



What Is This Module About?

The Filipinos are said to be a very religious people. Did you know that majority of the Filipinos are Christians? Many Christian beliefs and practices have in fact become a part of Philippine culture. Yet Christianity is not the only religion practiced in the Philippines. Do you know enough about the other religions? Maybe you have neighbors or friends who belong to a different religion. Maybe you yourself have a different religion.

This module will introduce you to the important beliefs and practices of people of different religions. It will also teach you how to live in harmony with these people—despite differences in belief—in order to achieve a more peaceful community, nation and world. The module is divided into two lessons:

Lesson 1 — *Religions of the World*

Lesson 2 — *People of Different Faiths*



What Will You Learn From This Module?

After studying this module, you should be able to:

- ◆ identify the origins of the major world religions;
- ◆ identify the important teachings, beliefs and practices of the major world religions;
- ◆ demonstrate the proper attitude toward people of other religions; and
- ◆ demonstrate religious tolerance.



Let's See What You Already Know

Write **T** on the line if the statement is true, and **F** if it is false.

- _____ 1. Muslims worship Mohammed.
- _____ 2. Buddhists worship Buddha.
- _____ 3. Hindus do not believe in one supreme being, but in many.
- _____ 4. Christians worship only Jesus Christ.
- _____ 5. Jews, Muslims and Christians use similar scriptures.
- _____ 6. One must respect the religious beliefs of others.
- _____ 7. One must not allow members of other religions into one's neighborhood or workplace.
- _____ 8. Differences in religion often cause war and conflict.
- _____ 9. There is something wrong with the way some people behave toward the religious beliefs of others.
- _____ 10. Religion has both personal and social aspects.

Compare your answers with those in the *Answer Key* on page 33. If most of your answers are correct, then read this module to further increase your knowledge. If you have very few or no correct answers, then you need to study this module carefully.

Before you proceed, however, answer the following questions:

1. Do you believe learning about other religions will put you under the influence of evil? _____
2. Do you believe learning about other religions will ruin or destroy your faith? _____
3. Will you get angry or be offended if you read about beliefs different from your own? _____

If you answered *yes* to any of the above questions, this module may not be for you. However, if you can set aside negative notions about other religions and keep an open mind while you study this module, then you may proceed. Good luck!

Religions of the World

Do you think your religion is the only true religion? If you believe so, do you know enough about the different religions for you to determine whether they are right or wrong, good or bad? Maybe you have many ideas about other religions that are not true.

After studying this lesson, you should be able to:

- ◆ identify the different religions of the world; and
- ◆ describe their origins, beliefs, practices and number of followers.

ADVISORY!!!

The following pages may contain ideas and beliefs in conflict with your own. If only for the time it would take you to study this lesson, set aside your biases. Keep an open mind. After all, this is only for the purpose of the study. Do you think you can do it? If you think you can, great! Let's now proceed.



Let's Try This

Study the pictures below and the beliefs inside the boxes. Each picture corresponds to a particular belief. Match the statement with the correct speaker by connecting them with a line.



Buddhist

Allah created everything on Earth and is the only source of guidance for humanity. If you submit to God's will, you will be rewarded in the Afterlife.



Christian

Brahman is the supreme spirit of the universe. Your actions in this life determine your status in the next.



Jew

Jesus is the son of the one everlasting God. Humankind can be saved through faith, because of the resurrection of Christ.



Muslim

Yahweh is the one true God. He made, is making and will make everything. Live according to His Divine Will as stated in the Torah.



Hindu

Achieve enlightenment and freedom from ignorance, desire and suffering through meditation and reincarnation. Rely on yourself to achieve enlightenment.

What did you notice about the statements? Did you note any similarities and differences among the beliefs? Were you able to match each belief and speaker correctly? Compare your answers with those in the *Answer Key* on page 34.



Let's Learn

There are many religions throughout the world, perhaps as many as there are different kinds of people with different cultures. But we are going to focus only on the five major religions, namely, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism. These five are considered major religions because they are the most widespread. Also, they have followers coming from every part the world, not just from a particular race or nationality. Thus, they are called **universal** religions.

Christianity

Christianity is the largest and most widespread religion in the world. About 33% of the world's population regard themselves as Christians.



Christians follow the teachings of and about **Jesus Christ**. Jesus was a Jew who lived some time during the first century A.D. The story of Christ, as well as his teachings, are recorded in the **New Testament**. This, together with the **Old Testament**, make up the **Holy Bible**. This book provides the basis for the Christian beliefs and practices.



Jesus Christ

Christianity started out as a Jewish sect. After Jesus' death, his followers were able to spread his teachings. During the 4th century A.D., Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. From there, it spread to many parts of the world.

There developed three main groups of Christians: the Roman Catholics, the Eastern Orthodox and the Protestants. These different groups developed different beliefs and practices, but they all share a belief in Christ's teachings, as recorded in the New Testament.

Jesus' teachings can be summed up in two commandments:

"Love God above all others."

"Love your neighbors as you love yourself."

Most Christians believe that:

- ◆ God created the universe and the first couple, Adam and Eve.
- ◆ Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan into disobeying God's instructions. This act of disobedience brought sin into the world. This sin has been inherited by all of humanity, and is called the "original sin."
- ◆ Jesus is the only son of God and he became human in order to save us from our sins. Some groups believe that because he is the son of God, he is also God. Others say he was only a great teacher.
- ◆ Those groups who worship Jesus as God believe in the concept of the **Holy Trinity**. This is the belief in one God, who is represented by three persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ Almost all Christians believe in salvation. They agree that everyone has eternal life. After physical death, one's soul can go to heaven and be with God. If one is not saved from one's sins, one's soul will be claimed by the devil and burn forever in the fires of hell. Most groups believe salvation can be achieved by repenting for one's sins, accepting Jesus as one's Lord and Savior, and becoming reconciled with God.
- ◆ Jesus was **resurrected**, or came to life again after death, and will come back again at the end of the world. This is called the **Second Coming of Christ**. At that time, all saved Christians who have died in the past will also be resurrected. These, together with living Christians, would join Christ and live forever.

Christians now number more than 1,700,000,000 or 1.7 billion. They make up about 33% of the total world population. There are now more than 22,000 separate Christian churches, sects and denominations throughout the world. Many of these groups have conflicting beliefs about the teachings of Christ.

Did you know that...

The Philippines is the only Christian country in Asia? More than 86% of the Philippine population is Roman Catholic. The rest of the Filipinos are either Muslims, Protestants or members of the Philippine Independent Church (the Aglipayans), or the sect called Iglesia ni Cristo. There are also some Buddhists and animists, but they are very few.



Let's Review

To see if you understood the previous section, answer this simple test. Fill in each blank by choosing the right word or phrase from the box.

1.7 billion	God	Holy Trinity	New Testament
22,000	Father	three	Adam
Eve	Indonesia	four	Philippines
Jesus	Abraham	original sin	resurrection

1. The _____ contains the story and teachings of Jesus.
2. The first human beings created were _____ and _____.
3. There are now about _____ Christians in the world.
4. The _____ is the only Christian country in Asia.
5. There are _____ main groups of Christians.
6. The disobedience of Adam and Eve of the Will of God is called the _____.
7. The _____ is made up of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.
8. The _____ is the coming back to life of Jesus.
9. _____ was a Jew in the 1st century A.D. whose teachings guide Christian life.
10. Jesus teaches that we should love _____ above all others.

