hindus are devoted followers of one of the principal gods Shiva, Vishnu or Shakti, and often others.

The purpose of life in Hinduism is minimize bad karma to enjoy better fortune in this life and in the next and to attain liberation/freedom (moksha) from the cycle of reincarnation. They live life according to the dharma. And in the afterlife, they believe if karma is unresolved, a soul is born into a new body; if karma is resolved, they attain moksha (liberation/freedom). This means being in God's presence or for others, it means uniting with God. Various methods to attain Moksha include avoiding attachment to impermanent things, carrying out one's duties, and realizing the ultimate unity between one's soul or self (atman) and ultimate reality (Brahman).

3) The concept of karma or "law of karma" is the principle that all of life is influenced by cause and effect, action and reaction, in which actions people take effect the future. Karma is a way of explaining evil and misfortune in the world, even for those who do not deserve it; their misfortune is due to wrong actions in their previous life. "Bad karma" is accumulated as a result of wrong actions. Sacred Hindu texts including Vedas, Upanishads, Sutras, Bhagavad and Gita prescribe a number of activities, such as pilgrimages to holy places and acts of devotion that can wipe out the effects of bad karma.

Hindus worship in temples, or in home shrines with spiritual leaders called a guru or sage. The religious life or practices takes the form of rituals associated with sculptures and images of gods in home shrines. Some practice meditation while others focus on fulfilling the social and moral duties. Various forms of Yoga are practices from the Hindu faith.



Hindu temple in Mylapore, India

Neasden Temple, London. Photo: Steve England.

4) It is said Hindus have a holiday for every day of the year. There is a list of over 1000 Hindu holidays. As in most ancient religions, many of the Hindu holidays mark the change of seasons, celebrate the harvest, and encourage fertility of the land. Others are dedicated to a particular deity or God(gods), such as Shiva or Ganesh or mark an important event. Here are a few,

- Holi - festival of colors and spring (February-March)
- Mahashivaratri (Shiva Ratri) - night sacred to Shiva (February-March)
- Rama Navami - birthday of Lord Rama (April)
- Krishna Jayanti - birthday of Lord Krishna (July-August)
- Kumbh Mela - pilgrimage every 12 years to four cities in India (July-August; last one 2003)
- Ganesha-Chaturthi (Ganesha Utsava) - festival of Ganesh (August-September)
- Dassera - victory of Rama over demon king Ravana (September-October)

The celebrations include a wide variety of rituals, including worship, prayer, processions, magical acts, music, dancing, eating, drinking, and feeding the poor.



## Christianity

1) Christianity was founded in the early 1st century AD, with the teaching, miracles, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Today it is the largest religion in the world, with around 2 billion followers. Today's Christianity has a variety of forms, beliefs and practices but all centers around faith in Jesus Christ. Christians believe Jesus is the Messiah, the "anointed one" predicted in the Jewish Scriptures. The word "Christ" comes from the Greek for "Messiah," (it is actually a title, not a surname). Christianity teaches the existence of one God, Yahweh, the God of the Jews. It shares this belief with two other major world religions, Judaism and Islam. Sacred sites related to the three religions can be found in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth.

Like Jews and Muslims, Christians believe one God who created the world and takes an interest in the humans who inhabit it. The purpose of life for Christians is to know, love and serve God.

2) Their beliefs are to be reflected by how they live; faith in the true God and Christ's resurrection, do good works, participate in sacraments. They believe in some kind of heaven, where believers enjoy the presence of God and other believers and freedom from suffering and sin. Some Christians believe in the existence of hell, where unbelievers or sinners are punished. Views differ as to whether hell is and some Christians reject the idea altogether.

3) Many Christian rituals and religious practices vary, individual church and individual Christian, but some practices are common to all forms of Christianity. Most Christians attend worship services at church on Sundays, which generally include singing, prayer and a sermon. Most Christian churches have a special ritual for ordination, or designating a person fit for a leadership position in the church. At home, most practicing Christians pray regularly and many read the Bible. Nearly all Christians are baptized, either as an infant or as an adult, and regularly participate in communion (also called the Lord's Supper and the Eucharist). Baptism and communion are considered sacraments - sacred rituals instituted by Christ himself.

