

Respecting Beliefs: Muslims, Christians, Jews and Others

Program Guide



AIMS MULTIMEDIA

9710 DeSoto Avenue • Chatsworth • California 91311
Tel: 800-367-2467 • Tel: 818-773-4300 • Fax: 818-341-6700
<http://www.aimsmultimedia.com>

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Respecting Beliefs: Muslims, Christians, Jews and Others

Dear Teacher / Presenter:

This program supplements your other teaching materials for:

WORLD RELIGIONS
TOLERANCE EDUCATION
CHARACTER EDUCATION

The goals of the program are to give your students:

- a glimpse into a few pivotal religions
- the rationale and tools for respecting those with different beliefs

Each segment is introduced with an historical overview. Using a split-screen technique, students speak about their beliefs, while pertinent facts are printed on the screen below them.

Beliefs covered are: Judaism, Christianity (Catholics, Protestants/Baptists), Islam, Buddhism and Atheism. These are among the most common in the United States.

Students also give their viewpoints about tolerance, understanding and respect.

The educator / host, Ruby Petersen Unger, concludes the program with a five-point action plan for how students can talk to others about their beliefs in a nonthreatening and effective way.

PLEASE NOTE: Talking about our beliefs and asking questions about the beliefs of others can be difficult to do. Please give your students a safe environment for those participating in the discussion, as well as for those who want to exercise their right to pass on participation in the activity.

The good you do does come back to you.

VIDEO SYNOPSIS

I. INTRODUCTION (first 3 1/2 minutes)

People on the street name the religions that come to mind when asked by a roving reporter.

Educator / Host, Ruby Unger explains why it's important to learn about other people's beliefs.

- Almost everyone has a belief system they follow.
- Our beliefs shape our perspective, our values, our code of behavior.
- Our beliefs affect everyone around us: we share the same world, we interact continuously.
- There are similarities, as well as differences in our beliefs; the differences enrich our lives.
- MONTAGE of religious services and ceremonies
- SCROLL of NAMES: examples of Gods, spirits, ghosts, goddesses

MAPS:

World total population, 6.3+ billion:

- Christianity, 2 billion
- Islam, 1.3 billion
- Hinduism, 900 million
- Non-religious, 780 million
- Buddhism, 360 million
- Confucianism and Taoism, 300 million
- Tribal, 180 million
- Atheism, 170 million
- Judaism, 14 million
- All other religions, 310 million

U.S. total population, 287+ billion:

- Protestant, 100+ million
- Catholic, 60 million
- Jewish, 6 million
- Muslim, 6 million
- Non-religious and other religions, 100+ million
- Tribal, 4 million
- Buddhist, 3-4 million
- Atheist, 2 million
- Hindu, 1.3 million

Only a few beliefs can be covered in one program. Those chosen are among the most common in the U.S.

II. JUDAISM (3 1/2 minute segment; starts 3 1/2 minutes from beginning of program)

- Scenes of a Bat Mitzvah (girl) and Bar Mitzvah (boy) coming-of-age ceremony in a synagogue
- Students talk about the Torah, good deeds, family traditions, community
- Scenes of a Seder meal with explanation by students

Jewish Golden Rule:

“What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellowman.” Torah, Shabbat 3id

III. CHRISTIANITY (3 1/2 minute segment; starts 7 minutes from beginning of program)

- Scenes from a Catholic confirmation; scenes of taking Holy Communion
- Students talk about following in Christ's footsteps, the Holy Trinity, the Eucharist/Communion
- Scroll of Protestant names
- Baptist church scenes
- Students talk about style of worship, belief in Jesus, how they are baptized

Christian Golden Rule:

"As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." Luke 6:31

IV. ISLAM (3 1/2 minute segment; starts 11 minutes from beginning of program)

- Scenes of Muslims praying in Mosque
- Students talk about the meaning of Islam; Muslim modesty for women and men; their prayer schedule; the five Pillars of Islam (rules); the Hajj journey to Mecca; Ramadan and the Eid Ul-Fitr celebration.

