



LGBT* HISTORY MONTH 2016

Religion, Belief & Philosophy

*lesbian, gay, bisexual & trans



Resource Pack for Youth Work & Education Settings



Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans
History Month



FORMERLY LGBT
YOUTH NORTH WEST





This is the LGBT History Month Pack 2016 and its theme is Religion, Belief and Philosophy: A Leap of Faith.

This pack contains useful information about faith and sexuality as well as four session plans you may wish to use in lessons or groups you deliver in youth or education settings.

The pack is designed to be flexible. It can be used as a whole, with each of the lessons/sessions building knowledge for the next session, or sessions and activities can be used individually.

Should you require additional support, have any questions, or wish to discuss this pack further, please contact us at the Proud Trust: info@theproudtrust.org

This pack was developed as a partnership between LGBT History Month, Schools OUT UK, The Proud Trust and the LGBT Consortium.

DISCLAIMER

★ Describing and detailing religious beliefs is a very hard task because there is so much variety within and between religions. We have tried to reflect some key beliefs and teachings here to aid discussion. We recognise, however, that we can not reflect every religion or every denomination/aspect of that religion. We would advise you to avoid saying "All Christians believe...", and instead say "Some Christians believe..." and encourage the young people you work with to give examples from their own lives and faiths to bring the topic to life.

A FEW WORDS FROM

Sue Sanders, Professor Emeritus,
LGBT History Month UK founder.



LGBT History Month is 11 years old in 2016. We have really grown in those years and it is wonderful to see museums, galleries, cinemas, theatres, trade unions, local authorities, schools, universities, colleges, clubs, pubs, churches etc. embracing the chance to claim our past, celebrate our present and create our future. We need to make the LGBT community, in all its diversity, visible and safe. We are thrilled that our partners The Proud Trust, who have been crucial in enabling us to augment the many free resources we provide to 'Educate OUT Prejudice', have worked with us to produce this pack to support the vital work. Every year for the last few years we have chosen a theme so we can extend our reach and resources and enable people to realise that, as LGBT people, we are everywhere.

Why are we doing Religion, Belief & Philosophy?

We at LGBT History Month have chosen to focus on Religion, Belief and Philosophy this year. The Equality Act says we must 'foster good relations between the protected characteristics'. Three of those 'protected characteristics' are: gender reassignment; religion and belief; and sexual orientation. We need to get on together. That is the law.

First of all, of course, we need to realise that lesbians, gays, bisexuals and trans people are also Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, pagans, agnostics and atheists. Our duty as Schools OUT UK is to represent the LGBT community in all its diversity.

Second, we need to recognise that most people who belong to a faith group have religion to bring peace and understanding to their lives. We also need to acknowledge that there are some who use – or abuse – religion to justify their own prejudices and bigotry.

Third, we also recognise that many in the LGBT community will hold prejudices towards people of faith. This is not without reason. There is a history of antagonism, apart from the current struggles over same sex marriage, same sex adoption, conversion therapy and gender reassignment. Religious orthodoxies continue to exclude us and deny us access to opportunities enjoyed by cisgender heterosexuals. But religions promote universal love, as well as demanding that we do not judge. These are invaluable ideals and form the basis of a dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding. We need to offer the olive branch here.

Fourth, LGBT people of faith have made great strides to make their own places of worship inclusive at micro and macro levels; from the churchgoer who talks to the church leader and is out to the congregation to ensure they see the human face of LGBT, through to the brave campaigners who stick their heads above the parapet to challenge those at the top of the hierarchy.

Fifth, on a number of occasions it has been pointed out to me by my black, Asian and minoritised ethnic (BAME) friends that their sexual orientation or gender identity is a part of their identity and that their religion, belief or faith is another part of that identity. For many, their belief comes first, and they feel uncomfortable when their faith is challenged by westernised activists for LGBT rights who don't fully understand their position. We need to be careful to avoid western perceptions and Eurocentric assumptions and be sensitive to the diverse needs of the LGBT community.