Are you done? You may now check if your answers are correct by turning to page 35 for the *Answer Key*.



Let's Learn

Islam

Islam is the youngest of the world's great religions. It is believed to have been founded in 600 A.D., when the angel Jibreel (Gabriel) read the first revelation to the prophet Mohammed. However, many of its followers believe that Islam existed long before Mohammed was born. It is supposed to date back to the creation of the world. Adam (the first man), Ibrahim (Abraham), and Isa (Jesus) are all considered prophets of Islam before Mohammed. Mohammed's role as the last of the prophets was to formalize, clarify and purify the faith by removing foreign ideas that have been added in error.



Followers of Islam are called Muslims. **Muslim** is an Arabic word that refers to a person who submits himself/herself to the **Will of God**.



Let's Think About This

Many people think Muslims worship Mohammed, but this is not true. They regard him only as a great prophet. They worship Allah. **Allah** is the Arabic for "the One True God."

Allah's words and laws are written in the **Qur'an**, the sacred book of the Muslims. Every Muslim has to strictly follow these laws if he/she wants to go to Paradise, a place of physical and spiritual pleasure, after death. Nonbelievers and sinners are believed to go to Hell, where they will burn forever.

Muslims also consider the **Hadith**, a collection of the deeds and sayings of Mohammed, as a valuable book. They use it as a guide for living. But it is not regarded as highly as the Qur'an.

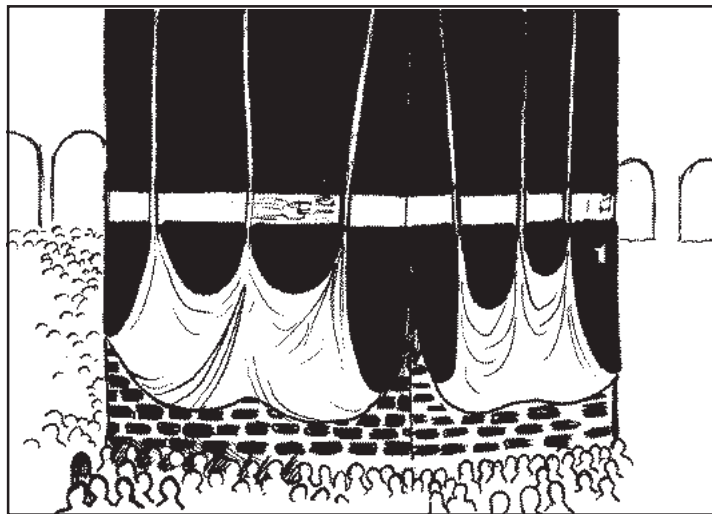
Have you heard the word *Jihad* mentioned in the news? It is usually thought by non-Muslims to mean "holy war," which allows Muslims to fight non-Muslims in the defense of Islam. Do you think this is the correct meaning of the word? What does Jihad mean for a Muslim?

For many Muslims, **Jihad** refers to a struggle within the self. It may be a struggle towards a certain goal, such as achievement in a certain profession, self-purification, or some other noble aims.

In accordance with the laws of Allah in the Qur'an, Muslims avoid the use of alcohol and drugs. They also abstain from gambling and eating pork, which is considered unclean both for the body and the spirit.

A Muslim's duties as described in the **Five Pillars of Islam** are:

1. To recite the **shahadah**. The shahadah is a Muslim's statement of belief. It goes: "There is no God but God, and Mohammed is His Prophet."
2. To perform the **salat** (prayer) five times a day. This is done while facing Mecca, the birthplace of the prophet Mohammed. It is done in the morning before sunrise, at noon, mid-afternoon, after sunset and just before sleeping.



The Ka'aba, a Muslim shrine in Mecca

3. To donate regularly to charity through the **zakat**, a charity tax that is equivalent to 2.5% of the Muslim's salary. A Muslim is also encouraged to give to the needy whenever he/she is moved to do so.
4. To fast during the month of Ramadan. This is believed to be the month that Mohammed received the first revelation of the Qur'an from God. Fasting is a form of spiritual and physical cleansing.
5. To make at least one **hajj** (pilgrimage) to Mecca, if financially and physically able.

Islam is the second largest religion in the world today. Muslims, who number around 1.2 billion, represent about 22% of the world's population. They are scattered all over the world, but are currently concentrated from the West coast of Africa to the Philippines. They are growing in number by about 2.9% per year, faster than the total world population, which increases by only about 2.3% per year.



Let's Review

Based on what you have just read about Islam, can you tell if the statements below are true or false? Write your answers in the blanks. Also explain why you answered true or false.

1. It is the duty of Muslims to fight non-Muslims according to the concept of Jihad.

True or False? _____

Explanation: _____

2. Muslims look upon Mohammed as the only prophet of God.

True or False? _____

Explanation: _____

3. It is the duty of Muslims to help the needy and donate to the poor.

True or False? _____

Explanation: _____

After answering the test, refer to the *Answer Key* on page 35 to check if you got the correct answers.



Let's Learn

Hinduism

Hinduism is the only major religion that does not have a single founder, a specific system of belief, a single system of morality, nor a central religious organization. It consists of thousands of different religious groups that have evolved in India since 1500 B.C.



Hinduism is now the world's third largest religion. It has around 762 million followers, which is about 13% of the world's population. It is the main religion in India, Nepal, and among the Tamils in Sri Lanka. There are also Hindus scattered in different parts of the world.

The most important Hindu texts are the **Vedas**. These are holy writings on a wide number of topics, such as worship, the nature of God, and even medicine, music, the arts, military science and so on. All Hindus consider the Vedas to contain the highest truth.

Another important Hindu text is the **Bhagavad Gita**, which means “Song of God.” It is a long, beautiful poem describing a conversation between the warrior Arjuna and his charioteer Krishna. The poem is set in a battlefield. It begins with Prince Arjuna hesitating before attacking the enemy when he sees many of his friends and relatives on the other side. He suddenly feels the war is cruel and decides to put down his arms. Krishna, who is an incarnation of the god Vishnu, then reminds him that the higher way is to do his duty as a warrior and thus obey God without question. The scripture then goes on to describe the nature of God and the ways and means by which humans can know Him. It thus summarizes the religious thought of India through the ages.

Another important Hindu text is the **Rig Veda**, which is a collection of hymns used for rituals. This is actually one of the Vedas earlier mentioned.

Hindus also worship one God. This God, called **Brahman**, is everywhere and everything. For Hindus, all reality is one divine entity who makes up the universe and is at the same time greater than the universe.

This deity is usually known in three personages:

Brahma, the Creator who is continuing to create new realities.



Vishnu, or Krishna, the Preserver, who preserves these new creations.



Siva or Shiva, the Destroyer, who destroys in order that new things can be created.



Many hundreds of lesser gods and goddesses are also worshipped by Hindus. Every person may have his or her personal god or goddess, so long as that person understands that these are merely various aspects of the one God that makes up everything. As a result of this kind of philosophy, Hindus are very tolerant of other religions. They, in fact, have a saying:

Ekam Sataha Vipraha Bahudha Vadanti.

“The Truth is one, but different sages call it by different names.”

