

# Junior Soldiers

UNIT 13 : LESSON 5



## Understanding different religions

**PURPOSE:** To acknowledge that there are people of many faiths living in our community; to gain a brief understanding of the key similarities and differences; and to consider how we can best respond as disciples of Jesus.

Jesus told him, “I am the Way—yes, and the Truth and the Life. No one can get to the Father except by means of me.” John 14:6 (TLB) Looking at absolute truth. “Dear friends, let us practice loving each other, for love comes from God and those who are loving and kind show that they are the children of God, and that they are getting to know him better. 8 But if a person isn’t loving and kind, it shows that he doesn’t know God—for God is love.” 1 John 4:7-8 (TLB) Speaking the truth in love

So Paul, standing before them at the Mars Hill forum, addressed them as follows: “Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious, for as I was out walking I saw your many altars, and one of them had this inscription on it –‘To the Unknown God.’ You have been worshiping him without knowing who he is, and now I wish to tell you about him.” Acts 17:1-4; 10-12; 16-31 (TLB) The world we live in and how we are to approach others.

## Consider & Prepare

This is a difficult but necessary topic for us to address with children who are living in a multicultural society. The children in your group may already have friends who belong to faith communities of other religions. They may also have heard information about other religions through discussions at school or the media.

Please take special note of the purpose for this lesson. At this stage in their development we are simply aiming to acknowledge that other faiths exist in our communities, that they are similar in some ways but that they have key differences to the Christian faith. We want to equip our children to be secure in their faith and to treat every person with love and respect, regardless of what they believe.

Take some time to read the Scripture verses above and pray about your own response. Pray for the children in your group as they continue to grow as followers of Christ.

The following information will provide you with a basic reference point for this lesson. We recommend that you have this information on hand during the lesson as it may assist you with answering any questions that arise.



## Positional Statement – Multi-Faith Events

Multi-faith events acknowledge the presence of different faith groups in the community and provide an opportunity for the Christian faith to be represented in a multi-faith environment.

In Australia, there are occasions when peoples of different faiths may be invited to participate in community events. These may be initiated in contexts such as school ceremonies, civic celebrations and trauma situations. They provide opportunities for people to acknowledge the spiritual dimension of life.

The Salvation Army supports co-operation in events that celebrate our shared humanity, such as relief work, community development, and civic celebrations. When Salvationists are present at such events, they affirm what they believe to be true about God and their relationship with him and give witness to God revealed to the world through Jesus Christ.

## Doctrines

The Salvation Army has 11 faith-based statements called doctrines that summarise its religious beliefs. These doctrinal statements place the Salvos in harmony with other mainstream denominations of Protestant Christianity.

1. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.
2. We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.
3. We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, undivided in essence and co-equal in power and glory.
4. We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.
5. We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocence, but by their disobedience, they lost their purity and happiness, and that in consequence of their fall, all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.
6. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has by His suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.



7. We believe that repentance toward God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit are necessary to salvation. Consider & Prepare
8. We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.
9. We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.
10. We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
11. We believe in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, in the general judgement at the end of the world, in the eternal happiness of the righteous, and in the endless punishment of the wicked.

### Other world religions

The following information is only a summary of a range of major religions. Please keep in mind that they will contain generalisations and that there may be many different groups within each religion.

For more information see "Spectators Guide to World Religions" by John Dickson.

#### Islam

- One God, Allāh
- Abrahamic religion
- Islamic Holy book is the Qur'an, considered by its adherents to be the verbatim word of God, the unaltered and final revelation of God
- The Qur'an also includes the prophetic traditions (or hadith) of Muhammad (c. 570–8 June 632 CE), considered by them to be the last law bearing prophet of God
- An adherent of Islam is called a Muslim
- Muslims believe that the purpose of existence is to worship God
- Muslims believe that Islam is the complete version of a primordial faith that was revealed many times before through prophets including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus
- Muslims maintain that the previous revelations have been partially misinterpreted or altered over time
- Islamic religious concepts and practices include the five pillars of Islam



- The five pillars of Islam are basic concepts and obligatory acts of worship which touch on virtually every aspect
- of life and society, from banking and welfare, to family life and the environment.
- Most Muslims are of two denominations: Sunni (75–90%) or Shia (10–20%)
- About 13% of Muslims live in Indonesia
- The largest Muslim-majority country, 25% in South Asia, 20% in the Middle East, and 15% in Sub-Saharan
- Africa
- Sizable minorities are also found in Europe, China, Russia, and the Americas
- With about 1.6 billion followers or 23% of world population, Islam is the second-largest religion and the fastest growing religion in the world.