4) Holidays, feasts and fasts are a significant part of Christian religious practice. The feast days celebrate joyous historical events, such as the birth and resurrection of Christ, while the fast days provide a special opportunity to focus on self-reflection, self-discipline, and repentance. Some Christian holidays have come to have a considerable impact on western culture and traditions.



Advent  
season of Advent  
ventus, "coming")  
marks the beginning of  
church year and the  
approach of Christmas.



Palm Sunday  
Palm Sunday is the  
tenth Sunday of Lent  
and the last Sunday  
before Easter. It  
commemorates the  
triumphal entry of  
Jesus into Jerusalem.



Ash Wednesday  
Wednesday  
first day of Lent, a  
period of fasting that  
ends up to Easter. Its  
central ritual is placing  
ashes on the  
forehead.



Easter  
Easter is a spring  
festival that celebrates  
the resurrection of  
Christ. It is the oldest  
Christian holiday and  
the most important  
day of the church year.



Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus. The English word "Christmas" derives from the old English Cristes maesse, or "Christ's mass."



**Lent**  
Lent is a 40-day period of fasting and repentance in preparation for Easter.

## Judaism

1) Judaism is one of the oldest religions still existing today. It began as the religion of the small nation of the Hebrews, and through thousands of years of suffering, persecution and occasional victory, has continued to be a influential religion and culture. Today, 14 million people identify themselves as Jewish. Modern Judaism incorporates both a nation and a religion, and often combines strict obedience to ritual laws with a more open attitude towards religious belief. The well-known Ten Commandments come from Judaism.

### Ten Commandments

- Worship no other gods.
- Do not worship idols.
- Do not misuse the name of the Lord.
- Keep the Sabbath holy.
- Honor your father and mother.
- Do not murder.
- Do not commit adultery.
- Do not steal.
- Do not give false testimony
- Do not covet

2) Unlike Christianity and Islam, Judaism has no official requirements for membership. In general, a person can be considered "Jewish" whether he follows a complete system of beliefs about God and the afterlife, or believes in a few simple beliefs that give meaning to ritual. This flexibility in Jewish belief is because actions (good deeds and the mitzvot), not beliefs, are the most important aspect of Jewish religious life. In general, they believe people are good and they should obey the law and atone, or make up for their sins. In essence, their purpose in life is to obey God and fulfill duties to common man.

Nevertheless, the sacred texts, the Torah and Talmud have teachings about God, humanity, and the meaning of life, and these beliefs are importance for their influence on Christianity and Islam, currently the two largest religions in the world. Jewish sacred texts and literature have little to say about what happens after death, which may be surprising to non-Jews since the sacred texts of Christianity and Islam, both founded in Judaism, elaborate rather fully about the afterlife.

3) In Judaism, ultimate reality is a single, all-powerful God. Many of the world's religions have a heroic figure who will rescue the good, judge the wicked, and restore peace to the world (Krishna in Hinduism, Maitreya in Buddhism and the Second Coming of Christ in Christianity). In Judaism, this figure is the Messiah.

Sunset Friday night to sunset Saturday is the Sabbath or the day of worship, led by Rabbis in synagogues and ceremonies and practices with the family. On this day of the week, Jews are forbidden to work. From the Jewish perspective, the Sabbath is not about rules but about joyful celebration and rest.

Jewish rituals and religious practices are based on an elaborate framework of divine mitzvot, or commandments, combined with rabbinic laws and traditions, this law is central to Judaism. Halakhah governs not just religious life, but daily life, from how to dress to what to eat to how to help the poor. Observant Jews are expected to recite three prayers daily and more on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. . Many Jews sway their body back and forth during prayer and many synagogues have a hazzan (cantor) who is a professional singer employed for the purpose of leading the congregation in prayer.