Hindus see the divine in everything and this includes any form of worship a person may wish to adopt. A Hindu may, in fact, become a member of another religion and still be a Hindu.

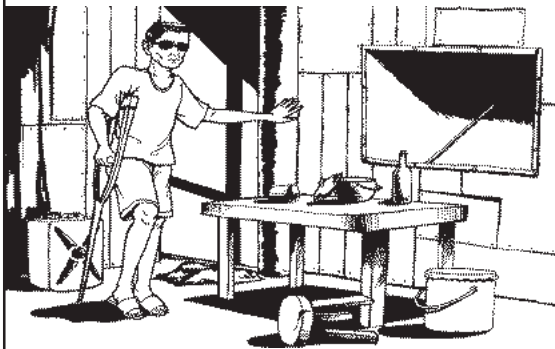
Another important Hindu concept is called **ahimsa**. This means “nonviolence,” “non-injury” or the absence of the desire to harm.

The concept of **reincarnation** is also important to the Hindu belief. **Reincarnation** refers to the idea that when people die, their souls live on to be reborn in another body.

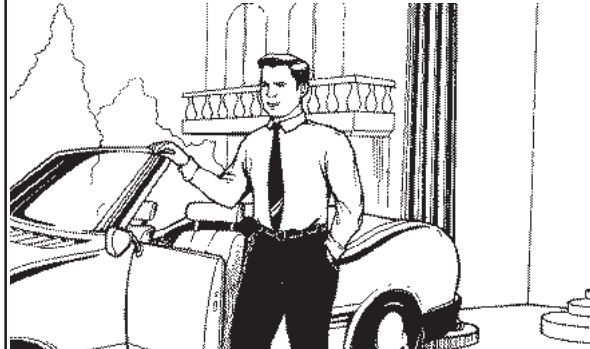
In Hinduism, humans are believed to be trapped in **samsara**, a meaningless cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth. As they go through this cycle, they accumulate **karma**. **Karma** refers to the sum of one’s good and bad deeds. It determines how you will live in your next life.

If you are pure in thoughts and deeds, you will be rewarded in your next life. You can be reborn at a higher level. Eventually you can escape the cycle of samsara and achieve enlightenment. If you do many bad things, you will pay for it in your next life. You can be reborn at a lower level, that is, under very difficult circumstances. Do you follow so far? Let us look at some examples.

Lito was born to a very poor family. He was also born lame and blind. He could not even get a decent job in order to make his life better. He lives a very wretched life alone in his shanty.



Nick, Lito’s acquaintance, is very wealthy. He inherited a huge amount of money and some apartment houses from his father. Now he lives a life of luxury and can afford to do so for a very long time.



Do you think it is unfair that Lito was born lame, blind and helpless, while Nick is wealthy without having to work for it? Not if you think in terms of karma.

Maybe in his last incarnation, Lito did many bad things. Perhaps he robbed the poor and broke somebody's legs. He is merely paying for it in his present life. Nick, on the other hand, probably helped the poor and did many good things in his past life. Now that he has been rewarded, he has to watch out that his wealth does not lead him to commit bad things. This would attract bad karma and he might pay for it in his next life.

Hindus often practice meditation and fasting. They also make daily devotions and engage in activities like the **puja**. This is an act of worship that may be done through invocations, prayers, songs or rituals.



Let's Try This

Name two concepts in Hinduism that you find interesting, or which you think are good concepts that you yourself can follow or believe in.

1. _____

2. _____

To guide you, here is a sample answer:

I find the idea of **karma** very interesting. Karma refers to the good and bad things that we do. According to the Hindus, we are rewarded for our good karma, and punished for our bad karma. Our present circumstances are a reflection of our karma. When we are suffering, this can mean we did something bad in the past that we are now paying for. When we are enjoying some good fortune, this may be a reward for good things that we did before. All this makes a lot of sense to me.



Let's Learn

Judaism

Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people. It is one of the **Abramic Religions**, which also include Christianity and Islam. These religions trace their roots to the time (around 2000 B.C.) when the God of the Israelites established a divine covenant (agreement) with Abraham. The Hebrews (the ancestors of the Jews) were even then scattered and homeless. God told Abraham that He would give Abraham's people a new land that they could call their own.



The Hebrews were led out of captivity in Egypt to the Promised Land by Moses. There they established a kingdom. The kingdom was divided in two—the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah. The Jews were able to build a temple and establish their religion.

In 722 B.C., Israel was conquered by the Assyrians. Judah fell to the Babylonians in 587 B.C. In 63 B.C. the Romans took control of Palestine. The Jews began to wait for the arrival of a Messiah who would drive the Roman invaders out. It was about this time that Christ was born and Christianity developed from a Jewish sect into a religion.

Jews were scattered again, this time throughout the world. Their temple was destroyed. Their religion was no longer centered in Jerusalem; they were in fact prohibited from setting foot there. The **synagogue** (the Jewish house of worship) became the new center of Jewish life. Authority shifted from the priests to the **rabbis** or local scholars and teachers, who are learned in the Jewish laws and traditions.

The Jewish holy book is called the **Tanakh**. It contains the words and commandments of God, as well as the history of the Jewish people. It is composed of three groups of books:

- ◆ the **Torah**, composed of the books Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy;
- ◆ the **Nevi'im**, the books of Isaiah, Amos, and other prophets; and
- ◆ the **Ketuvim**, which includes the book of Kings, Chronicles, etc.

Another book that is important for the Jews is the **Talmud**. It contains stories, laws, medical knowledge, debates about moral choices, etc.



Let's Think About This

Did you know that the Jews, Christians and Muslims use very similar scriptures? The Jews call it the **Tanakh**, the Christians refer to it as the **Old Testament**, and the Muslims call it the **Qur'an**. All three religious groups consider these writings sacred texts because they record the words of God.

The Jews believe that God is the creator of all that exists. He is one, without a body, and He alone is to be worshipped as the absolute ruler of the universe. God monitors the activities of humans. He rewards individuals for good deeds and punishes evil.

Jews believe actions and behavior are more important than faith or belief. They believe that beliefs come out of actions. They also do not believe in original sin (the belief that all people have inherited Adam and Eve's sin when they disobeyed God's instructions in the Garden of Eden). Jews believe that the world and its people are good because these are creations of God. They also believe that humans need no savior or intermediary to bring them closer to God. One can be drawn closer to God and make one's life holy by obeying the **mitzvot**, or the divine commandments of God.



Let's Learn

When you think of the word *messiah*, what comes to your mind? What does this word mean to you? Write it down below.

The Jewish **Messiah** does not refer to a savior who will bring them closer to God. The term refers to a king who will gather the Jewish people back to their land of Israel.

Strict discipline, according to the Law of God, governs all areas of Jewish life. Jewish males must regularly go to the synagogue. When it is the **Sabbath** day or the day of rest (Saturday for Jews), they must not work. It is considered a sin for a Jew to work during the Sabbath.

Jews celebrate many festivals during which they perform many sacred rituals, including fasting and penitence. These festivals include:

- ◆ **Passover**, which is held every year to recall the Jews' deliverance out of slavery in 1300 B.C. During the Passover meal, six different foods are eaten according to a specific order. The foods represent different aspects of the Jewish experience of slavery.
- ◆ **Hanukkah**, or the Feast of Lights. This is a festival celebrated in December to commemorate the war fought by the Jews in the past for religious freedom.
- ◆ **Rosh Hashanah**, which is the Jewish New Year. It marks the anniversary of the completion of creation, which the Jews calculate to have happened around 5,760 years ago.