Muslim Golden Rule:

"Love for others what you love for yourselves and dislike for others what you dislike for yourself." Muhammad (Hadith)

V. BUDDHISM (3 1/2 minute segment; starts 14 minutes from beginning of program)

- Landscape scenes at a meditation center
- Students talk about the Buddha's teachings of the four Noble Truths; meditation; mindfulness; karma; the namaste greeting and farewell.

Buddhist Golden Rule:

"Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." Udana-Varga 5.1

VI. ATHEISM (2 1/2 minute segment; starts 17 minutes from beginning of program)

- Scenes of atheist club meeting
- Students talk about their identities as atheists, about the importance of learning from others, about their personal moral codes, and about their tolerance towards people who follow a religion.

VII. TOLERANCE (1 1/2 minute segment; starts 19 minutes from beginning of program)

- Host Ruby Unger reminds us that “tolerance” is more than “putting up with something.” It’s making the effort to learn about and understand people who are different.
- Students make comments about knowledge, understanding and respect.

Quote:

“Liberty and tolerance are the foundation of a civil society.” Benjamin Franklin

VIII. ACTION PLAN FOR HOW TO TALK WITH OTHERS ABOUT THEIR BELIEFS

(1 1/2 minute segment; starts 20 minutes from beginning of program)

1. **OPPORTUNITIES:** Use an opportune moment to learn something new.
2. **HOW YOU ASK:** Facial expressions, posture, gestures, and tone of voice matter; show respect.
3. **HOW YOU ANSWER:** Welcome the interest of others; give good information.
4. **HOW YOU LISTEN:** Make eye contact, give full attention, nod, paraphrase back for meaning.
5. **BE THERE AND AWARE:** Ninety percent of life is just showing up. Attend, listen, observe, and learn.

IX. CONCLUSION (1 minute segment; starts 22 minutes from beginning of program)

- Host Ruby Unger encourages viewers to learn from others about their beliefs. Human honor, human respect, human dignity are universal ... and it begins with us. The good you do does come back to you.
- People on the street talk about respect, as end credits roll.

INTRODUCTORY QUIZ

NAME _____

1. _____ T or F. The largest world religion is Christianity.
2. _____ T or F. Muslims always face east when they pray.
3. _____ T or F. Christians, Muslims and Jews all have the same God.
4. _____ T or F. Buddha was born a Hindu prince.
5. _____ T or F. An atheist and an agnostic believe the same thing.
6. _____ T or F. You can respect someone without liking them.

VOCABULARY

The following terms are used in, or relate to, the subject of this program.

BAPTISM: the Christian sacrament of washing away old sins; for infants, “original sin”

COMING OF AGE CEREMONY: a special event of “initiation;” a formal acceptance as a member of a religious community, usually involving a ritual (tribal rites, confirmation, bar/bat mitzvah, etc.) It can require months/years of instruction; it usually takes place during adolescence, 12-15 years of age

DEITY (Middle English/Old French/Late Latin): a god or goddess

DENOMINATION: a Christian religious group, for example: the Lutheran denomination

DHARMA (Sanskrit): the teachings of the Buddha

DOGMA: a strictly followed set of rules and principles from an authority

EID UL-FITR (Arabic): the Muslim celebration after fasting during the month of Ramadan; special prayers are said in the mosque; family and friends have festive visits; gifts are given, including increased charity to the poor

EUCCHARIST (Middle English/Late Latin/Greek): the Christian sacrament of Holy Communion or Lord’s Supper, during which the eating of bread and drinking of wine/juice represents Jesus’ sacrifice of his body and blood. Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox Christians have different ways of conducting communion.

MASS: a daily celebration of the Eucharist in Catholic churches

MECCA: the city in Saudi Arabia where Muhammad was born; the spiritual center of Islam; Muslims face Mecca during their prayers, five times a day.

