

WEEK 2: HOW CAN THERE ONLY BE ONE, TRUE RELIGION?

ABOUT THIS SERIES

As we start the new year, join St. Mark on Sunday mornings for conversations on faith and doubt in our series *Reason for God*. Together, we'll take on some of the common questions people have about faith and Christianity.

ITEMS NEEDED

Bibles

CHECKLIST BEFORE YOUR GROUP ARRIVES

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Pray for your group | <input type="checkbox"/> Read through the Discussion Guide | <input type="checkbox"/> Refreshments (optional) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean meeting area | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean bathroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Crack front door |

OPENING (5 MIN)

After a general welcome, say: Let's get started this morning with a quick icebreaker—

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE CANDY?

After a brief discussion, say: There are lots of candies in the world. Some of us like coconut, some of us can't stand it. Some crazy people like black licorice. A lot of people like Reese's Peanut Butter cups. It's all just personal preference.

But what about religion? There are 4,000–some religions in the world, how are you supposed to know which one is the true religion? Is it all just personal preference?

Well, that's the question we're going to discuss today as we continue our series, *The Reason for God* as we ask *How can there only be one, true religion?*

Before we get started, will you please pray with me?

OPENING PRAYER (1 MIN)

Host, lead the group in prayer.

PAUL IN ATHENS (APX. 10-15 MIN)

After a prayer, say: We could look at a lot of sections in the Bible that talk about God set himself apart from all the religions of the world. The first command of the top ten commands is "Thou shall not have any other gods before me."

But an interesting way of approaching the question of "How can there only be one, true religion?" is to see how a man named the Apostle Paul handled the tension of talking about Jesus in the midst of a pluralistic society.

CAN EVERYONE TURN TO ACTS 17:16-18 AND CAN SOMEONE READ ALOUD FOR US?

WHAT WAS PAUL'S MESSAGE (IN VERSE 18)?

After a discussion, say: Notice that this wasn't a debate comparing the moralities of other religions or ideas of God or gods. Rather, it was a conversation about the event of the resurrection.

WHEN TALKING TO NON-CHRISTIANS, WHY DO YOU THINK CHRISTIANS LEAD WITH TOPICS OTHER THAN THE RESURRECTION?

IN VERSE 18 THEY CALL PAUL "A BABBLER". DO YOU THINK CHRISTIANS TALK ABOUT OTHER TOPICS BECAUSE THE RESURRECTION SOUNDS CRAZY?

PAUL IN THE AEROPAGUS (APX. 10-15 MIN)

After a discussion, say: In the next section Paul is brought to a big amphitheater-type building (that you can still visit today) called *The Aeropagus*. There, people would give first-century Ted Talks about philosophy and religion.

CAN SOMEONE ELSE READ ACTS 17:19-23 ALOUD FOR US?

After the reading, say: Paul's word "ignorant" here isn't the insult for them that it is for us. He's talking about what they don't know. Actually, he's being very complimentary of the Athenians, and finding a connection with them.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT SHARING OUR FAITH FROM PAUL'S METHOD HERE?

After a discussion, say: Let's keep following this story of Paul.

CAN SOMEONE READ ACTS 17:24-34 ALOUD FOR US?

WHAT STANDS OUT TO YOU FROM THIS READING?

After a discussion, say: Some of the people eventually rejected Paul because he talked about the resurrection. but this is actually a good thing. In other words, they aren't rejecting Christianity for a secondary issue.

HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE YOU SEEN REJECT CHRISTIANITY FOR REASONS OTHER THAN THE RESURRECTION?

AS A SUMMARIZING QUESTION—HOW DOES THE RESURRECTION HELP ANSWER THE QUESTION OF "HOW CAN THERE ONLY BE ONE, TRUE RELIGION?"

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT AND PRAYER (5 – 7 MIN)

After a discussion, say: Let's close things out with prayer—

ARE THERE ANY PRAYER REQUESTS TODAY?

Host, begin with a prayer asking God to help us lead with the resurrection. Then, pray for the prayer requests.