After their temple was destroyed and the Jews were exiled from their land, Jews suffered from heavy persecution. Christians hated them because they would not recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah and they did not believe that he is the son of God. Christians also believed that Jews were responsible for Christ's death on the cross. Many groundless stories were spread about them. In the Philippines, when people fight, they sometimes shout at each other, "Hudyo! (Jew!)" This means that the one being shouted at is a traitor and an evil person.

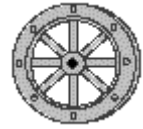
This **anti-Semitism** — hatred against the Jewish race — reached a horrible peak in the 1930s and 1940s. During that time, Adolf Hitler and the German Nazi party organized the **Holocaust**, the attempted killing of all Jews in Europe. About 6 million Jews were killed in one of the world's greatest examples of racial and religious intolerance. Would you believe that this fierce anti-Semitism continues even today?

The Jews established the **Zionist** movement to counteract the persecution. Finally, they were able to create a Jewish homeland. The state of Israel was established on May 18, 1948.

There are currently about 18 million Jews throughout the world. They are mainly concentrated in North America (about 7 million) and Israel (about 4.5 million).

Buddhism

Buddhism is the only major religion that avoids dogmas (beliefs or principles authoritatively upheld to be true).



It was founded in India by the Buddha, Siddharta Gautama. He was born in 563 B.C. in Lumbini, which is in modern-day Nepal. At the age of 29, he left his wife, children and political involvements in order to seek truth. He wanted to find the reason for all the suffering he saw in the world. He also wanted to discover how to escape this suffering.



Buddha

Siddharta became an **ascetic**, or someone who denies all physical comfort and pleasure. But he did not find the whole truth in asceticism. He felt that the pleasures of the world must also contain some truths. He joined many other groups and rejected them all. Then, in 535 B.C., he found the “truth” he was looking for and from then on was called **Buddha**, meaning, “The Enlightened One.”

Most people believe Buddhists worship the Buddha. This is not true. Buddha is a title that means “one who has awakened,” or “one who has been enlightened.” This refers to one who has seen the truth. Buddha is not God. There can be many Buddhas. In fact, anyone can become a Buddha, even you, if you want to.

Buddhists do not worship one God, nor do they worship many gods. They believe there is a supreme universal force. This force does not need to be worshipped because it is everything and everywhere. People are part of the force. So are trees and rocks. If you worship the force, you would end up worshipping everything you see!

In his search for truth, Siddharta found the **Middle Way**. This involves finding the balance or middle ground between too little and too much. For example, one should not reject worldly pleasures completely and neither should one engage in too much pleasure.

The Buddha saw that nothing in this world is permanent. He saw that the world and the self (ego) are illusions. He realized that our attachment to these illusions is the main cause of suffering. The Buddha formulated the **Four Noble Truths**:

- ◆ There is suffering in this world.
- ◆ The suffering has a cause.
- ◆ There is an end to suffering.
- ◆ There is a path that leads to the end of suffering.

The goal of the Buddhist is to awaken from illusion and escape suffering. How do you awaken from illusion? By letting go of worldly things, and by seeing that everyone and everything is one.

How do you escape from suffering? You escape suffering when you discover that everything, including suffering, is illusion. You escape suffering by letting go of desire or attachment to worldly things.

If you escape from the illusion of the ego and the idea that each of us is a separate being, your heart becomes free from hate and greed and you become more compassionate towards others.

The Buddha taught the way to the truth, which is called the **Eightfold Path**. It consists of:

1. right understanding
2. right thinking
3. right speech
4. right conduct
5. right livelihood
6. right effort
7. right mindfulness
8. right concentration

Buddhists, like the Hindus, also believe in reincarnation. During each lifetime, a person must strive to release all attachment to the world and thus be free of illusion. The Buddhists call the state of freedom from all illusion and suffering **nirvana**. This is what every Buddhist hopes to attain.

Buddha's teachings can be found in the **Tripitaka**, a large collection of sayings and lessons, often called **sutras**.

Today, there are millions of Buddhists all over the world. These belong to branches of Buddhism that have developed throughout the years, including Zen Buddhism, which has recently become very popular in Western countries.



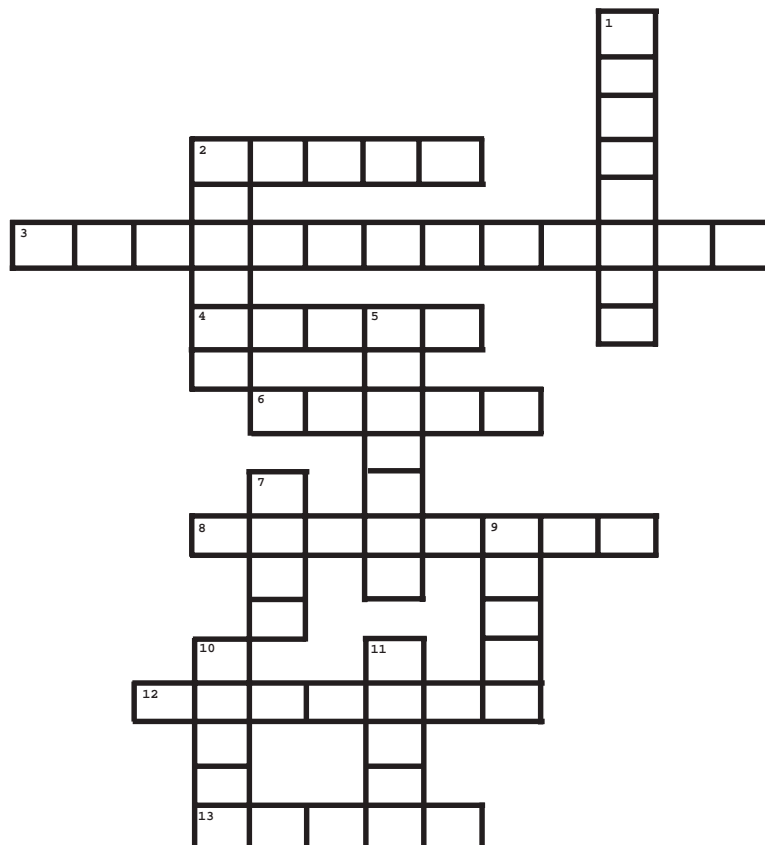
Let's Try This

Are there people belonging to other religions in your neighborhood or barangay? Do they belong to one of the religions we have discussed? How did you feel about them before you read about the different religions in this module? How do you feel about them now? Do they seem less strange to you now? Write your thoughts below.



Let's See What You Have Learned

Solve this puzzle. Use the clues given on the next page.



Across

2. The first group of books in the Jewish Tanakh
3. Hindus and Buddhists believe that when a person dies, his/her soul lives on and he/she can be reborn in another body. This process is called _____.
4. The sum of one's good and bad deeds. Hindus believe it determines how you will live in your next life.
6. His teachings form the basis of the Christian faith
8. The last great prophet of Islam
12. The state of freedom from illusion and suffering for the Buddhists.
13. According to Christians, souls who have not experienced salvation are collected by the _____.