<http://www.islam-guide.com/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/>

<http://www.islamreligion.com/>

## Buddhism

- Has no personal God or gods (nontheistic)
- Is a religion or dharma, “right way of living”, that encompasses a variety of traditions, beliefs and practices
- Largely based on teachings attributed to Siddhartha Gautama, commonly known as the Buddha (“the awakened one”)
- The Buddha lived and taught in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent sometime between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE
- The Buddha is recognized by Buddhists as an enlightened teacher who shared his insights to help people end their suffering by eliminating ignorance and cravings
- This is achieved by understanding certain concepts including the Four Noble Truths
- The ultimate goal of Buddhism is the attainment of the sublime state of Nirvana, by practicing the Noble Eightfold Path (also known as the Middle Way)
- Two major branches of Buddhism are Theravada (“The School of the Elders”) and Mahayana (“The Great Vehicle”)
- Theravada has a widespread following in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia
- Mahayana is found throughout East Asia and includes the traditions of Pure Land, Zen, Nichiren Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Shingon, and Tiantai (Tendai)



- In some classifications, Vajrayana – practiced mainly in Tibet and Mongolia – is recognized as a third branch, with a body of teachings attributed to Indian siddhas, while others classify it as a part of Mahayana.
- Buddhist schools vary on the exact nature of the path to liberation
- One consistent belief held by all Buddhist schools is the lack of a Creator deity
- The foundations of Buddhist tradition and practice are the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma (the teachings), and the Sangha (the community)
- Taking “refuge in the triple gem” has traditionally been a declaration and commitment to being on the Buddhist path
- Other practices may include following ethical precepts; support of the monastic community; renouncing conventional living and becoming a monastic; the development of mindfulness and practice of meditation; cultivation of higher wisdom and discernment; study of scriptures; devotional practices; ceremonies; and in the Mahayana tradition, invocation of buddhas and bodhisattvas

<http://www.gotquestions.org/buddhism.html>

[http://kadampa.org/reference/buddhist-beliefs?](http://kadampa.org/reference/buddhist-beliefs?gclid=CMXq1oLLrsUCFdclvQodnQMADw)

[gclid=CMXq1oLLrsUCFdclvQodnQMADw](http://kadampa.org/reference/buddhist-beliefs?gclid=CMXq1oLLrsUCFdclvQodnQMADw)

<http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/5minbud.htm>

## Hindu

- Unlike most other religions, Hinduism has no single founder, no single scripture, and no commonly agreed set of teachings
- Hinduism is often referred to as ‘a way of life’ or ‘a family of religions’ rather than a single religion
- Although it is not easy to define Hinduism, we can say that it is rooted in India, most Hindus revere a body of texts as sacred scripture known as the Veda, and most Hindus draw on a common system of values known as dharma
- Hinduism originated around the Indus Valley near the River Indus in modern day Pakistan
- About 80% of the Indian population regard themselves as Hindu
- Most Hindus believe in a Supreme God, whose qualities and forms are represented by the multitude of deities which emanate from him
- Hindus believe that existence is a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, governed by Karma



