



Which Way Is the Right Way?

A Study of Christianity, Cults and Other Religions

Teachers Guide for Grade 11

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Publishing House
St. Louis

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3558 S. Jefferson Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63118-3968
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To the Teacher

Which Way Is the Right Way? has been designed for 11th-grade students, but it may be taught (with adaptations) in grades 9, 10, or 12.

Which Way Is the Right Way? begins an overview of the Christian faith, of the major non-Christian world religions, and of movements within Christianity. Next, the students will study various cults—the established cults, the Eastern and “New Christian” cults, and the satanic cults. The final unit provides an opportunity to review ways to relate to people of other faiths.

Which Way Is the Right Way? is a 45-session course, providing resources for half of one semester. We recommend class five days per week. However, if the class meets less often, you might (a) extend the material in this course over a longer period of time, (b) assign certain sessions to individuals or small groups for reports in class, or (c) select sessions or units in accordance with class periods available.

THE LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL RELIGION SERIES

This is one of 12 courses for Lutheran high schools. The courses have been designed for a variety of scheduling programs. Four courses contain 90 sessions each and provide materials for five sessions per week for one semester. Each of the other eight courses contains 45 sessions and is designed for one quarter.

Grade 9

Fitting In: Relationships with God and Others (45 sessions)

For God So Loved . . . : A Study of the Gospel of John (45 sessions)

God's Old Testament People (90 sessions)

Grade 10

God's Plan Unfolds: The Church from Nazareth to Nicaea (90 sessions)

One Body in Christ: A Study of the Church (45 sessions)

Instruments in God's Hands: A Study of Christian Ethics (45 sessions)

Grade 11

Saved by Grace: A Study of Christian Doctrine (90 sessions)

The Church Takes Shape: A Study of Church History (45 sessions)

Which Way Is the Right Way? A Study of Christianity, Cults, and Other Religions (45 sessions)

Grade 12

Personal Christian living (90 sessions)

Engagement and marriage (45 sessions)

The general epistles and Revelation (45 sessions)

This design was prepared after a survey of all high schools affiliated with the Association for Lutheran

Secondary Schools and after extensive conversations with high school and college teachers. Thus it reflects both current practices and theory. The Parish Services staff wishes to express a special word of thanks to the ALSS administrators for their assistance.

While any course assumes a certain background and maturity of the students, each course can stand alone—a previous course in this series is not an *absolute* prerequisite. The Student Books contain no grade level designations; therefore courses can be adapted to other grade levels.

MATERIALS

In addition to this guide, you will need a copy of the Student Book and a Bible. (This course generally quotes the New International Version. We recommend that you select a translation commonly used in the congregations of your students.)

Students will need a copy of the Student Book and a Bible, as well as access to other resources, such as Bible dictionaries and concordances.

USING THIS GUIDE

Some sessions suggest more activities than can be accomplished in one period. Be selective. You know your students. Use the activities and materials that will be of most value to them.

LAW AND GOSPEL

The plans in this guide help you structure sessions so that students see both Law and Gospel. You will want the Holy Spirit to work in them as they hear God's words of accusation, forgiveness, and guidance. As you begin to plan the course, you might reread *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* by C. F. W. Walther. This is good reading for all who work with youth, especially teachers.

Once (**John 12:20–21**) some Greeks came to Philip and said, “**Sir, we would like to see Jesus.**” Your basic goal as you teach each day should be to bring students to “see Jesus.” Confront them with their spiritual needs; then lead them to see Jesus their Savior as the Answer to those needs. Let His love permeate all relationships in your classroom as you grow together in grace by the Spirit's power. Set this as your primary goal, and let all other objectives grow within this goal.

We invite you to write the editors about *Which Way Is the Right Way?* Share the joys and frustrations you experienced as you taught this course, offer suggestions for other courses, etc. Please write

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UNIT 1: RELIGION! WHAT'S THAT?