Down

1. The goal of the Buddhist is to awaken from _____.
2. The Holy Book of the Jews
5. It refers to a king who would lead the Jewish people back to their homeland
7. The essence of Christ's teachings
9. The birthplace of Mohammed, where Muslims make pilgrimages
10. A Muslim term for personal struggle
11. A Jewish teacher learned in Jewish laws and traditions

Compare your answers with those in the *Answer Key* on page 35.



Let's Remember

- ◆ Christians believe that they can be saved through Christ. They are not only taught to love one another but to love God above all.
- ◆ Muslims believe salvation comes through obeying the Will of God or Allah.
- ◆ Hindus believe in a supreme force that is in everything, and is beyond everything. They believe in the laws of karma and reincarnation.
- ◆ Jews, like Muslims, believe that obeying God's commands is important. They base their many rituals and practices on the words of God as recorded in the Tanakh.
- ◆ Buddhists hope to awaken from the illusions of this world and achieve nirvana, a state of total freedom from suffering and illusion.

People of Different Faiths

Now that you have studied the major world religions, consider this question: *Why does religion often lead to war?* We will try to answer this question in this lesson. We will also try to answer another one: *How do we put an end to religious conflict?*

After studying this lesson, you should be able to:

- ◆ display the proper attitude towards other religions or people of different religions; and
- ◆ apply principles that would help put an end to religious conflicts.



Let's Read

A man named Hans Kung wrote: **“There will be peace on Earth when there is peace among the world religions.”**

Why do you think he said this? It is because many of the greatest conflicts our world has ever known were caused by differences in religion among groups of people. Instead of becoming a source of kindness and brotherhood, religion has continually become one of the chief causes of hatred and war. It has bred hostilities and divided people. Here are a few examples of situations where people's differences in religious beliefs resulted to conflict.



“Bloody Sunday” in Ireland in 1972

Bloody Sunday. On January 30, 1972, British soldiers opened fire on unarmed and peaceful civilian demonstrators in Derry, Ireland, killing 13 and wounding a number of others.

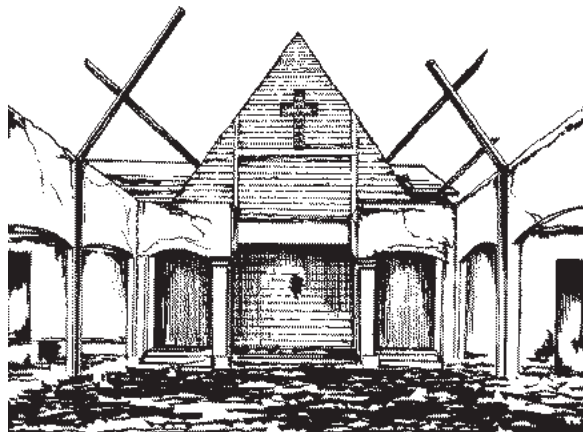
This event was a result of the long history of disagreement between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland. The fierce battle between these two religious groups, which began as a political conflict, continues to this day. Over 3,600

people have been killed and over 30,000 injured in the past 30 years.

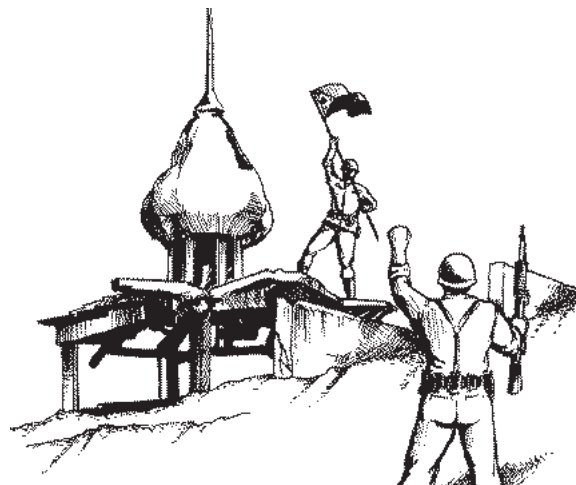
Muslims and Christians Killing Each Other in Indonesia. In June 2000, three thousand Muslim fighters with heavy artillery began massacring hundreds of Christians in the village of Duma on Halmahera Island, Indonesia.

For the past 20 years, Christians and Muslims have been fighting over the island of Maluku. Each group wanted to drive the other group out.

Recently, the conflict broke out into an all-out war. Muslims and Christians began attacking each other fiercely and burning each other's houses of worship (mosques and churches). Thousands of people, both Muslims and Christians, have died in this conflict.



A Christian church roofless after being burned by Muslim mobs



A government soldier waves the Philippine flag atop a burned mosque

first inhabitants of the country and have fought long and hard against being colonized by the Christians.

The War in Mindanao. In Mindanao, there have been many bloody encounters between Muslims and the military, resulting in brutal deaths. Several foreigners have also been hostages by a group of Muslim rebels. Thousands of families have lost their homes and many others have suffered and died.

One probable cause of these battles is the old conflict between the Muslims and Christians in the country. Muslims want a separate nation from that of the Christians, who make up the majority of the population. The Muslims were the



Let's Think About This

What do the three situations have in common?

Compare your answer with that in the *Answer Key* on page 36.



Let's Learn

Conflicts happen in many places all over the world. These are influenced or caused by many factors, such as racial, ethnic, economic and political disagreements. But they have one thing in common: in one way or another, religious differences between the groups contribute to the conflict. Does this mean religion has bad influences on people?

As you have learned in the previous lesson, the different religions of the world have one thing in common—they all teach positive values and ethical principles like love, charity and understanding. So what causes religious conflicts? See if you can tell what causes the conflict in the following story.



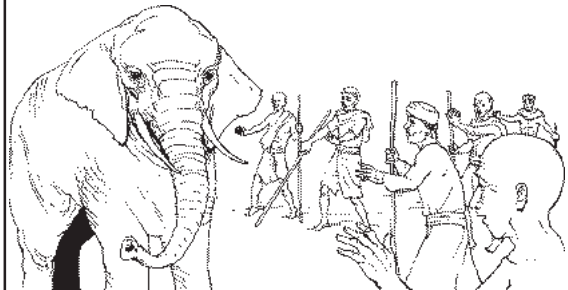
Let's Read

Have you heard the story of the six blind men and the elephant? Let's look at this old children's tale again.

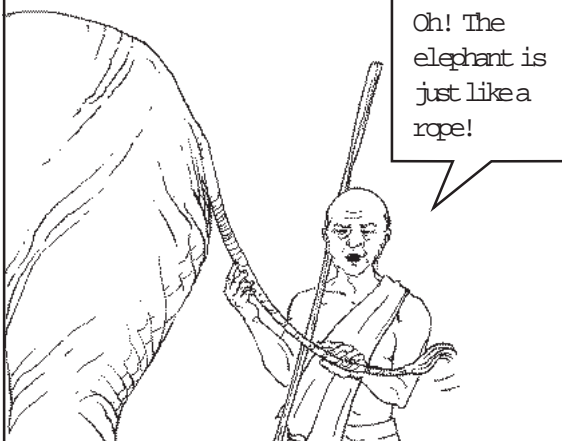
Once upon a time, there were six blind men who wanted to know what an elephant is like.



