



Which Way Is the Right Way?

A Study of Christianity, Cults and Other Religions

Student Book

By Bruce Frederickson

Edited by Board for Parish Services Staff

Editor: Arnold E. Schmidt



Publishing House
St. Louis

Editorial Secretary: Phoebe Wellman

Write to Library for the Blind, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295 to obtain *Which Way Is the Right Way? A Study of Christianity, Cults, and Other Religions*. (Student Book) in braille or sightsaving print for the visually impaired.

Unless otherwise stated, the Scripture quotations in this publication are from The Holy Bible: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION, © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

Bible quotations marked RSV are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1946, 1952, © 1971, 1973 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and are used by permission.

Bible quotations marked TEV are from the Good News Bible, the Bible in TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION. Copyright © American Bible Society 1966, 1971, 1976. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE, © The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1973, 1975, and are used by permission.

Copyright © 1988 Concordia Publishing House
3558 S. Jefferson Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63118-3968
Manufactured in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Concordia Publishing House.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 CA 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88

Contents

To the Student	4	Unit 4: The Established Cults	42
Unit 1: Religion! What's That?	5	19 Cults: What Are They?	43
1 What Is a Religion?	6	20 Cults: What Do They Offer?	45
2 What Is Christianity?	8	21 Is Christ God or Man?—The Jehovah's Witnesses	47
3 Who Cares What Others Believe, Anyway?	10	22 Anti-Trinitarianism: Who Is God?	49
Unit 2: World Religions: The Big Five	12	23 Mormonism: New Revelation Is Better than the Old?	51
4 Hinduism: One of the Oldest Religions	13	24 Worldwide Church of God: A Distortion of the Truth	53
5 Who Is the Enlightened One—Buddha or Christ?	15	25 Adventists: Jesus Is Coming Again, but When?	55
6 The Wisdom of the Ancients: Confucianism	17	26 Humanism: A House Built on Sand!	57
7 The Fastest-Growing Religion: Islam	19	27 Review of Sessions 19–26	59
8 The Lord Our God Is One Lord: Judaism	21	Unit 5: Eastern and “New Christian” Cults	60
9 Review of Sessions 1–8	23	28 Where Did All the New Cults Come From?	61
Unit 3: “I Am the Way”: Christian Religions	24	29 In New Christian Cults, the Moon Is Not the Son!	63
10 The Great Schism: Roman Catholic, Orthodox Traditions	25	30 The New Light from the East Is Dark!	65
11 The Reformation: Roots of Protestantism	27	31 New Science Religions	67
12 Denominations: Let's Talk About It	29	32 Entering and Leaving Cults	69
13 Denominations: Agreeing to Disagree	31	33 Review of Sessions 28–32	71
14 Iconoclasm: Back to Basics?	33	Unit 6: Satanic Cults	72
15 Movements in Protestantism: Calvinism	35	34 Satan Is “Alive and Well”: The Occult Explosion	73
16 Movements in Protestantism: Arminianism	37	35 Astrology: It's in the Stars	75
17 Movements in Protestantism: Synergism	39	36 Witchcraft and Magick	77
18 Review of Sessions 10–17	41	37 Spiritism: Beyond Death's Door	79
		38 Organized Satanism	81
		39 Unmasking the New Age	83
		40 “But It's Only a Game!”	85
		41 “It's Only a Song!”	87
		42 Review of Sessions 34–41	89
		Unit 7: Your Faith and Others	90
		43 Relating to the Faith of Others	91
		44 Replacing Fear with Confidence	93
		45 Review of Sessions 1–44	95

To the Student

What will it be like to leave home—to be completely on your own for the first time, like when you go away to college, join the Armed Forces, or report to your first year-round, full-time job?

You can be sure you'll meet people very different from yourself. Their skin will be a different color or they'll wear different-style clothes and eat different kinds of foods. Maybe one of these people will be a roommate and you will date another one. Maybe they will talk with you about another difference—their religious beliefs.

How will you respond?

Will you know what they're talking about? Will you know enough about their beliefs to carry on a conversation with them? Will you be able to talk to them about your faith in Jesus—without “turning them off”?

Of course, you will need to trust God to guide you at that time. After Jesus warned His disciples that they would face persecution because of their faith, He promised them, “**Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit**” (Mark 13:11). As a child of God, you can rely on that promise.