There are only two religions in the world: the religion of people (which says that we must *do* something to appease God's wrath) and the religion of God (which says that God, in Christ, has done something to bring us closer to Himself). This religion of God is actually a faith and a life based on Christ's sacrifice for our sins.

The study of other religions, especially as you compare them to the Christian faith, can have several benefits for students. Very likely they will better understand others, will better understand their own faith, and will be better equipped to witness their faith to others.

Session 1: What Is a Religion?

BIBLE BASIS

Matt. 15:8–9

CENTRAL TRUTH

In Jesus Christ, God has presented true *religion* to us. People continue to have many differing, often conflicting ideas and definitions of religion. God encourages us to learn and to compare our faith with others, so our faith might be strengthened and so that others will “see” Jesus and accept Him as their Savior.

OBJECTIVES

By the grace of God students will

1. identify some of the opinions and attitudes (both Christian and non-Christian) that others have about *religion*;
2. express a bold desire to witness their faith in Jesus as Savior from sin;
3. profess an active faith in Jesus Christ;
4. assess their own definition of religion.

BACKGROUND

For an introduction, use the Student Book conversation between a preacher and a taxicab driver. (This has been adapted from the appendix of *Who Says I'm OK* by Alan Reuter [Concordia, 1974]) and is used by permission.)

Before teaching this session, write your definition of *religion* and study it for a few moments. How closely does it compare with those given below? Do you think students might have similar opinions? Compare these two dictionary definitions of the word *religion* with your own. Note your thoughts as you consider the similarities and differences.

[Religion is] belief in a divine or superhuman power or powers to be obeyed and worshiped as the creator(s) and ruler(s) of the universe . . . expression of such a belief in conduct and ritual . . . any specific system of belief, worship, conduct, etc. often involving a code of ethics and a philosophy . . . any system of beliefs, practices, ethical values, etc. resembling, suggestive of, or likened to such a system. . . . (Webster's New World Dictionary).

Religion is a man's recognition of his relation to

God and the expression of that relation in faith, worship, and conduct. It may be correct or not (Acts 26:5, James 1:26–27). *Biblical religion is primarily a thing of the heart and life rather than ritual* (The New Compact Bible Dictionary).

Many people think of *religion* as a series of *things* people do to get closer to God. The word *religion* in Latin seems to be related to a word that means *to tie back*. Quite understandably, people have gotten the idea that their religious deeds “tie them back” to God.

In this session help your students see how mere religion differs from a living faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Before beginning this first session, look over the remainder of the unit so that you can plan continuity and avoid duplication.

GETTING INTO THE SESSION

After students have read the first paragraph, ask if anyone needs clarification about the situation in which Jesus spoke these words. You might lead students in an opening prayer. Ask God for a right understanding of your faith, thank Him for bringing you into the Christian faith, and praise Him for preserving you in that faith to this point in your life.

WHAT IS RELIGION? (Objective 4)

1. Write the word *religion* on the chalkboard, and ask your students to write their definitions of the word on a separate paper. Suggest they try using the word in a sentence, outside the church usage. (For example, “I brush my teeth *religiously*.”) Students may find it easier to define *religion* that way, and then return to the church context.

2. Ask volunteers to share their definitions with the class. Look for definitions that define religion as a set of rituals, and contrast these with others that include a faith or a trust in God. As various definitions are shared, and this difference begins to emerge, see if students are aware of that distinction (but don't give away too much of the next exercise). Notice any students who have their definitions confused. Also note students who express guilt feelings over an apparent lack of commitment to Christ. You may be able to minister God's comforting grace to them individually later.

YES AND NO IN A TAXI CAB (Objectives 1 and 4)

Arrange two chairs, one behind the other, to be “seats in a taxi.” Have two students sit in these chairs and read the parts of the taxi driver and pastor. Choose students who will read loudly and expressively. Encourage realism.