- Hindus believe that the soul passes through a cycle of successive lives and its next incarnation is always dependent on how the previous life was lived
- Hindus believe that the soul reincarnates, evolving through many births until all karmas have been resolved, and moksha, spiritual knowledge and liberation from the cycle of rebirth, is attained. Not a single soul will be eternally deprived of this destiny
- Hindus celebrate many holy days, but the Festival of Lights, Diwali is the best known
- Hindus believe that a spiritually awakened master, or satguru, is essential to know the Transcendent Absolute, as are personal discipline, good conduct, purification, pilgrimage, self-inquiry and meditation
- Hindus believe that all life is sacred, to be loved and revered, and therefore practice ahimsa, “noninjury”
- Hindus believe that no particular religion teaches the only way to salvation above all others, but that all genuine religious paths are facets of God’s Pure Love and Light, deserving tolerance and understanding
- With more than a billion adherents, Hinduism is the world’s third largest religion. The vast majority of Hindus, approximately 940 million, live in India. Other countries with large Hindu populations include Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, United States, Fiji, United Kingdom, Singapore, Canada and the island of Bali in Indonesia

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/ataglance/glance.shtml>

<http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Hinduism/2000/06/A-Summary-Of-What-Most-Hindus-Believe.aspx#QEhSu3pUzqGltwKA.99>

<http://hinduism.about.com/od/godsgoddesses/tp/deities.htm>

## Judaism

- Judaism is the religion, philosophy, and way of life of the Jewish people
- One God
- The Torah is the foundational text supplemented by the Midrash and the Talmud
- Judaism is considered by religious Jews to be the expression of the covenantal relationship that God established with the Children of Israel
- Judaism includes a wide range of texts, practices, theological positions, and forms of organization



- Within Judaism there are a variety of movements. Today, the largest Jewish religious movements are Orthodox Judaism, Conservative Judaism and Reform Judaism. Major sources of difference between these groups are their approaches to Jewish law, the authority of the Rabbinic tradition, and the significance of the State of Israel
- Authority on theological and legal matters is not vested in any one person or organization, but in the sacred texts and rabbis and scholars who interpret them
- Judaism has its roots as a structured religion in the Middle East during the Bronze Age
- Judaism is considered one of the oldest monotheistic religions
- Many aspects of Judaism have directly or indirectly influenced secular Western ethics and civil law
- The Jews include those born Jewish and converts to Judaism
- In 2012, the world Jewish population was estimated at about 14 million, or roughly 0.2% of the total world population. About 42% of all Jews reside in Israel and about 42% reside in the United States and Canada, with most of the remainder living in Europe, and other minority groups spread throughout the world in South America, Asia, Africa, and Australia

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/beliefs/beliefs\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/beliefs/beliefs_1.shtml)

<http://www.jewfaq.org/index.shtml>

**What you will need:**

**For Connecting in**

- Print off the pictures and words from Appendix A – you should have 25 A4 pages plus a summary sheet
- Blu-tack (If you would like to stick the pictures and words on the wall)

**For the Main Thing**

- A selection of chocolate bars. Choose a few different varieties and provide enough of these varieties for the children to have one each.
- Non-chocolate Options: things in nature [leaf, stick, pebbles, shells etc]; different stationery items [pen, pencil eraser, ruler, paper, etc], anything that you can use that gives each child a different item that can be all linked in the one category. While other items may be used, the principle & activity is still the same.
- Print off the cards from Appendix B and cut them out so that you can hand them out individually
- Blu-tack (If you would like to stick them on the wall)



## For Tying In

- A sheet of paper for each child
- Coloured markers
- Bibles

## Connecting in

I wonder if you have any friends who have different beliefs to you. Maybe there are children in your school who are Muslims or Buddhists. There are many different religions represented throughout the world. Today we are going to investigate some of these and think about what it is that makes Christianity different. The information we will look at today is only a small summary about each one. Remember that, just as Christians have different denominations, like Catholic, Anglican or The Salvation Army, other religions have separate groups which may believe slightly different things or behave in different ways.

### Match it up

Take the headings (Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism) you have printed from Appendix A and spread them out on the ground. Work together through each of the other sheets from Appendix A and ask the children to decide which religion each set of symbols, traditional clothing, Holy book and god/gods belongs to.

## The main thing

**Illustration:** We're not all Mars Bars...

If you have chosen a non-chocolate option you will need to adjust this slightly to suit.