Sixth, we have choices. If we are unlucky enough to find ourselves in conflict between our faith and our true identity, we can walk away or we can seek reconciliation. Those who do not have that choice are having their human rights abused and that is a different, but massively important issue. Otherwise, that choice is theirs and we, as an organisation, need to respect it. Our duty is to support them. It's as simple as that.

Seventh, the UK is not a secular state. The Queen is the head of the Church of England and the bishops within the House of Lords give the church a guaranteed, unelected role in the governance of the nation. Every school in the land has an ethos. Most are Church of England and many are Roman Catholic or otherwise. With the growth of faith related academy chains and legislation to allow free schools, the current trend is towards more religious influence in schools, rather than less. We need to involve ourselves in these issues to make sure that the LGBT community is protected, safe and visible, and has a voice in all of our educational institutions.

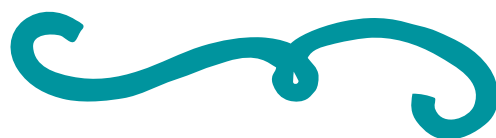
That is why this year we are taking up Religion, Belief and Philosophy as our theme.



Tony Fenwick

CEO of
Schools OUT UK

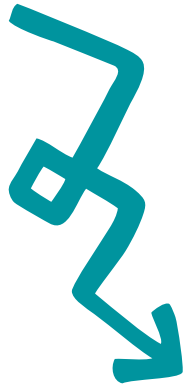
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LGBT HISTORY MONTH



Session Plans Week 1 – 4

These session plans can be used as a whole scheme of work over a number of weeks, or as stand alone activities from which you pick and mix.

Please make sure you have read the facilitator guidance and the religious fact file before you run these activities.

SESSION 1 – RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCE (60 MINS)

This first session will investigate the beliefs of major religions. It will look at the values that followers of particular faiths are expected to believe, and whether this causes any conflict with the religious perspectives on gender and sexuality.

Introduction

(10–20 mins)

Begin the session by asking the group what they think the words 'faith', 'belief' and 'philosophy' mean. Give them the 'Religions of the World and their Symbols' sheet and ask them if they recognise any of the religions or symbols on the sheet. Ask them to tell you any facts they know about the religions or symbols listed.

This discussion will lead to the first exercise.

Aim:

To warm up the group to the topic.



Materials:

The religious fact file in the back of this pack (p26 – 37).

Copies of 'Religions of the World and their Symbols' sheet (p38).

Religions of the World and their Symbols



Christianity



Judaism



Islam



Sikhism



Taoism



Jainism



Buddhism



Shinto



Hinduism



Bahá'í



Confucianism

EXERCISE 1

Six Major Religions (25-40 mins)

Aim:

To discuss the teachings of the six major religions and how these relate to gender and sexuality.

Materials:

.....

Flipchart paper, pens. Each small group of young people will focus on one of the religions so will need the two pages related to that religion, so print off the Religious Fact File (p26 – 37), in the back of this pack.

Ask the group to name the six major world religions. (These are Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism). Explain that there are many other belief systems too.

Divide the group into smaller groups. Give each group a religion to focus on and the correlating handout. They should read this handout and discuss it in their groups.

On a piece of flipchart paper, ask the group to write down what they feel are the positives and negatives of the religion they have been given. Ask if there are any surprises about the beliefs surrounding lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people of the religion they have been given. Conclude by asking each group or person to share one thing they have learnt.

Notes for Session Leader:

- It may be necessary with some groups to start with definitions of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT). If you are unsure and would like a useful definition, these can be found in the glossary of LGBT terms at the back of pack.
- This pack is designed to be used with a range of ages. Please read through the religious fact file and highlight to the young people any words they may not understand. These can be found in the 'Other Useful Definitions' section in the back pages of the booklet.
- When discussing their findings, highlight to the young people that religions generally teach love, tolerance and acceptance. Try to avoid criticising any religion, but instead encourage discussion.