MONOTHEISM: the belief that there is only one God

PARAPHRASE: to restate or reword something in order to help makes its meaning clearer - for example, “in other words, you mean ...”

POLYTHEISM: the belief in more than one god, or many gods

RAMADAN (Arabic): the month of fasting, when Muslims do not eat or drink during the daylight hours between sunrise and sunset

REINCARNATION: the belief that the soul, upon the death of the body, comes back to earth in another body or form

REVERE: to deeply respect, honor and admire someone who inspires awe and devotion

SACRED: something holy; devoted or dedicated to a deity; having a religious purpose

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SACRAMENT: an important Christian ceremony said to have been initiated by Jesus Christ to symbolize a believer's commitment: baptism, confirmation, Holy Communion, marriage, etc.

SANGHA (Sanskrit): a group/community of Buddhists

SECTARIAN: following a narrow belief; limited in interest to those who share that belief

SECULAR: things that are not religious, spiritual or sacred; nonreligious subjects

SECULAR HUMANISM: any set of beliefs that promotes human values without following the rules of any religion

SHABBAT (Hebrew): the Jewish Sabbath: day of rest and religious services

TOLERANCE: a fair, objective and respectful attitude towards those whose opinions, practices, race, religion, nationality, etc., differ from one's own; interest in and concern for the beliefs of others; an undogmatic viewpoint; a patient, impartial and open-minded spirit. (There are other definitions regarding endurance ability; physical characteristics of an object, etc.)

“DID YOU KNOW?” FACT SHEET

- Christianity is the largest religion, worldwide, with 2 billion followers.
- BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini) have been changed to BCE and CE, in most of the world. BCE means “Before the Common Era”; CE means “the Common Era”.
- Same deity / different names:
Judaism: God / Yaweh; Christianity: God / Jehovah; Islam: God / Allah
- Hindus have more than 300 million gods. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are supreme.
- Moses delivered 613 commandments; we mostly learn about the top ten.
- Buddha was not a god; he was born a Hindu prince. Buddhists may/may not believe in a god or gods.
- Jesus was born Jewish and was a rabbi/teacher early in his life.
- Most religions seek to answer the questions: How was the world created? Why is there suffering? What is the meaning of life? What happens to us after death?
- Of the 234 nations in the world, only two have an official religion: Algeria and Brunei (both Muslim.)
- China is officially atheist, but it has 102 million Buddhists; 70 million Christians; 37 million Muslims. It's the largest country worldwide, with 1.3 billion people.
- Over eighty percent of the population of East Germany is atheist, as well as twenty-nine percent of Russia's population.
- There are more Jews in the U.S. than in Israel; Russia is next, then France.
- Muslims live mostly in Indonesia; then Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Turkey.
- Thirty percent of Protestants, twenty-eight percent of Roman Catholics, eight percent of Jews and seven percent of Muslims say they attend their religious services every week, according to a recent U.S. survey.
- Kwanza is a harvest festival celebrating African cultures; it is not religious.
- Native tribes revere all things natural, as well as the spirits of the dead.
- Saints are people who helped others when they were alive, and who, after death, keep helping people. Miracles are attributed to them.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

The following activities may be assigned as individual projects; you may also choose to break the class into small groups and assign as group activities.

1. Investigative Reporter(s)

Interview a leader of a religion, or a nonreligious group, in your area. This can be someone you know, or a leader from another belief. Report your findings back to the class. Some questions you might ask (always try to ask who, what, where, why and how questions):

- Why did you choose this belief to follow?
- How did you prepare to be a leader of your belief? (i.e., years of schooling, etc.)
- What changes have you seen in your belief's organization? (i.e., attendance at services/ meetings, new rules over the years, gender roles, etc.)
- How does your belief's organization contribute to the community?
- How are you supervised? Who is your boss?
- How is your organization supported financially?