One day, somebody told them that there was an elephant in the neighborhood. They hurried to where they were told the elephant was.



The first blind man grasped the elephant's tail. He said:



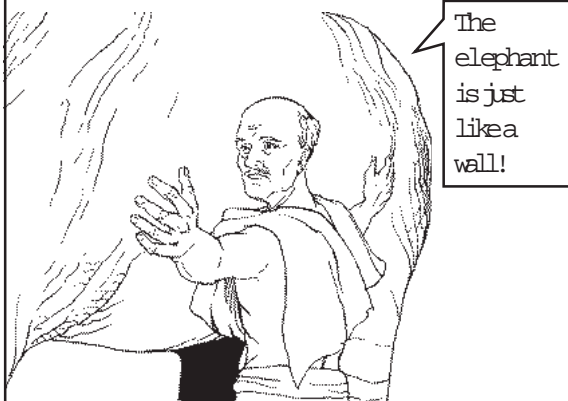
Oh! The elephant is just like a rope!

The second blind man caught hold of the elephant's legs. He said:



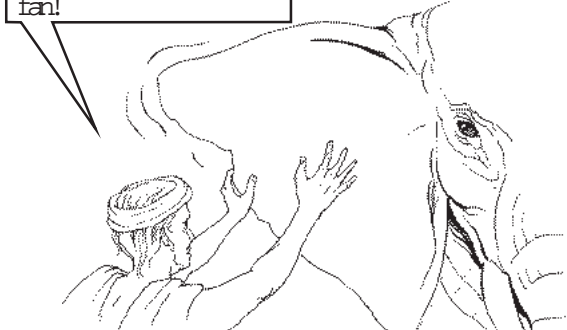
Why, the elephant is just like a tree!

The third blind man got hold of the elephant's body. He cried out:



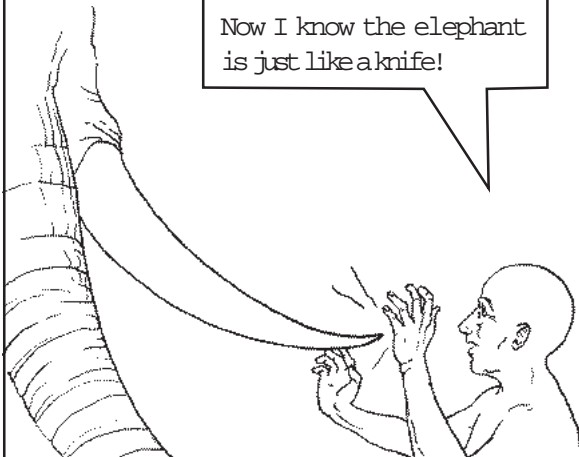
The fourth blind man grabbed one of the elephant's ears. He said:

My friends, the elephant is just like a fan!



The fifth blind man took hold of one of the elephant's tusks. He cried out:

Now I know the elephant is just like a knife!



The sixth blind man grasped the elephant's trunk. He said:

Oh, my! The elephant is just like a snake!



The six blind old men quarrelled among themselves. Each one thought he was right and the others were wrong.





Let's Think About This

Answer the questions below.

1. What was the problem of the six blind men? Why couldn't they agree?

2. How do you think this lesson can be applied to religion, particularly religious conflicts?

Compare your answers with those in the *Answer Key* on page 36.



Let's Read

Now read the following story.

One day, five men started arguing about the real name of God.



The first one, a Jew, said:

The name of the one true God is Yahweh.



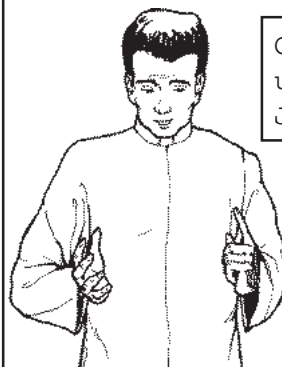
The second man, a Muslim, said:

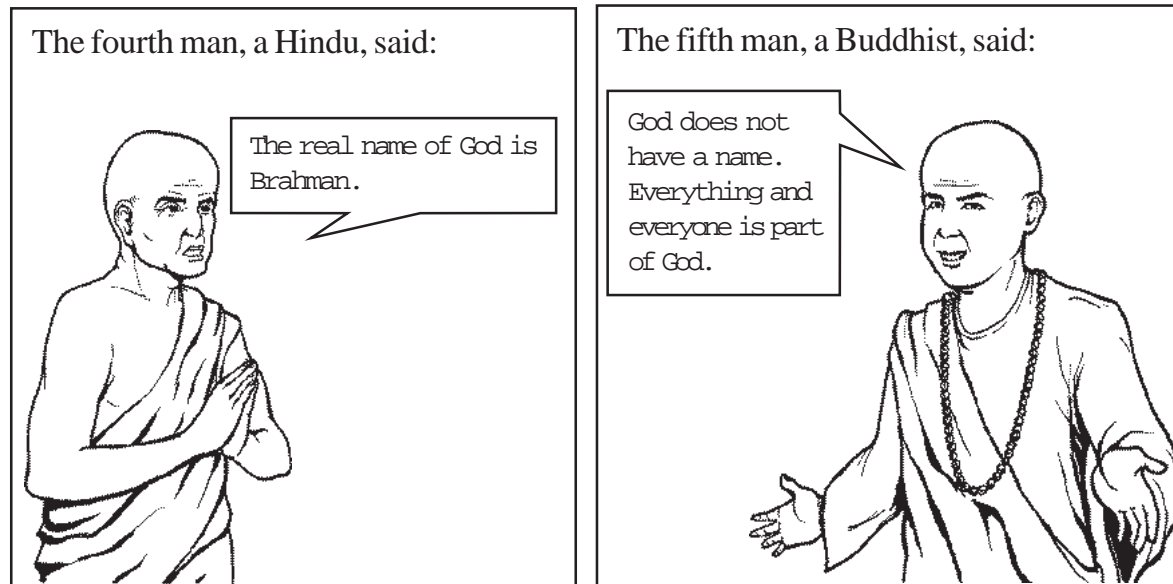
I don't agree!
The name of God is Allah!



Then the third man, a Catholic said:

God revealed himself to us through his son, Jesus Christ.





Which of these people do you think is right? Do they remind you of the six blind men?



Let's Learn

Why does religion often lead to hate and war? Is religion bad?

Read the following statement:

“Every religion emphasizes human improvement, love, respect for others, sharing other people’s suffering. On these lines, every religion has more or less the same viewpoint and the same goal.”

— The Dalai Lama

Do you agree?

Religious groups differ greatly in their ideas, beliefs and practices. But all seem to teach people how to be good and how to treat each other with love and understanding.

What then can be the cause of all the conflicts?

Religious conflicts are often caused by an attitude that people take towards others who have beliefs different from their own. This attitude is called **intolerance**. Religious intolerance is said to occur when people do not allow others to practice beliefs different from those prescribed by their own religion.

What causes religious intolerance?

There is one characteristic of religion that we have not discussed. It is the importance that religion places on faith and loyalty. Some religions teach that faithfulness to your religion is a value, and that you have to think of your religion as the one true religion. Other religions are said to be created by false prophets, or worse—the devil himself. The members of these religions then try to convert others into their religion, in the belief that they are saving them from evil.