EXERCISE 2

Free Will Says... (20-30 mins)

Aim:

To help the young people question the choices we make, including the idea of disobeying and how we use free will.

Materials:

.....
You don't need anything for this activity, but you can print out the list on the next page.

Explain the rules of 'Simon Says' to the young people, e.g. Whenever they say 'Simon says' followed by an instruction, the group should do it. Anybody who does not immediately do the task will be out of the game and unable to win. Should the person leading the game say an instruction but not say 'Simon says...' beforehand, and you still do the task, you are also out of the game. The person who is leading the game is the judge as to whether you are out or not out.

Start playing 'Simon Says'. When the game starts, what 'Simon Says' will be simple and will mimic the childhood game that many of them will know and will have played. However, as the game progresses what 'Simon Says' will be more complex, and may make the young people pause to think whether they want to complete the task. You will need to use your judgement as to what is appropriate and what is not, given your knowledge of the group you are working with (including disabilities, sensitivities, age and how well they know each other).

The list can go on, and the aim is to try and get people to stop obeying Simon and to question what they are doing.

Notes for Session Leader:

- This is an active game about pushing personal boundaries and may not be appropriate for all groups. There are alternative ways of playing it where you can print out the list of instructions rather than reading them out. The young people can then work in pairs and ask each other whether they would hypothetically do the activity on the list, rather than really doing it. They can tick the activities they would complete.

Use some or all of this list:



Touch your nose	
Hop on one leg	
Bend over	
Rub your belly	
Whistle	
Clap your hands	
Stamp your feet	
Stick out your tongue	
Lie down	
Give your phone to the person next to you	
Shout out a secret	
Take off your shoes	
Hold hands	
Pull someone's hair	
Tell a lie	
Call somebody an insulting name	
Kiss another group member's elbow	
Lick your shoe	
Say Simon is the best	
Be left handed	
Be right handed	
Believe being gay is a sin	
Think that people who believe in God are stupid	

Discussion

After playing the game, ask the young people:

Discussion questions



What did we just do?

How did it make you feel?

Were there any points where you felt uncomfortable? Why?

Were there any things you couldn't do?

If you stopped, why did you choose to stop?

- Were you always aware you had a choice?
- At which point did you decide to stop playing?
- Why didn't you keep playing so you could win?

If you continued, why did you continue?

- Would this have been at a different point if it wasn't a competition?
- Did you think about it?

How do you think this exercise relates to religious belief?

Can people choose which parts of religion they follow?

Do they risk their god's judgement if they do not obey every part of religion?

Can we use our free will to make choices as individuals?

Plenary (5 minutes)

Ask the young people to think about the values that have been discussed regarding the six major religions, their treatment of LGBT people and the free will exercise. Ask whether they believe people have a choice as to which parts of religious belief they follow. Ask them what the consequences/results might be if people did not follow all the parts of their religion. Finish by asking what tips they would give to religious leaders about LGBT identities.

SESSION 2 – WHO AM I? (45–80 mins)

This session will look at how our beliefs and culture make up our identity. It explores the social connections and cultural values that are important to us as individuals, and as parts of a larger community or group.

Introduction

(15 mins)

Ask the group to give you examples of religious artefacts, religious songs or poems, icons or images of gods, and ceremonies or celebrations. You can write their ideas down on a whiteboard or flipchart. The information below will help you.

Aim:

To introduce objects and ideas associated with religion.

Materials:

Flipchart and pens or a whiteboard and pens.

- **Religious artefacts** – An artefact may be described as an object that has special archaeological, cultural or religious interest. Each religious tradition has items of special significance. Some examples are cross/crucifixes, prayer wheel, monk's robes, incense, rosary beads, chalice and paten, Advent candle, Nativity set, Diwali cards, Aarti lamp, prayer beads, Holi paints, menorah, prayer mat with compass, Hajj robe and bowl for karah parshad.



- **Religious songs or poems** – these are songs or poems which are used for worship or at particular religious festivals or ceremonies. Examples of these are Christmas Carols, the Kaddish, Psalms, Adhan (or the call to prayer), Qur'anic Chanting, Sutras, Tanka, Hai Ku, Raagas and Kabir poetry.