2. Dramatic Performance

Find a poem, play, song, etc., that tells of an event in the folklore of a belief system, or shows people respecting those of other beliefs. Produce a taped presentation, or perform it live in class.

3. Let's Eat!

Prepare a meal or dish that is traditional to a particular belief system. Explain why the ingredients and preparation are special. (i.e. Muslim halal meat, Jewish kosher foods, Easter bread, etc.)

4. Field Trip

Initiate a class field trip to a house of worship (church, synagogue, cathedral, etc.), meditation center, or other. Begin by: getting all the necessary permissions before making the first contacts; find an interested person/religious leader to receive your class and give a tour; schedule the date; arrange for transportation; alert your school / community newspaper of what you're doing. They might want to do a story about the event. Take pictures of the group with the leader, and the location.

5. Guest Speaker

Invite a religious leader, or leader of a nonreligious group to speak to your class. Prepare a list of questions of what your class might want to know to give them in advance of their appearance. (See #1., above, for question ideas.) Alert your school / community newspaper of what you're doing. They might want to do a story about the event. Take pictures of your class with the leader.

6. Review the media!

Write a review / essay about a TV show, movie, video game, website, CD, etc., with the goal of describing how it shows respect and understanding between people of different beliefs - or not!

7. Notable Quotes

Write an essay about one of the "notable quotes" from this study guide. What is your opinion?

SENTENCE COMPLETION EXERCISE

“How well do I give/get respect?”*

On a separate sheet of paper, please complete the following sentences. Write as many endings as you can think of. You may choose to share your thoughts with the class, or keep them to yourself. The choice is strictly your own; you do not have to share this with anyone else.

There are **no** wrong answers.

1. One of the things I wish people understood about my beliefs is ...
2. One of the things I wish I understood about the beliefs of others is ...
3. If I were to be more open-minded, then ...
4. If I were more respectful towards people of other beliefs, then ...
5. If I asked more questions about other people’s beliefs, then ...
6. If I would welcome people asking me about my beliefs, then ...
7. If I listened carefully to the words and feelings of others, then ...
8. If I were quiet and listened to others talking about their beliefs, then ...
9. With people of other beliefs, sometimes I’m afraid that ...
10. If I were kinder toward others, then ...
11. If I paid more attention to how I talked to people, then ...
12. One of the rules I try to live by is ...
13. I respect people when they ...
14. I don’t respect people when they ...
15. When people ask “what are you?” or “what do you believe?” I answer ...

* based on *The Art of Living Consciously*, Nathaniel Brandon

NOTABLE QUOTES
“THIS IS WHAT I THINK ABOUT THAT..”

What is your opinion of these notable quotes? On a separate sheet of paper, write a sentence stating your opinion of, or response to, each of these quotes - or select one of the quotes and write a one-page essay expressing your views on the topic of that quote.

Benjamin Franklin (founding father)

In his biography of Ben Franklin, Walter Isaacson writes, “Franklin believed in God, but he did not subscribe to any particular sectarian doctrine. This led him to help raise money to build a new hall in Philadelphia that was, as he put it, ‘expressly for the use of any preacher of any religious persuasion who might desire to say something.’ He added, ‘Even if the Mufti of Constantinople were to send a missionary to preach Mohammedanism to us, he would find a pulpit at his service (for his use).’”

Bruce Springsteen (musician)

Discussing his respect for Dr. Robert Coles, who is a Pulitzer Prize-winning author and child psychologist, Bruce Springsteen has said he was profoundly influenced by Dr. Coles’ 1999 book, *The Secular Mind*. “It is an extended meditation on the moment during everybody’s day when things stop, and you’re connected to other things, larger things. Sometimes those moments come automatically, like at the birth of a child, or the death of somebody you love ... or listening to ‘Louie, Louie.’ I guess that that idea is sort of what songs and music and art are for.”