But what if the people you are trying to save feel the same way? What if they feel their religion is the one true religion and yours was created by the devil? The result is fighting, which leads to hatred and, most often, war.

What can be done to stop the fighting? There is only one thing we can do. That is to change our attitudes about other religions and their believers. How can this be done?

Now that you have learned about the different religions, do you think you can believe in their teachings? Although the basic teachings of different religions may be similar, their practices and beliefs are different. Can you possibly have strong faith in your religion while at the same time also believe in the teachings of another?

You do not have to believe in the teachings of other religions. If you want to help end the conflicts between religions, the first thing you have to do is to respect the right of others to follow freely their own religious beliefs and practices, even though they may seem false to you. This involves:

1. Accepting that followers of other religions consider their religion to be true in the same way you consider your religion to be true.
2. Allowing others to practice their religious faith, as long as these practices do not cause harm to others.
3. Not refusing employment, accommodation, etc., on religious grounds.
4. Trying to accommodate other people's religious needs. For example, employees should be allowed to take time off during religious festivals or holidays that are important to them.
5. Not stereotyping people of other religions. (Stereotyping means having a fixed set of ideas about someone or something.)



Let's Try This

Do you have friends or relatives who belong to a different religion? If there are none, try to go around your barangay and look for someone belonging to a different religion. Talk with him/her about his/her beliefs and practices. Verify if what has been discussed in Lesson 1 conforms to his/her understanding and practice of his/her religion. As you talk with him/her, try to apply the things you have learned here so far about tolerance and respect.



Let's Learn

We have already discussed the first step towards achieving peace among religions—respecting each other's right to practice religious beliefs. But this means that members of different religious groups might end up disagreeing, not liking each other, and not communicating. This doesn't sound good, does it?

It is important that people from different religious groups engage in **dialogue**. What does this mean? This means that they should communicate with each other on equal grounds. No one should act as if he/she is in a position of authority, as if he/she is trying to save the other. A meaningful dialogue between people of different religious groups means sharing each other's beliefs. This should help them appreciate the similarities as well as recognize and respect the differences between their religious beliefs. This should lead to better understanding between the groups. Better understanding should lead, ideally, to peace.



Let's See What You Have Learned

Write **T** on the line if the statement is true, and **F** if it is false.

- _____ 1. There are no differences between the religions of the world.
- _____ 2. Religious intolerance means not allowing others to practice religious beliefs different from your own.
- _____ 3. Meaningful dialogue between members of different religious groups means one party trying to save the other from the "evil religion" he/she belongs to.
- _____ 4. In order to achieve peace with members of other religions, you have to believe in what their religion teaches, even if these are in conflict with the teachings of your own religion.
- _____ 5. It is the right of every person to practice and express his/her religious beliefs.

Compare your answers with those in the *Answer Key* on page 36. Were most of your answers correct? Very good. You are now prepared to take the post-test for this module. If most of your answers were wrong, you better go back and read through the things you failed to understand. Afterwards, you may take the test. Good luck!



Let's Remember

- ◆ Religion in itself does not teach people to fight. It is the people's bad attitude toward each other's religions that leads to conflict. This bad attitude is called religious intolerance. You are intolerant of another person's religion when you do not allow that person to express religious beliefs different from your own.
- ◆ The different world religions teach the same basic truths, but in different ways.
- ◆ You must respect the religious beliefs of others, even if you don't believe they are true.
- ◆ In order to resolve religious conflicts, you should:
 1. Allow others the right to practice their religious beliefs, even if these are in conflict with your own beliefs.
 2. Engage in meaningful dialogue between members of different religious groups in order to learn about their beliefs and practices.
 3. Learn to value the differences between the beliefs and practices of different religions while recognizing the fact that all religions have very similar goals.



Let's Sum Up

Let's look at the important concepts you have learned in the module. They are summarized below so you can remember them better.

- ◆ The five major world religions are: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and Buddhism. These religions have the most number of followers worldwide.
- ◆ Christians follow the teachings of Christ, especially his commandment that we should love one another and God above all.
- ◆ Muslims follow the Will of God or Allah.
- ◆ Jews also put importance in following the commands of God or Yahweh.
- ◆ Hindus believe in a supreme force that is in everything and at the same time is beyond everything.
- ◆ Buddhists hope to attain nirvana and be free of suffering and illusion.
- ◆ The world religions teach the same basic truths, but in different ways.
- ◆ We must respect and be tolerant of other people's religious beliefs and practices, even when these may be very different from what we personally believe in.



What Have You Learned?

A. Encircle the letter of the correct answer.

1. Jesus Christ taught people that . . .
 - a. they should love themselves only
 - b. they should love others as they love themselves
 - c. they should love themselves more than they love others
 - d. none of the above
2. Muslims place the greatest importance on . . .
 - a. obedience to the Will of Allah
 - b. obedience to the Will of Mohammed
 - c. obedience to the spirit of war
 - d. all of the above
3. Hindus believe that . . .
 - a. animals are sacred and should be worshipped
 - b. animals are dirty and should be killed
 - c. everything is sacred and no living being should be harmed
 - d. none of the above
4. Jews believe that . . .
 - a. action is more important than belief
 - b. belief is more important than action
 - c. neither belief nor action is important
 - d. none of the above
5. The goal of the Buddhist is . . .
 - a. to worship the Buddha
 - b. to obey the Buddha
 - c. to love the Buddha
 - d. to awaken from illusion

B. A family belonging to a different faith moved in next to your house. What would you do? Check the option you prefer.

- _____ 1. Ask them to describe their religion to you and offer to tell yours to them, if they are interested. You also express your desire to attend one of their services and invite them to yours.
- _____ 2. Treat them no differently than any other neighbor, ignoring your religious differences.
- _____ 3. Suggest that they should convert to your religion; express no interest in learning about their religion.
- _____ 4. Force them to convert to your religion.
- _____ 5. Tell your new neighbors to leave because they might influence your neighborhood with their “evil ways.”
- _____ 6. Tell the rest of your neighbors to make life miserable for the new family so that they would move away.
- _____ 7. Take more direct action—enter their house and destroy their furniture, leave a dead rat on their front door, or do other such actions.

Compare your answers with those in the *Answer Key* on pages 36–37 to see how you did in the test. If you did not do very well, that is all right. Studying this module could not possibly change your attitudes toward people of other religions instantly. You will have to work on this patiently. Just remember what we have discussed in this module the next time you encounter someone of a different faith.

If you did well in the final test, congratulations! You know enough about other religions as well as about the proper behavior toward people with different beliefs and practices. The only thing left to do is practice. Practice everything you have learned here. By doing so, you would be working towards ending religious conflicts and thus help bring about peace among religions and among people of the world.