- Hand out a chocolate to each person and ask everyone who has a chocolate to get together
- Ask the Mars Bar to get together, ask the M&M's to get together, ask the Snickers to get together and ask the Curly Wurly's to get together
- Many people say that all religions are looking for something more... they're all religions, but, in the same way that a Mars Bar is not M&Ms is not Snickers is not a Curly Wurly... Islam is not Buddhism is not Hinduism is not Christianity.
- We all believe in something – but what we believe in is different.



## Similarities and Difference

Take the cards from Appendix B and hand them out to the children. Ask them to read the card aloud then decide whether it is something that is similar or different to what Christians believe. Divide the cards into two groups – similar and different. You might like to stick them onto the wall in these two groups.

Ask the children

- What are some of the things that many religions have in common?
- What is important and different about what we believe as Christians?

The most important difference between Christianity and every other religion is Jesus. We don't just believe that he existed as a man or that he was a good teacher. We believe that he is God, that he lived on earth, that he died and that he came back to life after three days. We believe that our faith in Jesus is the only way for us to be saved and live forever with God.

In John 14:6 (TLB) Jesus said, "I am the Way – yes, and the Truth and the Life. No one can get to the Father except by means of me.

As Christians, we believe that the God that we worship in the Bible is the God of the whole world, but that doesn't mean that everyone agrees with us.

This was true back in Bible times too.

Read – Acts 17:22-23 (TLB)

People of Athens, I see that you are very religious. 23 As I was going through your city and looking at the things you worship, I found an altar with the words, "To an Unknown God." You worship this God, but you don't really know him. So I want to tell you about him.

## Tying In

It is important now for us to think about how we should respond when people have beliefs that are different from our own.

Provide each child with a blank sheet of paper and some markers. Pause after each section to allow the children to reflect on what they have heard. Some children may process this better if they are allowed to chat as they make notes.

Ask the children to look up each of the following four Scripture references in their Bibles.

1. John:13:34-35 (CEV)

But I am giving you a new command. You must love each other, just as I have loved you. 35 If you love each other, everyone will know that you are my disciples. We must always treat all people with love and respect, no matter what they believe. We can treat them with love and respect even if we don't agree with what they believe.



Write words or draw pictures as you think about what this means.

b) 1 Thessalonians 1:7-10 (CEV) You became an example for all the Lord's followers in Macedonia and Achaia.<sup>8</sup> And because of you, the Lord's message has spread everywhere in those regions. Now the news of your faith in God is known all over the world, and we don't have to say a thing about it. <sup>9</sup> Everyone is talking about how you welcomed us and how you turned away from idols to serve the true and living God. <sup>10</sup> They also tell how you are waiting for his Son Jesus to come from heaven. God raised him from death, and on the Day of Judgment Jesus will save us from God's anger. When we have friends or family members who don't agree with our beliefs we can show them by the way we live what it means to be a Christian.

Write words or draw pictures as you think about what this means.

c) Colossians 4:5-6 (CEV) When you are with unbelievers, always make good use of the time. <sup>6</sup> Be pleasant and hold their interest when you speak the message. Choose your words carefully and be ready to give answers to anyone who asks questions. Colossians 4:5-6 (CEV)

When people do want to talk to us about being a Christian it is important to know what we believe and why we believe it.

Write words or draw pictures as you think about what this means.

d) John 15:26-27 (CEV) I will send you the Spirit who comes from the Father and shows what is true. The Spirit will help you and will tell you about me. <sup>27</sup> Then you will also tell others about me, because you have been with me from the beginning. Sometimes it can be hard to know what to say when people ask us questions. We can learn as much as we can and we can also trust the Holy Spirit to help us to know what to say. We can also trust him to speak directly to the hearts and minds of others.

Write words or draw pictures as you think about what this means.

**Pray this benediction from Ephesians 3 for your children**

God is wonderful and glorious. I pray that his Spirit will make you become strong followers <sup>17</sup> and that Christ will live in your hearts because of your faith. Stand firm and be deeply rooted in his love. <sup>18</sup> I pray that you and all of God's people will understand what is called wide or long or high or deep. <sup>19</sup> I want you to know all about Christ's love, although it is too wonderful to be measured. Then your lives will be filled with all that God is. Ephesians 3:16-19 (CEV)



# Home & Beyond

## Be observant

- Notice the people that are at your school, shopping centre, in your street, etc. over the next week & make a mental list of all the difference and similarity
- As you become aware of the different ways that people behave, think of...
  - The way that you respond to them?
  - The way that they might see you behave?
  - How the way you live helps other people to know about Jesus.
  - Is there a way that you can show Jesus more through the way you live?

