

Looking for Meaning

Key Concepts/Words

- ☆ **GOD**-Ultimate Being (creator and sustainer of the world)
-Deity (a visible form of the power behind the world)
- ☆ **SYMBOLISM**- Something that points to or explains something. Religions have many symbolic actions and ideas.
- ☆ **REVELATION**- Something shown or explained that was previously hidden. Many religions have revealed truths, and these are important in the faith.
- ☆ **AWE**- Completely overwhelmed by a sense of God's presence. In many religious traditions experiencing God or his presence is sought through various ways.
- ☆ **COMMUNITY**- A group of people with something in common, e.g. sharing the same faith, sharing in prayer and worship.
- ☆ **AFTERLIFE**- The belief that there is some kind of life after the death of the body. Many religions have beliefs in a heaven or a place where souls or spirits go when the body dies.
- ☆ **SECULAR SOCIETY**- the term which refers to the way of life in countries where general life and government are not led by or linked to religious people or organizations. It is something separate from religious beliefs and practices.

Key Religious Teachings: the existence of God

Christianity

- God exists and always has done. He is eternal.
- The existence of the universe, the world and its inhabitants are proof of God's existence.
- Religious experience and revelation also point to the reality of God.
- Jesus is the best way to know about God.

Islam

- Allah is the one true God and from him all life comes.
- Allah has spoken to humanity through the prophets including the final prophet Muhammad (PBUH).
- It is Allah that unites everything.

Key Religious Teachings: the nature of God and ideas about God

Christianity

- God is one but is known through 3 distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (known as the Trinity)
- He is a God of Love (like a caring father) as well as a judge (who will reward and punish)
- He loves the world and all people in it, and sent His son Jesus to teach people about Him and to save people from their sins.
- Creator and sustainer of the world.
- Full of mercy and offers forgiveness to all willing to receive it.
- Best known through Jesus who is God incarnate. .

Islam

- God is one, Allah. They believe in the oneness and unity of Allah - Tawhid.
- He created everything.
- Allah has many attributes and some of his 99 names describe these.
- God is most merciful and will reward the faithful.
- He has spoken through the Prophet Muhammad.
- He will judge people according to their actions/deeds.

Why do some people believe in God and some do not?

There is too much suffering in the world.

I just feel that there is a God-I can't explain why.

My family all believe in God and worship regularly.

None of my friends believe in God.

The world must have been created by someone.

The Holy Books all contradict themselves.

So many people have had religious experiences.

What influences people's understanding of God?

- ☆ Upbringing-if they are brought up to believe in God.
- ☆ Having a deep spiritual experience which means that you don't need further proof that God exists.
- ☆ Experiencing a miracle.
- ☆ Some people haven't experienced religion or God and they have never experienced either in their family life.
- ☆ Some people feel that the religious community is like a family to them.

How do people experience God?

- **Miracle** (a miracle is usually regarded as something that is a wonder and something that wouldn't happen normally. For many people, in different religions, something that happens because of prayer or faith that is 'miraculous' is an experience of God, and a sense of his reality and presence).
- **Act of Benevolence** (sometimes a miracle is experienced almost as if it were an act of generosity from God).
- **Worship** (many people feel that they have a direct relationship and communication with God through their worship. Worship can take place in a place of worship with others of the same faith, or it can take place privately. It can be through a set ritual that is repeated, or it can be through personal thoughts and actions that the individual person finds helpful or meaningful).
- **Prayer** (for many, prayer is something very real and is a way of thinking about God and feeling that life is different as a result of praying).
- **An inner feeling** (sometimes people just feel that God is there, helping and supporting them, even when things don't appear to be so good).
- **Reading sacred texts** (many religious people find that sacred texts have a special meaning for them at a particular time and moment in their life. As they read they feel moved and inspired and sometimes they may feel that the words are direct messages from God).
- **Natural beauty and wonder** (there are many beautiful things in the world and sometimes people feel that God is involved in the making of the beautiful things, somewhere).

How do people respond to God through worship?

Prayer	Sometimes people pray on their own or with others. In many religions there are particular times or patterns of praying that believers follow, e.g. in Islam praying 5 times a day.
Preaching and teaching	Sharing the faith with others, and helping each other to grow in faith is an aspect of all religions too. For many religions, worship is a daily experience.
Pilgrimage	Many traditions have places of special significance, and believers make special journeys to them, sometimes alone, sometimes in groups.
Changing lifestyle	All religions have 'rules' or expectations about the way to live one's life.
Service and commitment	Serving others may be a requirement of lifestyle. Many religious traditions encourage their members to see all that they do as a service, or a response to God and those he has placed in their care. For some people, one of the greatest responses to God is the commitments made by believers- they are prepared to give everything to God.
Retreat or study	Sometimes people need to get away from the distractions of life that have a negative impact on their religious faith or practice. So many traditions try to help believers by offering places and times of retreat so they can concentrate fully on their faith.
Acts of Kindness	Almost all religions commend acts of kindness to others, whether or not they are members of the faith community.