Answer Key

A. Let's See What You Already Know (*page 2*)

1. **F**—Muslims do not worship Mohammed—he is considered as the last great prophet; they worship God or Allah.
2. **F**—Buddhists follow the teachings of Buddha, but they do not worship him.
3. **F**—Although Hindus may have many personal gods or goddesses, they also believe in one supreme being, called **Brahman**.
4. **F**—Although many Christians do worship Jesus as the Son of God, they also venerate God the Father, or Yahweh. Roman Catholics believe in and worship three persons in one God, called the **Holy Trinity**, which is composed of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
5. **T**—The Muslim Qu'ran, the Christian Holy Bible and the Jewish holy scriptures are said to come from the same source, and contain practically the same basic teachings.
6. **T**—Other people who have beliefs different from your own have a right to express them freely. You should always keep this in mind to avoid conflict.
7. **F**—People should not be discriminated against based on their religion or their beliefs—this is a violation of their rights.
8. **T**—People often fight because of intolerance of each other's beliefs.
9. **T**—Many religious conflicts that occur throughout the world prove this to be true.
10. **T**—Religion is personal because it has to do with your own relationship with God. It is also social because it requires you to participate in group activities and it involves ethical behavior toward others.

B. Lesson 1

Let's Try This (page 4)



Buddhist



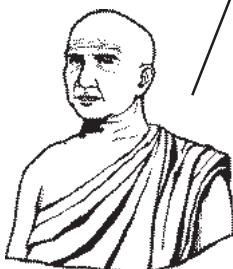
Christian



Jew



Muslim



Hindu

Allah created everything on Earth and is the only source of guidance for humanity. If you submit to God's will, you will be rewarded in the Afterlife.

Brahman is the supreme spirit of the universe. Your actions in this life determine your status in the next.

Jesus is the son of the one everlasting God. Humankind can be saved through faith, because of the resurrection of Christ.

Yahweh is the one true God. He made, is making and will make everything. Live according to His divine will as stated in the Torah.

Achieve enlightenment and freedom from ignorance, desire and suffering through meditation and reincarnation. Rely on yourself to achieve enlightenment.

Let's Review (page 7)

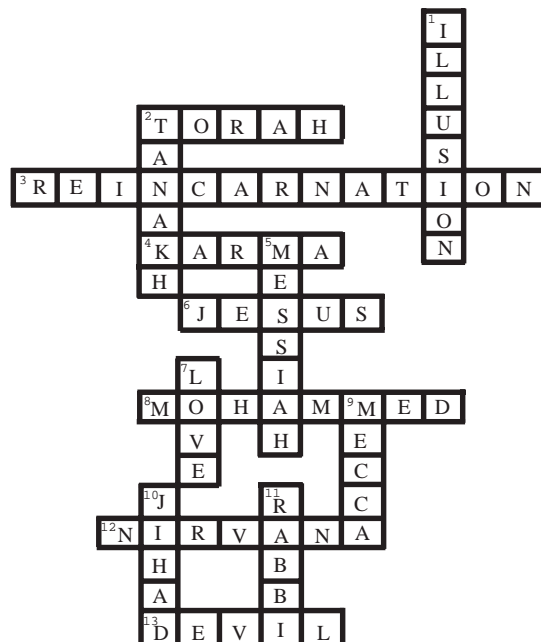
1. New Testament
2. Adam, Eve
3. 1.7 billion
4. Philippines
5. three
6. original sin
7. Holy Trinity
8. resurrection
9. Jesus
10. God

Let's Review (page 10)

1. **False.** Jihad means any struggle for a noble cause. It does not necessarily mean fighting others. Islam, in fact, teaches tolerance and love of peace.
2. **False.** Muslims also revere other prophets like Adam, Abraham and Jesus.
3. **True.** Giving to charity is the third most important duty of every Muslim.

(The learner may give other explanations aside from the ones above.)

Let's See What You Have Learned (pages 19–20)



C. Lesson 2

Let's Think About This (page 22)

The three situations describe violent conflicts between groups of people. These conflicts were all influenced by religious differences between the groups.

Let's Think About This (page 25)

1. The six men were blind, so they could not see that they were describing different parts of the elephant. The truth which the blind men cannot see is that the elephant is one animal with many different parts.
2. People of different religions usually end up fighting because they could not see that although they have different practices and beliefs, they basically have the same goals. They are in fact describing different aspects of only one truth. Remember the Hindu saying: "The Truth is one, but different sages call it by different names."

Let's See What You Have Learned (page 28)

1. **F** — Although many ethical principles of the different religions are similar or the same, their beliefs and practices differ greatly.
2. **T**
3. **F** — Meaningful dialogue between members of different religious groups can occur only if all parties respect each other's rights to hold and express their own beliefs. Instead of trying to "save" each other, they should just recognize that each group believes as firmly as all the others that they belong to the true religion and that they know the path to salvation.
4. **F** — You do not have to convert to other religions to maintain peace. You can continue believing in the things you believe in, but you must let others do the same. This is the path to peace.
5. **T**

D. What Have You Learned? (pages 31–32)

1. The correct answer is **(b)**. This is one of the most important teachings of Christ promoting love, tolerance and understanding.
2. The correct answer is **(a)**. It is neither the will of Mohammed nor that of war that Muslims obey, but that of Allah. Obedience to Allah is in fact one of the most important aspects of Muslim faith.

3. The correct answer is **(c)**. One of the most important aspects of Hindu faith is ahimsa, or non-injury. This concept stems from the Hindu belief that everything is sacred because everything is part of Brahman.
4. The correct answer is **(a)**. Jews place a lot of importance on good deeds, particularly obedience to the Will of God, as written in the scriptures. They believe that it is these, more than faith, that can lead to salvation.
5. The correct answer is **(d)**. The Buddha is not the path to salvation; he is merely a teacher who guides the Buddhist on the path. To follow the path, one has to awaken from illusion.

B. If you chose:

1. You get 5 points. This is the answer that shows the proper behavior toward people of other religions. This attitude promotes religious harmony in the community.
2. You get 3 points. This attitude is okay, but instead of engaging in dialogue, you are indifferent to other religions.
3. You get a 1-point deduction. This expresses religious intolerance.
4. You get a 2-points deduction. This attitude is very intolerant.
5. You should deduct 3 points from your score. This is a serious level of religious intolerance and harrassment.
6. Deduct 4 points from your score. This level of religious intolerance is worse than that shown in number 5.
7. You get no points. This shows you are extremely intolerant of other religions.



Glossary

Anti-Semitism Hatred of Jews

Ascetic A person who avoids physical pleasures and lives a simple life, often for religious reasons.

Denomination An established religious group that has usually been around for many years and has many members in different places in the world.

Dogma Teachings or beliefs stated by an authority like the church to be absolutely true.

Karma Sum of a person's good and bad deeds, thoughts and words.

Mitzvot Divine commandments of God that the Jews follow.

Nirvana Freedom from all illusion and suffering, which Buddhists hope to attain.

Puja A Hindu act of worship showing reverence to God through invocation, prayer, music, song or ritual.

Qur'an Muslim holy book.

Rabbi A Jewish scholar and teacher learned in Jewish laws and traditions.

Reincarnation The idea that when people die, their soul lives on to be reborn in another body.

Religious Intolerance Lack of respect for other people who practice a religion different from your own; disallowing others to practice a faith that is different from yours.

Sabbath Jewish day of rest (Saturday).

Samsara A meaningless cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth.

Sect A small religious group that branched off from an established religion or denomination.

Stereotype A fixed set of ideas about the characteristics of a particular type of person or thing, which are often wrongly believed to be shared by all the people and things of that type. (Example: We should never stereotype Muslims as having more than one spouse.)

Synagogue Jewish house of worship.

Tanakh Jewish holy book.

Vedas (singular: Veda) The holy scriptures of the Hindus.



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