4) Holidays are an important part of Jewish life. They help to keep tradition alive, contribute to a sense of community and belonging, remind believers of important historical events, and ensure regular reflection and celebration of the sacred. The most important Jewish holy days are the Sabbath, the three pilgrimage festivals (Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot) and the two High Holy Days (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). It is forbidden to work on any of these days.

The Days of Awe are the 10 days from the beginning of Rosh Hashanah to the end of Yom Kippur. This important period, which occurs in the autumn, is a time to reflect, repent, and atone for sin.

Hanukkah (also spelled Chanukah) is not the "Jewish Christmas" It celebrates a post-biblical event: the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrian-Greek rulers of Jerusalem. It also celebrates a miracle that occurred during this event: When God miraculously made the one day's worth of oil burn for eight days.

Passover is a spring holiday celebrating the Exodus - the freeing (liberation) of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt in the time of Moses (circa 13th century BCE). On this day they have special dietary restrictions ("Kosher of Passover") and a special meal.

Purim is a joyful spring holiday that features a festive meal, gift-giving, costumes, noisemakers in the synagogue, and required drunkenness. Non-Jews know it as "the Jewish Mardi Gras" or "the Jewish Halloween."

Rosh Hashanah is commonly known as the Jewish New Year. It is the day on which the year changes. Rosh Hashanah is a solemn and holy time. It occurs on the first and second days of Tishri, which falls in September or October.

Tu B'Shevat, is the New Year for Trees. It is the day chosen to count the age of a newly-planted tree. Over the years, the holiday has also developed into a day for celebrating (and enjoying) the fruit of the earth and focusing on care of the environment.

## Islam

1) Islam is the second-largest religion in the world, with over 1 billion followers. It is a faith founded by a man named Muhammad in 7th-century Saudi Arabia. Believers must recite the Shahada: "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is his Prophet" to be considered believers. Beyond this belief, however, Muslim doctrine (or belief) is often summarized in "Six Articles of Faith." Many Muslims believe that one must follow to the six articles to be a Muslim. The name of God is Allah, Muhammad, the founder of Islam, is known as "the Seal of the Prophets" or the last and greatest of the messengers of God. He is not considered a God. Allah is a God of justice, who expects good behavior and submission or giving in to the divine will of God and punishes those who don't submit to the will of God.

Muslim beliefs are summarized in "Six Articles of Faith." According to this list, to be a Muslim one must believe in:

1. One God;
2. The angels of God;
3. The books of God, especially the Qur'an;
4. The prophets of God, especially Muhammad;
5. The Day of Judgment (or the afterlife); and
6. The supremacy of God's will (or predestination).

2) For a Muslim, the purpose of life is to live in a way that is pleasing to Allah so that one may gain Paradise. It is believed that at puberty, each person's actions begin to be recorded and this will be used at the Day of Judgment to determine his/her eternal fate. Like Christianity, Islam teaches the soul exists forever. There will be a day of judgment and all humans will be divided between eternal Paradise and Hell.

The religious rituals of Islam are relatively few in number, but great in importance. The Five Pillars of Islam are five practices in the Muslim faith: Shahada, Ramadan, almsgiving, pilgrimage to Mecca and salat.

Shahada is the Muslim profession of faith, this is stated at least once in every Muslim's lifetime. The shahada is also recited in the muzein's call to prayer, included in the salat (daily ritual prayer) and in Sufi contemplative prayer. It is also recited in the moments before death.

Perhaps the most well-known Muslim practices is ritual prayer, or salat, which is performed five times each day: at dawn (al-fajr), midday (al-zuhr), afternoon (al-'asr), sunset (al-maghrib) and evening (al-'isha). Salat must always be preceded by ablutions (wudu') of ritually washing the face, hands, and feet.