- **Icons or images of gods** – these are the pictures or statues each religion uses to show their god or other religious figures. In Christianity, these could include Jesus and the Virgin Mary. In Hinduism, this could include Hanuman, the monkey god or Ganesh, the six armed elephant god.



- **Ceremonies or celebrations** – these are religious events that bring together communities in acts of worship and celebration. These may include marriages, baptisms, and festivals such as Diwali, Eid or Christmas. They are often the highlight of the religious calendar.



Note to Session Leader:

You should extend this activity by asking the young people if these things only exist in religions or whether they can be found elsewhere.

A key example you may wish to highlight to the young people is LGBT culture:

- An artefact may be a rainbow flag
- A song or poem may be a famous 'coming out' song such as "Born This Way" by Lady Gaga
- An icon may be somebody like Madonna or Laverne Cox
- A celebration may be a Pride event or Trans Day or Remembrance

EXERCISE 1

Beliefs & Experiences (15–30 mins)

Aim:

To show the young people that everybody has beliefs and experiences that make up their identity, and influence how they see the world regardless of whether this is religious or not.

Materials:

Pens and paper.

Ask each young person to spend five minutes writing down five things on a sheet of paper that are important to them, that they believe in, or that they have experienced in their own lives. This should include an artefact, a song or poem, an icon, and a ceremony or celebration. They should not show their answers to anybody else and should have a reason why they have made their choices. Let them know they can pick religious or non-religious things that are important in their lives such as music, books, films or sports. Should any of them find this difficult, they can look online or revisit the suggestions on the flipchart or white board from the introductory exercise.

Once the young people have completed this activity, split them into groups of three and ask them to take it in turns to state what they have for each topic, but not to explain why it is important to them at this point. The other two group members need to come up with suggestions of what they think each answer says about the other person and guess why it is significant. After the other group members have stated their own theories, the young person will reveal why the items were chosen and the meaning of the items to them.

For the final five minutes

Discussion questions

- Were people correct in their guesses?
- What were the similarities and what were the differences?
- What does this exercise reveal about people's beliefs?
- Do beliefs have to be religious?
- How do we respect people's beliefs and identities when they are different to our own?

EXERCISE 2

Stand Up for What You Believe In! (15–30 mins)

Aim:

To encourage young people not to make assumptions about people on the basis of religion or stereotypes.

Materials:

Activity sheet called 'Standing Up for What You Believe In! Cut out and mix up the sections. Have enough copies to give one copy to each small group of 3 – 4 young people.

Ask the young people if they think coming out as LGBT is hard. Ask the young people whether age, family, religion or the country a person lives in might play a part, and if so, ask how.

Split the group into smaller groups of three or four and give each group one set of the cut out sheets. Ask the young people to try and work out which photo matches with which quote and which biography. Ask them to share their guesses with the whole group then reveal the correct answers.

Note to Session Leader:

The activity sheet called 'Standing Up for What You Believe In!' is in the appendix at the back of the pack and will also act as your answer sheet, as the photo and quote are next to the name and biography of that person.

Plenary (5 minutes)

Ask the group:

- Which parts of the famous people's identities are most important?
- What three to five parts of your identity are most important?
- Should we have to decide or can we be many things at once?
- Does anyone ever experience conflicts over parts of their identity?
- What advice can we give each other about how to cope with or manage this conflict?

SESSION 3 – UTOPIA OR DYSTOPIA?

55-95 mins

Introduction

(10-20 mins)

Explain that this session is about exploring beliefs.

Ask them:

- What is a belief?
- Is it the same as a religion?
- What beliefs do you have?

You may wish to write some of their responses down.

Give out the 'What Do We Believe In?' sheet.