## Challenge yourself

- Look around your area/ school and identify 3 different faith/religions, then challenge yourself to investigate them to find out more.
- You might find an older person or the officer in you church to ask for information, Google the name of the religion, or head to the library.
- Once you have finished your investigation, share your findings with a friend, your parents, your big bud, or someone that you feel comfortable with to think through the differences between you and people of the other faith.
- Ask the question... "Does this affect my relationship with God... how?"

## Reflect

- Think about how you can show that you're a Christian by the way that you live.
- Over the next week, look for 3 ways that you can do this when something pops up to challenge/question your faith.
- Find 3 ways that you can practically show Jesus love to people that believe something different to you.



# Home & Beyond

Be observant

- Notice the people that are at your school, shopping centre, in your street, etc. over the next week & make a mental list of all the different ways that people behave, think of...
  - As you become aware of the different ways that people behave, think of...
  - The way that you might see you behave?
  - The way that they might see you behave to know about Jesus.
  - How the way you live helps other people to know about Jesus.
  - How the way you live helps other people more through the way you live?
  - Is there a way that you can show Jesus more through the way you live?
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  - Does this affect my relationship with God... how?
  - Ask the question... "Does this affect my relationship with God... how?"
  - Reflect
  - Think about how you can show that you're a Christian by the way that you live.
  - Over the next week, look for 3 ways that you can do this when something pops up to challenge you.
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**Junior Soldiers**