God is preparing you *right now* for that day. One way He is preparing you is through this course on *Which Way Is the Right Way? A Study of Christianity, Cults, and Other Religions*. May He through this study keep you faithful to Him and equip you to witness effectively to people who do not know Jesus as their Savior.

The Editor

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 everything for us). He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for our sins. He brought us closer to Himself. In the words of Paul, **"God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them"** (2 Corinthians 5:19). This is the message everyone needs to hear!

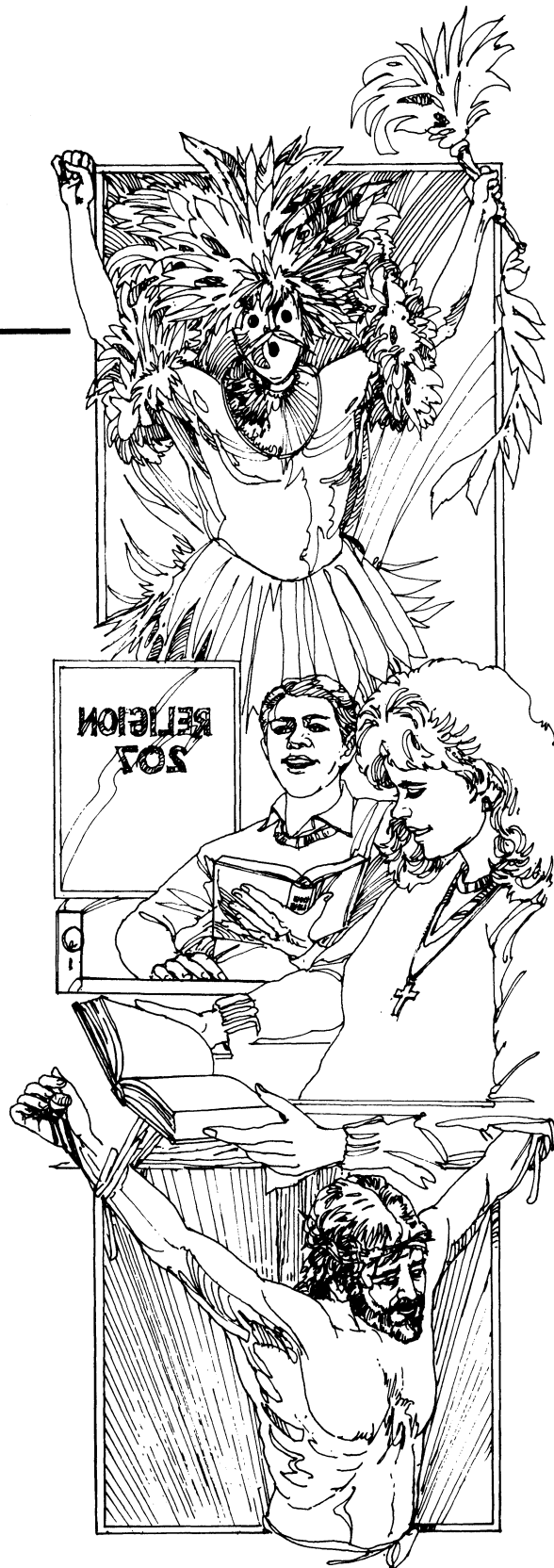
During this course you will learn many new things. You will also review some things you've known for a long time. The most important message for you is that God loves all people, just as He loves you. He wants you to know that, so that you can be motivated to share the great Good News with others.

By learning about other religions you'll be better able to witness your faith to them. You'll find ways in which religions are similar and ways in which they are different. You'll discover some things about other religions that will help you avoid saying something offensive to them. And you'll also discover situations in which God can particularly use you to His glory by sharing what Jesus means to you.

Before you share with people of other religions, be sure you know your own religion well. Above all, you need a firm personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Read His Word often and speak to Him in prayer frequently.

Notice the Bible verses at the end of each session. Mark them in your Bibles. Try to remember the connection between the verse and the point of the lesson. Then meditate on that verse as you go about your daily life. And when the Lord places before you an opportunity to share your faith, use His Word!

May the Lord give you great wisdom in your studying. May He give you a sense of joy in knowing Him personally. And may He empower you and make you a bold witness to His name!



Session 1

What Is a Religion?



While speaking to some Pharisees and teachers of the Law, Jesus quoted the Old Testament prophet Isaiah: “**These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men**” (Matthew 15:8–9). Jesus judged their religiosity. He told them it consisted only in empty rituals.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

1. Write your definition of *religion* on a separate sheet of paper. Then use *religion* in a sentence, but not in a “churchy” sense.