In small groups or pairs, ask the young people to read the sheet, then discuss:

- Do they know anyone who shares any of the beliefs from the sheet?
- Do they agree or disagree with the quotes?
- If someone holds these beliefs, how might they show these to the outside world?
- Are there any dangers related to believing too strongly in any of the things on the sheet?
- In the past, holding a strong belief is referred to as 'extremist', but now this word is mostly being used to describe terrorists that call themselves Islamic. How do you feel about this? Does this add to discrimination against Muslim people?
- What can we learn from this?

Aim:

To explore some non-religious beliefs.



Materials:

Copies of 'What Do We Believe In?' sheet.

EXERCISE 1

Big Beliefs (15-25 mins)

Aim:

To explore what big belief systems impact on the modern world

Materials:

Copies of the 'Big Beliefs' handout, cut out and mixed up.

Explain to the group that there are some big belief systems and world views that have shaped the world around us. Divide the group into small groups. Give out the cut out sheets from the 'Big Beliefs' handout.

Ask each small group to match the belief to the definition.

When they have finished, ask them to suggest which are the correct pairs, and reveal the answers.

- Do you know any countries or examples from history related to any of the words? (eg fascism and Hitler; capitalism and the USA; communism and Russia or Suffragettes and feminism)
- Which one thing on the list do you connect with most strongly and why?
- Are any of the beliefs listed the opposite of each other? (eg capitalism and communism)
- What happens in countries or communities when people have opposite world views?
- What suggestions do you have for the best ways we can live in harmony/alongside each other when we have opposing views?

Discussion questions

EXERCISE 2

Imagine a world
without religion
or dominant
belief systems
(30–45 mins)

Aim:

To highlight that all communities, groups and people have beliefs or codes for living. It is only when they are unusual to you that they become more visible.

Materials:

Flipchart paper and pens

Explain that a utopia is a perfect world and a dystopia is a world that has gone wrong. Give examples from film, literature and television of what utopias and dystopias can look like, e.g. the films *Blade Runner* or *The Hunger Games*, or novels such as *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, *1984* by George Orwell, or *Herland* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

Divide the group into two. If possible, separate them so one group cannot hear the instructions given to the other group. Give each group three sheets of flipchart paper and pens, and then ask them to write the heading 'Identity, gender and sexuality' on one sheet, 'Ethics and morals' on another sheet and 'Money, property and family' on the final sheet.

Ensure the other group cannot hear. Tell the first group they are now in a dystopian society where there is no religion or dominant belief system. Ask them in their group to describe their imagined world under each of the headings.

Now go to the second group. Ensure the other group cannot hear. Tell the second group they are now in a utopian society where there are no religions or dominant belief systems. Ask them in their group to describe their imagined world under each of the headings.

Once each group has clear ideas for each category, bring them back together and ask the groups to present their world view to each other. Ask the utopia group to comment on the world presented by the dystopia group, and vice versa.

- What are the similarities and differences between the utopia and dystopia?
- How does this compare to the country we live in now?
- Would you like to live in either of these imagined worlds?
- What would it be like for LGBT people in your imagined worlds?
- Can humans ever create a perfect world? Why or why not?
- If you could, what one thing would you take from the imaginary worlds into our real world?

Discussion questions

SESSION 4 – IMAGINE A NEW WORLD WITH RELIGION, BELIEF & PHILOSOPHY

(45 – 120 mins)

This session will build upon the exercises of the previous three sessions and ask the young people to build a belief system of their own. They may wish to call this a religion, belief system or philosophy.

Introduction (5–15 mins)

Bring the group together and ask them to state a main belief or philosophy they live by. Should they require prompting, show them the core beliefs of six religions included in this pack, or revisit the 'Big Beliefs' page for non-religious examples.

Aim:

To start to consider a core belief each person holds, and to see who shares that belief.



Materials:

None are needed, though you may want to have some copies of the core beliefs sheets from the Religious Fact File.

Ask them:

Why do you believe in the main belief/philosophy you have chosen?

Is this a similar belief to others around you; friends/family/community?

How have others influenced this belief?