Discuss the skit. You might use the following questions. Add more as time permits.

a. **The driver said, “You know, I got a theory about religion. All religions are OK if you practice them.” How is the driver wrong? How is the driver right?**

Point out the striking difference between Christianity and all other religions. Christianity tells what *God* has done (grace), and all other religions tell what *people* must do! This is “work-righteousness,” and seems to be the largest single difficulty most Christians have with their own faith! The driver is right in that all religions do try to answer basic questions about life (see session 3), but wrong in that all religions are OK so long as you practice them. The clergyman’s comment about Nazism demonstrates this.

Ask, **Can you think of any other religious systems that demonstrate that all religions are *not* OK even if you faithfully practice them?** Read Prov. 14:12. Discuss the **way that seems right to a man**. At least one rich young man felt that one could get to heaven by being good (Mark 10:17–31). Perhaps some in your class feel the same way.

(Your students will further discuss similarities and differences of religions in session 3.)

b. **The pastor suggested that Christianity isn’t some cheap escape from the way things are. How have people you know used religion or religious activities as an escape? In what way doesn’t Christianity allow us to escape? In what way do we escape?**

We can’t escape our sin, but in Christ we are freed from the futility of life and from the eternal death that it certainly brings. As the pastor said, Jesus “lets us in on Himself, on what He is and on what He does.” Christianity is a religion of *grace*. God offers Christ’s blood-bought forgiveness (Eph. 2:8–9) and through the Bible shows us the way to heaven (1 John 5:13).

c. **The pastor said that by the Gospel we “entrust ourselves to the YES in Jesus. We hold to that YES against the NO of life in history.” Why is it so important to distinguish between religion as a set of rituals and religion as a faith? What happens to our religion if this distinction becomes blurred?**

Religion is a set of motions; faith is the motive to follow through on those motions. Religion is a way of life; faith is *the* way of life. Trusting in the shed blood of Jesus, as a completed act, is more comforting than all the things we can hope to do in the future. Jesus’ grace is much more certain than all our rituals.

d. Discuss the Student Book questions. Empha-

size that *religion* encompasses more than lip service (“just belief”) or “right works.”

WHAT IS FAITH? (Objectives 2–4)

1. Stress the importance of seeing Christianity as more than a religion. Being a Christian is *more* than a way of life. Christianity is faith. Christianity is trusting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior from sin. Ask, **How would your life be different if you treated religion as a collection of rituals to be acted out?**

In 1 John 1:3–4 John describes faith as a *relationship* with Jesus Christ. In John 15:5–8 Jesus Himself says that this happens when we remain connected to Him. Faith is our relationship to Jesus Christ. If we are cut off from Him, no matter how hard we try, we can do nothing! Without faith, it’s impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6).

Compare this with being in a relationship with a member of your family. If you live *with* them, you feel closer to them. Ask, **What would happen to your relationship if you would move far away?**

Then move back to our spiritual relationship. Ask, **How can you remain close to Jesus?**

2. Tell the story of a tightrope walker. During the last century the great Blondin agreed to walk across Niagara Falls on a tightrope without the aid of a safety net as a publicity stunt. With cheering crowds lining both the United States and Canadian sides of the falls, this brave man carefully made his way over the windy chasm and cautiously picked his way back.

To the wild exultation of his fans, Blondin stepped to a rostrum and allowed his assistants to strap an ordinary straight-backed chair to his back. He then announced that he would walk the falls with this additional weight. A hush fell over the crowd as he once again began the trip. Again he successfully completed the round trip, to the wild cheering of the ecstatic onlookers. Finally he stepped to the podium. He would make the trip one last time, he announced, but this time he would carry a person seated in the chair fastened to his back. The crowds shouted their approval and their confidence in him until he asked the telling question, “Who will volunteer to ride in the chair?”

3. Ask, **If you were in the crowd that day, what would you have done? How does this true story illustrate both a phony and a true faith in Jesus Christ?**

4. Invite students to tell of a time when they felt like most of the people in the crowd—willing to cheer for Jesus, but afraid to get on His back and let Him carry them over their problems!