2. Share your definition or sentence with others. Did you learn anything further about the meaning of the word religion?

Now look up the word in a dictionary and compare its definition there with yours. What is the difference between using the word in a “churchy” sense and using it otherwise? How does this help your understanding of *religion*?

YES AND NO IN A TAXI CAB

Here is a conversation between a clergyman and a taxicab driver. The driver throws the first words over his shoulder in the direction of the clerical collar he glimpsed when the clergyman got into the cab.

Driver: Where to?

Clergyman: Airport, please.

Driver: You a priest or something?

Clergyman: I’m a Lutheran pastor.

Driver: That so? I used to go to a Lutheran church. St. Paul’s on the north side. Pastor X baptized my kids. Know him?

Clergyman: Yes, I do.

Driver: Yeah? I liked him a lot, but I don’t go much any more. (Pause.) You know, I got a theory about religion. All religions are OK if you practice them.

Clergyman (not interested): That so?

Driver: Yeah! Every religion is good so long as you put it into practice.

Clergyman (suddenly deciding to take the conversation seriously): Could I test your theory?

Driver: Sure, go ahead. Always like to talk about religion.

Clergyman: What would you say about Hitler and Nazism? Was that a good religion?

Driver (surprised): That wasn’t no religion!

Clergyman: But it had many of the characteristics of a religion—rituals, doctrines, heretics. Most important, Hitler demanded and got total loyalty and unquestioning obedience. The institutions of Nazism replaced those of Christianity almost item by item. What does that do to your theory that every religion is good so long as you put it into practice?

Driver: Well you sure got a crazy definition of religion!

Clergyman: Let’s look at another time people think of religion—when someone dies.

Driver: Yeah! I’ve thought about that. It bothers me when I think that one of my kids might die. I used to go into their rooms at night when they were little, and they’d be sleeping, and I’d love them so much I could just feel it. I knew if one of ’em died it would be awful. I knew I couldn’t stand it. I would even pray once in a while that God won’t let ’em die. I thought going to church might help. But then there didn’t really seem to be a God. ’Scuse me, Reverend. I don’t mean to insult you.

Clergyman: That’s OK. Go ahead.

Driver: Finally it just seemed useless, all that singing and praying and sitting and standing. Mind you, I’m not against religion. Good for the kids to get some starch into their lives, something to keep ’em straight.

But I knew that if something was going to happen to 'em, it would. Nothing I could do.

Clergyman: What do you expect from Christianity? A cheap escape from whatever frightens you?

Driver: Well, what is Jesus supposed to do?

Clergyman: He lets us in on Himself, on what He is and on what He does. He is YES to us, and He asks us to believe that and to give up our other “gods” and self-justifications. His best-known stories were about Himself, because He was accused of saying YES to people who didn’t have much going for them socially or morally or religiously—whores and traitors. He told about a son who took his inheritance and left home.

Driver: Yeah, yeah, I know. “Prodigal son.” Right?

Clergyman: Right. Jesus has a different way of dealing with rejected people. We might call it “forgiveness,” but it does not come cheap. Jesus’ death is His final and total commitment to us. He experienced the verdict—let it happen to Him.

The boy in Jesus’ story got that kind of YES; it set him free to admit that he was wrong. We are given that YES in Jesus; it sets us free to say NO to our fake religions. The YES is stronger than the verdict, because when the verdict had done its worst, the YES overcame it.

Driver: I never heard it that way before.

Clergyman: But that’s what Christians mean by “Gospel.” We entrust ourselves to the YES in Jesus. We hold to that YES against the NO of life in history. Jesus makes us free—free to enjoy His gifts, like bowling and kids and work and the wife. We’re no longer trapped into making gods out of them. We’re free to be *for* them as Jesus is *for* us.

Driver: Well, where does church and praying fit into all this?

Clergyman: It helps if we first stop thinking that church is a building or a religious organization. Church is really what happens to people when the Gospel is happening to them and through them to other people. The words that Christians share with one another about Jesus as God the Forgiver are meant to set them free for one another and for all men.

Driver: Doesn’t sound like any church I know.

1. Think about it. In what ways is the taxi driver right?

2. In what ways is he wrong?

3. How would you react differently than this pastor did?

4. Read **2 Corinthians 1:18–22**. What does it mean to you that Jesus is your YES?

5. Read **James 1:26–27; 2:14–17**. Can religion be just belief? Explain.

6. Can religion be only a collection of *right* works? Why or why not?

WHAT IS FAITH?