Almsgiving is a central activity in Islam. The zakat is an alms tax, required of every adult Muslim. For most of Islam's history, the tax was enforced by the state. Today it is left up to the individual, except in Saudi Arabia where religious law (Shari'a) is strictly followed. The rate of zakat is 2.5 percent of the value of all of one's possessions or things. The recipients of the tax are the poor, debtors, slaves seeking to buy their freedom, volunteers in jihad, pilgrims, and the collectors of the tax.

At least once in his or her lifetime, each Muslim is expected to undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca, the sacred city of Islam. This holy journey is called the hajj in Arabic. It must take place during the month of Dhu al-Hijja (the last month of the Islamic year) to meet the requirements of the hajj.

3) The most sacred place in Islam is the Ka'ba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The Ka'ba is a mosque (built by Abraham according to Muslim tradition) built around a black stone. The Ka'ba is believed to be the first place that was created on earth and the place where heavenly happiness and power touches the earth directly.

Medina is the second holy city of Islam, after Mecca. The Masjid al Nabawi, the Mosque of the Prophet, is located in Medina and built on the site of Muhammad's home where he is buried. The first mosque of Islam is also located in Medina and is known as Masjid al-Quba, the Quba Mosque.

The third most sacred city in Islam is Jerusalem. Jerusalem is important because Muhammad traveled to Jerusalem and went from there into heaven. The most important Muslim sites in Jerusalem are the Dome of the Rock, built over a sacred stone. This stone is holy to Jews as well, who believe it to be the site at which Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac (Muslims place this event in Mecca) and the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

There are two main sacred texts in Islam: the Qur'an (or Koran) and the Hadith (or Hadeeth). The Qur'an is the most sacred text and it is believed to be the literal word of God as told to Muhammad. The Hadith is a secondary text that records sayings of Muhammad and his followers.

4) Islam has relatively few holidays compared to most other religions. Traditionally, Muslims celebrate two major festivals ('Id Al-Fitr and 'Id Al-Adha), a month of daytime fasting (Ramadan), and a day of voluntary fasting ('Ashura, also an important Shiite festival).

Ramadan is not a holy day but a holy month. It is the ninth month of the Muslim year. During Ramadan, those who are able must abstain from evil thoughts and deeds, food and drink (including water), and sexual intercourse from dawn until dusk for the entire month. Non-Muslims in Muslim countries during Ramadan must be careful not to eat, drink, or smoke in the presence of Muslims during the daytime hours of fasting, as the law requires adherence to the fast in public.

Traditionally, Ashura honors two events: the day Nuh (Noah) left the ark and the day Musa (Moses) was saved from the Egyptians by Allah. Among Shi'ites, however, Ashura is a major festival, the tazia (ta'ziyah). It honors the death of Husayn (also spelled Hussein). For Shi'a Muslims, rituals and observances on Ashura consist primarily of public expressions of mourning and grief. Some Shi'as express mourning by beating their head or ritually cutting themselves. This is intended to connect them with Husayn's suffering and death as an aid to salvation on the Day of Judgment. Passion plays acting out the death of Husayn are also presented on Ashura. The regime of Saddam Hussein saw this as a potential threat and banned Ashura commemorations for many years. Since Saddam Hussein was removed from power in Iraq, Ashura was marred by bomb attacks that killed and wounded hundreds.

- **Interesting extension reading:**

Muslims trace their heritage to the Hebrew people and prophets. In particular, they trace their ancestry to Ishmael, the firstborn son of Abraham. In the Hebrew Scriptures, Abraham and Sarah had difficulty having a child. So, Abraham took Hagar as a second wife. Hagar had a son, named Ishmael. However, Sarah also had a son, named Isaac. Having met her marital duty and God's promise, Sarah demanded that Abraham reject Hagar and Ishmael. Abraham did so, and from this point, the Qur'an(Koran) stops following the biblical story and follows the story of Ishmael. According to the Qur'an, Ishmael went to the place that would later be known as Mecca. His descendants or children would be the Muslims, while Isaac's descendants or children became the Jews.