Gene Roddenberry (creator of Star Trek)

“I do not belong to any church but I do consider myself a religious man. I believe that I am part of you and you are a part of me and we are part of all life ... we are all one family under one creator ... perhaps some of that thinking made its way into Star Trek in the philosophy of tolerance and respect for life which I tried to include in the episodes. I believe that all people, customs, rituals and all that sort of thing, are equal.”

Diane Keaton (actor, director)

Commenting on her film, *Heaven*, during a television interview: “... I thought, OK, somebody has to do a documentary on Heaven and just show all the ways on film that man has depicted Heaven and how absurd it is. It’s just the strangest concept I’ve ever heard of. How is it possible? All eternity ... what are you supposed to do? Yeah, I got killed for that film. You know, nobody liked that film. It was a critical bomb. And, I really had to take it, and I really felt like, uh, OK, I’m sorry ... I’m sorry I made the film.”

Richard Gere (actor, activist)

From a newspaper report: “Buddhists were shocked when, on Oct. 20, 2001, at Madison Square Garden in New York City, Richard Gere, Hollywood’s best-known Buddhist, was booed off the platform at a rock concert where Paul McCartney and Mick Jagger, among others, were performing for the benefit of victims of the September attacks. Mr. Gere had advocated compassion in the face of aggression.”

ACTION PLAN

HOW TO TALK WITH OTHERS ABOUT THEIR BELIEFS

1. OPPORTUNITIES:

There are times during the day when you have a chance to talk with someone about their beliefs. Look for those opportunities and take note of what's going on around you. If it feels right, it might be a good time to start a conversation. Use your best instincts.

2. HOW YOU ASK:

How you ask your questions is as important as what you ask. Your facial expressions, posture, gestures, i.e. your body language, and your tone of voice do matter. Follow the "no putdowns" rule and show respect.

3. HOW YOU ANSWER:

Welcome the interest being shown in you and your beliefs. Assume the other person has little or no information and that he or she is sincere in the questions he/she is asking. Be patient and open. What you tell the other person can increase his/her level of understanding and respect for both you and your belief system. Thank the person for asking!

4. HOW YOU LISTEN:

Make eye contact; give your full attention; nod to show you're listening; paraphrase, or say back what you're hearing to check for understanding ... saying it out loud is also a good way to help you remember what you hear. Don't interrupt while the other person is talking. Listen to the feelings behind the words.

If it's true that ninety percent of life is just showing up, then you can achieve a lot by attending a lecture, or a discussion, or a meeting; by visiting a house of worship; by thoughtful and quiet observation of what's going on around you. You don't always have to actively participate. But, do try to be open-minded; be there and be aware.

TEST

NAME _____

1. What is the largest world religion? _____

2. What is the second largest world religion? _____

3. Muslims face _____ when they pray.

4. Which religious faiths believe in the God of Abraham? _____

5. In what order did Islam, Judaism and Christianity develop and who was the founder of the first one?

6. T or F. The Buddha was a God. _____

7. T or F. A religion's "golden rule" is a statement of kindness towards others. _____

8. T or F. There's nothing to be gained by "just showing up." _____

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Some useful websites for further research:

www.secularhumanism.org

www.AtheistParents.org

<http://worldfactsandfigures.com/religion.php>

http://worldfactsandfigures.com/complete_list.php

www.ilaam.net/Opinions/SecularMajority.html

www.adherents.com

www.religioustolerance.org/worldrel.htm

www.worldalmanacforkids.com/explore/population.html

www.atheistempire.com/reference/statstext.html

www.prb.org//Content/ContentGroups/Datasheets/wpds2002/2002_World_Population_Data_Sheet.htm

www.nationalgeographic.org

www.pluralism.org

www.crosscurrents.org

www.museumoftolerance.com

www.teachingtolerance.org

www.partnersagainsthate.org

www.tolerance.org

www.mixitup.org

INTRODUCTORY QUIZ (ANSWER SHEET)

1. **T** T or F. The largest world religion is Christianity.
2. **F** T or F. Muslims always face east when they pray.
3. **T** T or F. Christians, Muslims and Jews all have the same God.
4. **T** T or F. Buddha was born a Hindu prince.
5. **F** T or F. An atheist and an agnostic believe the same thing.
6. **T** T or F. You can respect someone without liking them.