1. Describe the difference between a religion and a faith.

2. Ask your teacher to tell you a story about Blondin, a publicity-seeking tightrope walker. How could you relate the story of the tightrope walker to the difference between religion and faith?

3. When do you stand on the sidelines and cheer? When are you silent?

4. Describe a situation in which you *wished* you had said more (like this preacher did).

Ask God to give you a new boldness to share His love with others, especially those of faiths other than yours. May His peace and certainty fill you with joy in your sharing the Gospel wherever and whenever it might be.

REMEMBER

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

1 Peter 3:15–16

FOR NEXT TIME

If you had only two minutes to describe your faith to someone, what would you say? How much or how little would you include in your short statement of belief? Are there any already-prepared statements that you might use?

Session 2

What Is Christianity?

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

Wally came home from work late one night. As usual, he rode the bus. Suddenly he heard a thud and felt the bus lurch to an awkward halt. The driver ordered everyone out immediately. The curious passengers piled out quickly. The gathering crowd buzzed with excitement.

As Wally stepped out of the bus into the cold night air, he heard a woman ask, "What happened?"

"Some fellow got hit," one man replied in a gruff voice. "He's under there now," he continued, pointing under the bus.

"Why don't they move the bus off him?" the same woman pleaded.

"It would kill him immediately if they did," came the response from the same man, only softer this time. "I'm afraid he's stuck under there!"

The woman gasped, as she shivered against the chilling night air.

Wally knelt down, quietly surveyed the situation, and moved to the front of the bus. He saw a body pinned between the two wheels. Any movement of the bus would surely crush the already badly injured man, he thought. Wally heard the bus driver yelling for someone to call an ambulance and a tow truck.

Without hesitating, Wally crawled under the bus. To his amazement, he discovered that the man was conscious. Wally hadn't had much medical training beyond the Boy Scout First Aid Merit Badge and the little bit of First Aid in health class the previous semester. But inexperienced as he was, it was obvious to Wally that the man was near death.

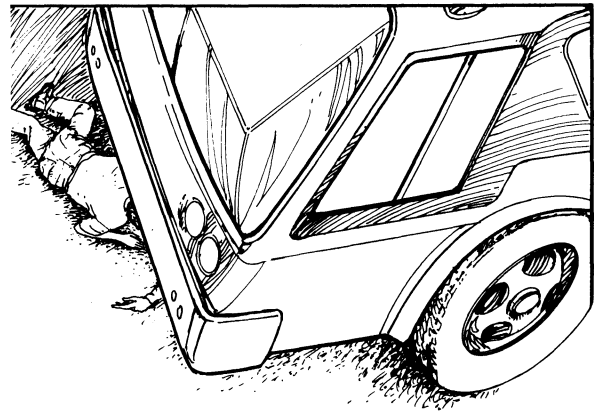
Wally took a deep breath and began to talk. He spoke in a low, but distinct voice. Wally told the man

...

Wait. Let's ask you. What would you have told the man if you had been Wally?

YOU DON'T SAY!

1. Maybe you wouldn't have crawled under the bus in the first place! Imagine instead that you watched someone else crawl under the bus, someone you *knew*



wasn't a Christian. What do you suppose that person would say to the dying man?

2. Ask yourself, "Could I say the same thing to that person?" Why or why not?

3. What if that non-Christian just talked about the weather—how cool it was that evening. Could you have said that? Why or why not?

4. Suppose that non-Christian crawled under the bus and tried to have the man sign an organ-donor card. Could you have done that?

5. Suppose he tried to encourage the person by saying, "Contemplate. Meditate. Simply believe you're out from under this bus, and it will be." Could you say that?

6. We Christians have a unique and very important message: Jesus. We are compelled to talk about Him (**Acts 4:20**). No, we don't always choose the time or place (**1 Peter 3:15**). But we are encouraged to do it with boldness. We are encouraged to share the *hope* that Jesus gives us!

Listen to what Peter said. "**Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved**" (**Acts 4:12**). Peter was talking to a group of people who were having a hard time believing. They couldn't quite accept the fact that Jesus truly was the Messiah who had risen from the dead. Peter was on trial for his life. He could have chosen to say nothing, but he sensed that people were dying—just like the person under the bus. Peter spoke up. He didn't mince words, either. He spoke about Jesus. Peter said, "Jesus is the only way to heaven." No ifs, ands, or buts!