	Some religions expect people to pay a tithe (a 10 th of one's income) or other annual welfare due.
<p>Vocation</p> 	<p>For some, responding to God is a matter of what they do, in terms of a job or career, in their life.</p> <p>Some religious traditions have monastic callings-when people dedicate themselves entirely to God, and are involved in a life of ministry and service.</p>

What is the value of religion in a secular society?

Some people believe...

- Religious belief is timeless and will always be relevant to the believer.
- Religion can bind people and communities together.
- Religion has often inspired courage and self-sacrifice.

Other people believe...

- Fewer people worship in Britain today.
- Education and government are not led by religion today in the UK.
- Many traditions have changed, e.g. Sunday trading, shops open on Christmas day etc.

Symbols

Why do some people use symbols?

- ☆ To understand deeper ideas of their God/faith.
- ☆ To focus on whilst praying or meditating.
- ☆ To try to understand God as some things about God are beyond human comprehension.
- ☆ To help to explain their faith.

Christians believe that God is 3 'persons' in one, known as the Trinity. These three persons are

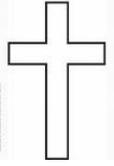
God the **Father**

God the **Son**

God the **Holy Spirit**

Some Christians use symbols to describe these ideas about God, for example h₂O and the three states that it comes in: ice, water and steam. With the Trinity, the three 'persons' are each an aspect of God's nature, which humans are able to perceive and understand.

Religious Symbols



Christianity-Cross

- The cross reminds Christians of Jesus' death on the cross, which they believe was to save people's sins and was the greatest act of love.
- Jesus' resurrection was the overcoming of sin and death, so they bringing of new life and hope into the world.

Islam-Subhah (prayer beads)

- The Subhah is a string of beads used to count recitations in worship.
- It has 99 beads on it and each one represents one of the qualities/names of Allah.
- Many Muslims use it daily in their prayers as it helps them in their devotion of worship.



Death and the Afterlife and Funeral Rites

Christianity	Islam
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ There is an eternal life after death, which is received through faith.❖ God chooses when people die.❖ Entry into Heaven depends on how a person responds to Jesus and his teachings and the way a person responds to those in need on earth.❖ Resurrection is the main theme of Christian funeral services- they usually start with the words of Jesus 'I am the resurrection and the life'.❖ The resurrection of the dead is a central theme in Christianity-	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Life after death is called Akhirah❖ Allah knows the time of a person's birth and death long before they are born.❖ Kindness is shown by sitting next to someone dying, to read from the Qur'an and help them to recite the Shahadah- declaration of faith.❖ The dying person should lie facing Makkah.❖ The Adhan (call to prayer) should be the final words heard-just as they were the first.

<p>because of the resurrection of Jesus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Belief in life after death is also important for the Christian idea of justice. ❖ A new earth and haven will be made after Judgment day. ❖ Life choices are important. Christians see hell-the opposite of heaven-as a state of being separated from God through one's own deliberate rejecting of God and his ways whilst on earth. ❖ Interment (burial in the ground) is a choice some Christians prefer, although many will be created. ❖ For those buried, a cross or memorial stone is placed at the site of burial (cemetery) and some will visit the grave on the anniversary of the death. ❖ For those cremated, the ashes may be scattered. ❖ Funeral services may include a Eucharist (Holy Communion). ❖ Ending the burial service will usually be words of committal: 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.' ❖ Usually after the funeral there will be a wake where refreshments are served to family and friends and they will share sorrow and also their memories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Men who have been on Hajj (Called Hajji) will have the ihram (robe) that they wore on pilgrimage draped over them. ❖ The Imam leads the prayers at the mosque and at the graveside. ❖ The funeral will take place within 24 hours after death and usually only men attend. ❖ The body is buried as Muslims believe the body should be placed in contact with the earth. The ceremony should be as simple as possible. ❖ Releasing the soul happens straight after death. It is taken by the Angel of Death to a state of waiting until the Day of Judgment. ❖ Angels will have recorded a person's actions and deeds over their lifetime and depending on what they have believed and how they have lived. ❖ Hell and Paradise are described in the Qur'an, Paradise is a beautiful garden with rivers of milk and honey and hell is a terrifying place of heat and torture.
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How important is a belief in the afterlife?

- It is what you do on earth that matters, not what happens after you die.
- Some people think that God has prepared a place for them in heaven after death so they are not scared of dying.
- Some people are not afraid of death as they have lived a good life and have experienced many things.
- Death is a fact of life, but having a faith in God, for some people means that they are confident that there is an afterlife and that it is eternal and centered on God and his goodness.

How important are funeral rites?

- Some people think they are important as they believe that they allow people to end their life and follow the teachings of their religion, e.g. some Christians may want to be buried as they believe in the resurrection of the body.
- Some believe that funeral rites deal with the body but also help family and friends to grieve for the person who has died and it helps them to remember that they have gone to a better place.
- The way that bodies are treated after death shows the beliefs in the importance of faith and following God's teachings.