

## World Religions & Cults 101: More Questions

### PART I: ONE-GOD RELIGIONS

#### Chapter One: Christianity: *All About Jesus*

1. How have the words “Christian” and “Christianity” changed over the years? Would you say there is more respect in our culture for Christianity today than in past years, or less? What has changed?
2. What do you think Christianity is perceived as an “intolerant” religion, while other religions are not? Do you think this is a correct perception?
3. In what ways is Christianity intolerant? In what ways is it tolerant?
4. Two thousand years ago, Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Messiah [Christ] the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:17). What kinds of answers do you think you would get today if you were to ask a sampling of ten people the question, “Who is Jesus?”
5. Give examples of something the Bible says about history and science that are indisputable. Give an example of something the Bible says about the human condition that is reasonable and true?
6. The apostle Paul hinged the entirety of the Christian faith on the resurrection. Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 and give three reasons why the resurrection of Jesus Christ is crucial to Christianity.
7. George Barna, the leading researcher of trends in Christianity and the church, says that 20 million devoted Christians have left the organized church in favor of small groups, home churches, and other alternate forms of expression, such as the arts and media. Do you think the institutional, local church has value in our culture? Why or why not?
8. If your pastor were to ask you, “What can our church do to encourage people to become true disciples of Jesus Christ,” how would you respond?

#### Chapter Two: Judaism: *A Chosen People, Place, and Purpose*

1. Review the three parts of God’s promise to Abraham: a people, a place, and a purpose. Have these promises been fulfilled? If not, how will they be fulfilled in the future?
2. With 40 clues in their sacred writings that give specific clues about the Messiah, why do you think the Jews have largely rejected Jesus as their Messiah?
3. Take a look at the list of the Ten Commandments. These can be placed into two categories. What are they? Why do you think God arranged these commandments the way He did? Did Jesus have anything to say about these two categories?
4. From what you know about Jews in the world today, would you agree that Judaism is more about *relationships* than *rules*? Why or why not?
5. Take a look at the 13 principles written by Moses Maimonides. Do you disagree with any of these? Explain.
6. In what ways is Judaism more than a religion?
7. Is the contemporary *state* of Israel the same as the *nation* of Israel as understood in the Torah? How does this influence the way you view the state of Israel?

### **Chapter Three: Islam: *It's All About Allah***

1. Name at least three things that Christianity, Judaism, and Islam share in common. In what ways could these commonalities be used as a way to build a relationship between the practitioners of these three great religions?
2. What is the main reason Muslims refuse to worship Muhammad? Why do Muslims take such offense when Christians worship Jesus?
3. How do the tactics and actions of Muhammad in the 7th century inform the tactics and actions of devout Muslims today?
4. Give three similarities and three differences between the God of the Bible and Allah. What are three core Christian beliefs about God that offend Muslims?
5. Summarize the concept of "circular reasoning" as it applies to the Qur'an. Are Christians sometimes guilty of using circular reasoning to defend the Bible and God? Why is this not necessary where the Bible is concerned?
6. Jesus is recognized as an historical figure by both Judaism and Islam. Since Jesus is central to Christianity, how should a Christian bring Jesus into the conversation when trying to relate to a Jew or Muslim? Is this even necessary? Why or why not?
7. Can Christians learn anything from the Five Pillars of Islam?

### **PART II: BLENDED BELIEFS**

#### **Chapter Four: Mormonism: *The One True Church?***

1. Do you consider Mormonism a cult, a religion, or a form of Christianity? Support your answer.
2. Why do you think a man like Joseph Smith could gain such a loyal following in so short a time? Why did he seem to attract almost equal opposition?
3. Why was it important for Joseph to declare Christianity and the Bible to be corrupt?
4. Write out a one-sentence summary of Mormon beliefs in each of these areas:
  1. The nature of God
  2. The person of Jesus
  3. Humankind

Do you think these are reasonable beliefs? Why or why not?
5. Dr. Hazen, who has been in dialogue with Mormon scholars for many years, believes that the official beliefs of the Mormon Church are changing and moving toward orthodoxy. Why do you think many of the "old teachings" are still widely taught even though the scholars seem to be open to change?
6. What are three main differences between the Book of Mormon and the Bible?
7. Are the "feelings" of Bible-believing Christians any more legitimate than the feelings of Mormons? Why or why not?

### **Chapter Five: Jehovah's Witnesses: A View From the Watchtower**

1. The Jehovah's Witnesses' beliefs and lifestyle puts them at odds with many political and social institutions and practices, yet they seem undeterred. Why do you think that opposition has led to a strengthening—rather than a weakening—of their resolve?
2. What do you think would happen if Christians were required to meet for five hours each week for meetings and instruction? How would you handle a meeting where you wouldn't be allowed to ask questions?
3. In your opinion, how much time should a committed disciple of Jesus Christ spend reading and studying God's word each week? How much time should he or she spend in meetings?
4. Is there a correlation between the amount of time you devote to your spiritual life and the growth in your spiritual life? Is there a downside to "quantifying" the Christian life? If so, what is it?
5. Why is the Trinity so objectionable to every religion and cult except for Christianity?
6. Describe the difference between true worship as described by Jehovah's Witnesses and true worship as described by Jesus (John 4:23-24).

### **Chapter Six: The Mind Sciences: A New Way of Thinking**

1. The French philosopher Voltaire "hated Christianity, although he believed in the existence of God." What would you say to someone who said something like that today? (By the way, plenty of people have that view.)
2. What is the difference between deism and theism? Does the fact that many of America's founding fathers were deists change your opinion of America? Why or why not?
3. Does a person need reason in order to enter into a personal relationship with God? Why or why not?
4. Comment on this statement made by St. Anselm: "I believe so that I may understand."
5. Throughout history there has been a fascination with "hidden knowledge." Why do you think some people would rather focus on what is difficult to know as opposed to what is clearly revealed?
6. What's wrong with wanting to feel better about humanity and our world? Are Christians generally too pessimistic about the condition of the culture and the world? Why or why not?