

Series: Born to Be Believe

Lesson 2: The Monotheistic Religions

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Identify the three monotheistic faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
- Identify some of the similarities and differences between these religions.
- Discover ways to dialogue with Jewish and Muslim people in a Christian way.

Materials Needed:

- ☐ A copy of *Monotheistic Madness*, page A-45 to A-48
- ☐ Prizes (optional)
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Copies of page A-44
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Overhead projector
- ☐ Overhead copies of page A-44
- ☐ Overhead pens

Lead In:

Break group into two or three teams and tell them that you are going to play a game of *Monotheistic Madness*. The game is a series of questions that can be found on page A-45 to A-48. After each answer there is an explanation of the answer, which can be used to spark more conversation on the various religions.

As for the game, each team will take turns answering a question. They will have 30 seconds to provide an answer. If they get the answer wrong the same question will go to the next team. Each question has a point value and the team with the most points wins. Instruct them to keep score or appoint a score keeper for the game.

Task One:

Have a volunteer read Genesis 12:1-3 to the rest of the group. Before he or she reads, ask the students to identify the three promises that God makes to Abraham. They are 1) to give him land, 2) to make him the father of a great nation, and 3) to make him a blessing to others.

Ask students if anyone knows or remembers the story of Abraham. See what they can piece together. Basically, he and his wife Sarah were old and had no children but God promised to change that and God did. The couple has two children, Ishmael and Isaac.

Ask the students if they know the significance of these two brothers for Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths. Jews and Christians consider Abraham the father of a great nation through Isaac. Muslims consider Abraham the father of a great nation through Ishmael.

Transition by saying something like, *Despite these similarities, these three religions are distinct and believe different things.*

Task Two:

Ask the students if they remember The Four Big Questions from last week. They are as follows:

5. Where am I?
6. Who am I?
7. What is the problem?
8. What is the solution?

Tell the students that you are going to give them a handout that is going to guide them to compare the religions and find what is similar and different. The instructions are on the handout.

When they are finished, gather them for feedback. Solicit answers to the blanks. A good way to do this would be on an overhead. Copy page A-44 and then do one of these three things: a) write the words up as the students call them out, b) have a volunteer do the same, c) give overhead pens to the students to come and fill in the blanks. Either way, don't correct the answers yet. Record anything that is called. When this is done, ask the whole group to look at the answers and decide if they agree. Reading column by column, top to bottom and then left to right, the answers are as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| 1. Judaism | 6. Denied |
| 2. Christianity | 7. Affirmed |
| 3. Islam | 8. Affirmed |
| 4. solution | 9. Friday |
| 5. Synagogue | 10. Mosque |

Task Three:

Now ask the students to turn back to their groups and answer these questions with the help of their handouts and their own knowledge:

1. What do Christians have in common with Jewish people?
2. What is different between Christian beliefs and Jewish beliefs?
3. What do Christians have in common with Muslim people?
4. What is different between Christian beliefs and Muslim beliefs?

Again, gather the students back when they are done and solicit answers from the whole group. Some possible answers are as follows:

1. Both Jews and Christians believe that God created the world, that there is only one God, that God is loving and gracious, that humans were created in God's image, that the Old Testament is authoritative Scripture, that God promised a Messiah, that people should worship God, that morality is based on God's law, that there is sin in the world, and so on. There are *many* possible similarities.
2. The main difference is that Christians believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah and that by following him anyone can have forgiveness of sins, and that it is through Jesus that people are saved rather than by following the Mosaic law.
3. Some of the same similarities as in question number one are possible. God created the world, God is in charge, people should worship and surrender to God, God is the standard for morality, Jesus is a prophet, there is sin in the world, etc..
4. There are several key differences the main one being that Muslims don't believe that Jesus is God nor that there is salvation by grace. Other differences include scripture; Muslims follow the Koran (like a list of rules for living) written by their prophet Muhammad. Muslims believe that right living is the way to salvation. They also believe that men were created to be superior to women, whereas Christians believe that men and women both bear God's image and are equal.

Say something like, *As you can see, there are many things that followers of all three of these religions have in common. They all believe in one creator God, in worship, in right living, and so on. But if you had to boil down the main thing about Christianity, in contrast to these other religions, the thing that makes Christianity unique, what would you say it was?*

Look for the answer Jesus. Yes, it's the Sunday School answer but it is also the make or break difference between Christian belief and all other belief. Christians worship Jesus as God incarnate where no other faith does. Christian belief rests and falls on the divinity of Jesus. That's the key thing to grasp here.

Task Four:

Now ask the students, *If you were talking about faith with a Jewish person or a Muslim person, what could you say or how could you act in a Christian way?*

Look for three things: a) that students could focus on what they have in common with people of other faiths as listed above, b) that students could articulate their belief in the divinity of Jesus, and that c) all this (the relationship and the conversation) could be done in a Christian way, treating the person with love, dignity, patience, care, respect and so on.

Closing:

Conclude the evening with prayer for people of all faiths to come to know truth and for Christians to interact with people of all faiths in ways that are Christ-like.