

Understanding Different Religions for Self-Advocates

This resource is to help you if you want to learn about religion. It can also help you think about the types of common religions practiced.



What is Religion?

Religion is a set of beliefs about God or gods. People who follow a religion often worship, which means they show love and respect to their God or gods. Many people who practice religion spend time trying to learn about a power that is greater than humans.

Some religions believe in one God. This is called monotheism. Other religions believe in many gods. This is called polytheism.

Learning about religion can help you understand different groups of people. That's because religion often affects how people think and act.

Major Religions

Although many religions are practiced throughout the world, here is a list of the most common:

Christianity



Christianity is the biggest religion in the world. It is based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Christians believe that Jesus is God's son and that he died to forgive the wrong things people have done. You might also hear Jesus called the Messiah.

Christianity has many different groups. Each group has its own beliefs, values, and traditions. Some of these groups are Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Baptist, but there are many others.

Islam



Islam is one of the world's oldest religions. It teaches people to follow the will of Allah, who is God. The most important prophet in Islam is Muhammad. Followers learn from the Quran, which is their holy book. Muslims practice five important acts of worship called the Five Pillars.

There are three main groups of Islam: Sunni, Shia, and Muhakkima. There are smaller groups as well.

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Buddhism



Buddhism was started by a man named Buddha. He encouraged people to follow a path toward enlightenment, which means deep understanding and peace. This path is all about balance and moderation—not too much, not too little. Buddhists often practice not harming others and spend time meditating.

There are two main types of Buddhism: Theravāda and Mahāyāna.

Hinduism



Hinduism is another of the oldest religions in the world. People who follow it believe you can find truth in many different ways. Some important ideas in Hinduism are: doing the right thing, being born again after you die, and understanding that your actions and intentions have consequences. Being kind and accepting of other people is often seen as the most important virtue.

Hinduism includes many different beliefs and traditions about spirituality. Because of this, many people think of it not as a religion, but as a way of life.

Judaism



Judaism was started by a man named Abraham. People who follow Judaism believe in one God who cares about human beings. Jews believe that God made a special agreement, called a covenant, with the Jewish people. That's why you might hear them called the "chosen people."

Some Jewish groups include Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform.

Other Beliefs

There are many other religions as well. Popular Eastern religions include Confucianism and Taoism, which emphasize ethical living, harmony, and balance between life and society.

Other religions, such as Native American practices and Wicca, are deeply connected to the Earth and nature.

Finally, the absence of a belief in a god or refusal to practice a formal religion is called Atheism. Atheism is not a religion or a belief; it is a stance.

Resources

Buddhism: www.britannica.com/topic/Buddhism

Christianity: www.britannica.com/topic/Christianity

Hinduism: www.britannica.com/topic/Hinduism

Islam: www.britannica.com/topic/Islam

Judaism: www.britannica.com/topic/Judaism

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