Recall Peter (Matt. 14:28–30). You may here wish to make note of Matt. 7:21; Rom. 10:9; and 1 Peter 3:15–16 (printed in the Student Book).

Like the crowds that day, many people are willing to talk about religion and cheer from the sidelines. But

the proof of the pudding is in the eating! The proof comes when we are willing to put our trust in Jesus to carry us across the gulf that, because of our sin, separates us from God. Stress the need to ask God for boldness in witnessing to the unique truth of Christianity (**Acts 5:29; Prov. 28:1**).

Close by praying that the Lord would continue to give each of you a right understanding of faith in Jesus. This prayer might also include a petition for boldness in sharing your faith with others.

REMEMBER

During each session a Bible verse will be provided in this section. If you ask your students to mem-

orize portions of the Bible on a regular basis, you might consider using this section.

These are printed from the New International Version of the Bible. We suggest, however, that you encourage students to continue to memorize from the Bible version they have used in the past.

FOR NEXT TIME

Ask students to write a brief description of their own personal Christian faith. During the next sessions allow about two minutes for each student who volunteers to share what he or she has written.

Some students will not care to share. Thank those who do, and be supportive and caring to all.

Session 2: What Is Christianity?

BIBLE BASIS

Acts 4:12

CENTRAL TRUTH

God, in the Bible, has revealed that people may approach Him *only* through His Son, Jesus Christ. Christianity, unlike any other religion, explains what *God has done* (in Christ) for His people. Other religions describe what *people must do* for their god. Christianity, then, is a faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior that causes believers to love all others unconditionally, as Christ has first loved them.

OBJECTIVES

By the grace of God students will

1. describe Christianity in concise and Biblically accurate terms;
2. describe the uniqueness and importance of Christ for *all* people;
3. use the Bible to evaluate other belief systems in light of the unique claims of Christ;
4. demonstrate their love for others, as Christ first loved them.

BACKGROUND

While the main emphasis of this course is not witnessing, you will be helping your students learn to witness Jesus Christ and their faith in Him, especially to people of other religions or faiths. In this session you will help your students develop a concise statement of their faith. This will be useful to them as they examine other religions throughout this course. It will also be valuable when a situation arises in which they have opportunity to witness to someone of another faith.

May God bless you as you share your personal faith with those to whom the Lord has called you to minister. Joy in your witnessing!

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY? (Objective 4)

Have students read this section in the Student Book and write their response on a separate sheet of

paper. Explain that they should write out the words they would tell the man if they had been Wally and had crawled under the bus that night.

Invite volunteers to share their responses with the class. Some may choose to talk about death, some about Jesus, and some about heaven. Some might give a “canned” witness. Some might quote Scripture. Others might talk about their relationship with Jesus. (Make a mental note of any who seem to be having difficulty with this exercise. You may wish to talk to them individually later, as the opportunity arises.) Explain that their answers will vary, depending on what they perceive as important.

YOU DON'T SAY! (Objectives 1–3)

1–5. Encourage students to write out what they think a non-Christian would say to the dying person. Suggest that they choose a person who holds beliefs with which they are familiar.

After they have written their answers, ask, **Could you say the same thing that these non-Christians said? Of course, you *could* have talked about the weather or donating body parts. But *would* you?**

6–7. Have students look up the **Acts 4:20** passage and note that it talks about how the early disciples felt *compelled* to share what they had experienced.

1 Peter 3:15 is Peter's encouragement to be prepared to witness in any and all situations.

Read the **Acts 4:12** verse together and discuss briefly the situation in which Peter spoke these words. Stress that Peter was on trial, and his life was at stake. Yet he didn't soften his witness. Ask, **What would our faith be like today if Peter had said, “Salvation is found in a few ways, and faith in Jesus is one of them”?** Obviously, we wouldn't have the same Gospel!

Ask, **How do God's exclusive claims about Jesus Christ help you decide what you *could* or *couldn't* say in a situation like this? Obviously you *could* talk about the church, money, or the weather. Continue, **What would you really like to talk about?****