# Home & Beyond

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**Junior Soldiers**



## Appendix A

# BUDDHISM



**ISLAM**



**CHRISTIANITY**



**JUDASIM**

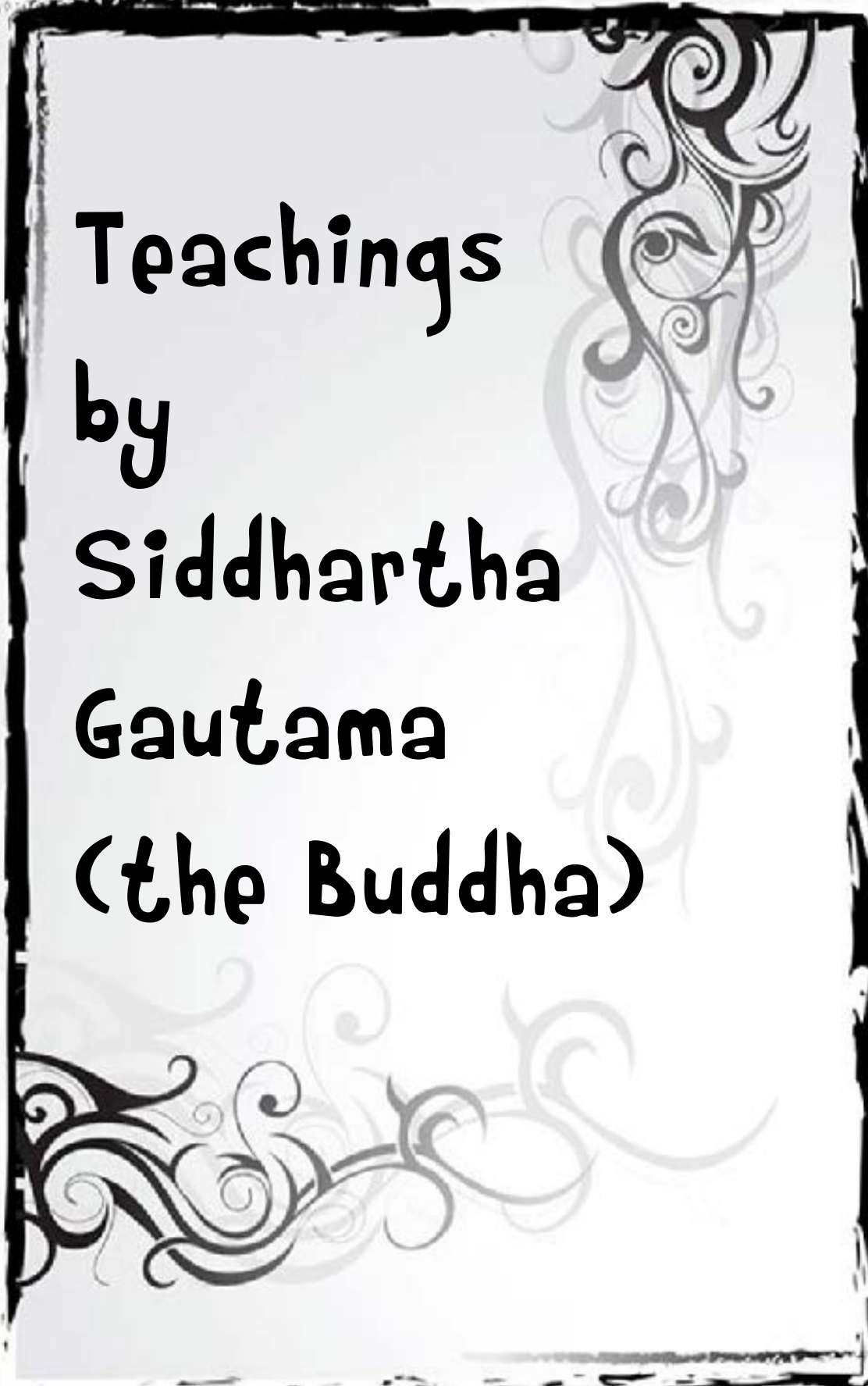


**HINDUISM**



# The Qur'an





**Teachings  
by  
Siddhartha  
Gautama  
(the Buddha)**



# The Bible



# The Torah







**The  
Veda  
and  
Other  
teachings**

**One  
God  
Allah**





**No  
personal  
god or  
gods**



**One  
God  
Yahweh**





**One supreme  
god that exists in  
many forms.**

**Each form has a  
different name -**

**for example,  
Ganesh, Shiva,  
Vishnu, Krishna,  
Rama, Hanuman**









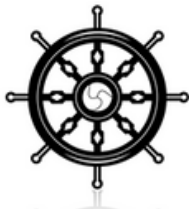






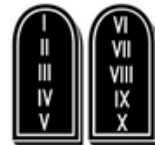


























<p>Islam</p>			<p>The Qur'an</p>
<p>Buddhism</p>			<p>Teachings by Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddah)</p>
<p>Christianity</p>			<p>The Bible</p>
<p>Judaism</p>			<p>The Torah</p>
<p>Hinduism</p>			<p>The Veda and other teachings</p>

## Appendix B

<p><b>Muslims believe that the purpose of living is to worship God</b></p>	<p><b>Muslims believe that Jesus was a good man and important but no more important than Adam, Noah or Abraham</b></p>
<p><b>Muslims believe that Islam is the complete version of a basic faith that has been revealed many times before</b></p>	<p><b>Muslims believe in the five pillars of Islam – these affect every aspect of life including banking, family life and the environment</b></p>



**Jews believe that they are God's chosen people**

**Jews believe that Jesus was nothing more than a good teacher**

**Jews believe that it is important to live by God's laws**

**Jews believe that God is everywhere, all of the time and that he has always existed**

<p><b>Buddhists believe that there is a “right way of living”, that includes traditions, believes and practices</b></p>	<p><b>Hindus value truth, honesty, and non-violence</b></p>
<p><b>Buddhists believe that it is important to live a moral life</b></p>	<p><b>Buddhists believe that they can end suffering through knowledge</b></p>
<p><b>The ultimate goal of Buddhists is to improve their inner peace and reach a state of ‘Nirvan’ – then they will be happy for life</b></p>	

**Hindus believe in Karma – the good that you do will be returned to you in some way**

**Hindus believe that every soul will be saved**

**Hindus believe in reincarnation – when an animal or person dies they will return in another form, depending on how well they have lived.**