SENTENCE COMPLETION EXERCISE (ANSWER SHEET)

“How well do I give/get respect?”*

Hold an in-class discussion once students have completed their sentences - but only if the students feel comfortable with discussing their responses. This will be a valuable learning exercise even if students choose to keep their responses private.

Students' responses will vary.

On a separate sheet of paper, please complete the following sentences. Write as many endings as you can think of. You may choose to share your thoughts with the class, or keep them to yourself. The choice is strictly your own; you do not have to share this with anyone else.

There are no wrong answers.

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2. One of the things I wish I understood about the beliefs of others is ...
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14. I don't respect people when they ...
15. When people ask "what are you?" or "what do you believe?" I answer ...

* based on *The Art of Living Consciously*, Nathaniel Brandon

NOTABLE QUOTES

“THIS IS WHAT I THINK ABOUT THAT...” (ANSWER SHEET)

What is your opinion of these notable quotes? On a separate sheet of paper, write a sentence stating your opinion of, or response to, each of these quotes - or select one of the quotes and write a one-page essay expressing your views on the topic of that quote.

Student responses will vary.

Benjamin Franklin (founding father)

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Bruce Springsteen (musician)

Discussing his respect for Dr. Robert Coles, who is a Pulitzer Prize-winning author and child psychologist, Bruce Springsteen has said he was profoundly influenced by Dr. Coles’ 1999 book, *The Secular Mind*. “It is an extended meditation on the moment during everybody’s day when things stop, and you’re connected to other things, larger things. Sometimes those moments come automatically, like at the birth of a child, or the death of somebody you love ... or listening to ‘Louie, Louie.’ I guess that that idea is sort of what songs and music and art are for.”

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“I do not belong to any church but I do consider myself a religious man. I believe that I am part of you and you are a part of me and we are part of all life ... we are all one family under one creator ... perhaps some of that thinking made its way into Star Trek in the philosophy of tolerance and respect for life which I tried to include in the episodes. I believe that all people, customs, rituals and all that sort of thing, are equal.”

Diane Keaton (actor, director)

Commenting on her film, *Heaven*, during a television interview: “... I thought, OK, somebody has to do a documentary on Heaven and just show all the ways on film that man has depicted Heaven and how absurd it is. It’s just the strangest concept I’ve ever heard of. How is it possible? All eternity ... what are you supposed to do? Yeah, I got killed for that film. You know, nobody liked that film. It was a critical bomb. And, I really had to take it, and I really felt like, uh, OK, I’m sorry ... I’m sorry I made the film.”

Richard Gere (actor, activist)

From a newspaper report: “Buddhists were shocked when, on Oct. 20, 2001, at Madison Square Garden in New York City, Richard Gere, Hollywood’s best-known Buddhist, was booed off the platform at a rock concert where Paul McCartney and Mick Jagger, among others, were performing for the benefit of victims of the September attacks. Mr. Gere had advocated compassion in the face of aggression.”

TEST (ANSWER SHEET)

1. What is the largest world religion? Christianity

2. What is the second largest world religion? Islam

3. Muslims face Mecca when they pray.

4. Which religious faiths believe in the God of Abraham? Jews, Christians and Muslims

5. In what order did Islam, Judaism and Christianity develop and who was the founder of the first one?

Judaism, followed by Christianity and Islam; Abraham founded Judaism

6. T or F. The Buddha was a God. False

7. T or F. A religion's "golden rule" is a statement of kindness towards others. True

8. T or F. There's nothing to be gained by "just showing up." False. You'll see, hear and learn something new if you're there.