EXERCISE 1

Ten 'Commandments' (10-25 mins)

Aim:

For the young people to create a list of beliefs which they think society should follow.



Materials:

Flip chart paper and pens.

Activity:

Divide the group into small groups.

Give each group a piece of flipchart paper and ask them to write down between 5 and 10 rules or core beliefs to live by. They should give their belief system a name and create a title for the list of core beliefs. They should all agree on the beliefs they write down.

Once they have their lists, bring the group back together to share some of the beliefs.

- What are the similarities between your group's ideas and the other groups?
- What differences are there?
- Was it easy to all agree to the beliefs?
- How did you come to agreement e.g did you have to compromise?

Discussion questions

Note to Session Leader:

- This activity may prompt ideas that are harmful or go against the principles of equality. Free thinking should be encouraged, but the session leader should challenge discriminatory ideas such as racism or homophobia. Challenges should be in the form of questions to help the young people learn, rather than to punish them.

EXERCISE 2

My new belief system

(30-80 mins)

Explain to the young people that they will create the paraphernalia or objects associated with practicing a religion or belief system. On a piece of flipchart paper or a whiteboard, write down the five categories (which are listed on the following page) and give a brief definition for each, or print the page with the categories on. (You may want to look back to the notes for session two for further inspiration).

Aim:

For the young people to produce a selection of the following for their new belief system;

- An artefact or object
- A song or poem
- Icons or images of god(s)
- Ceremonies or celebrations
- Rituals
- Clothing for their faith (optional)

Materials:

.....
Copies of the 'New Belief System Categories' page (overleaf).

Flipchart paper, pens, internet access (if possible), any art and craft supplies that may be available, material to make religious clothing (optional).

Note to Session Leader:

For young people who already have a faith, they may not wish to imagine a new belief system, but to celebrate the faith they already have. This is perfectly acceptable. They can list examples from their own faith for the above categories, to share with the group. However, thinking about week one, and specifically the contradictions often found in faith related to LGBT people, ask them to consider if there are any challenges in their faith which they would like to change.

This session may continue into future weeks depending upon time constraints. Once all the groups have created their belief system, ask the groups to present and defend their faith to the group. Ask the young people to vote for a belief system other than their own, that they would like to join.

- Why did you vote for the belief system you voted for?
- What would the belief system be like for LGBT people?
- What one belief will you take away from this to live by in your real life?

Discussion questions

NEW BELIEF SYSTEM CATEGORIES

1. Artefact of faith

They should make an artefact for their faith and describe the story behind it. It could be a painting or an object that has significance, such as jewellery or a relic.

2. Song or poem

This could be an original composition but can also be any song they like which has a message or significance that would fit with their belief system. It could also be new words to an existing tune.

3. Icons


Some of the young people may choose not to have icons or images of a god or gods. The belief system does not have to be a religion but can be a philosophy where they simply share a set of principles. They may choose a celebrity or somebody they know as an icon. Ask them to think about whether the followers of their belief system will believe in a god or gods, and if this will be a god who is already worshipped.

4. Ceremonies or celebrations

Let the young people decide whether their belief system has a festival like Christmas or Hanukah or Eid-ul-Fitr or solstice. Also ask whether people who are part of their belief system can be married or baptised or have a bar mitzvah or any other rite of passage.

5. Rituals

For people who will be part of their faith or belief system, will there be an act of shared worship, such as the Holy Communion or prayer, and how, where and why will this happen?



How will your belief system be inclusive and encourage equality?

RELIGIOUS FACT FILE



The core beliefs of
six major religions



Core Buddhist Beliefs



Buddhists do not worship any gods or god. People outside of Buddhism often think that Buddhists worship the Buddha. However, the Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) never claimed to be divine. He is viewed by Buddhists as having attained what they are also striving to attain, which is spiritual enlightenment and freedom from the continuous cycle of life and death. Buddhists believe a person has countless rebirths which inevitably include suffering. Buddhists seek to end these rebirths. Buddhists believe it is a person's cravings, aversion and delusion that cause these rebirths. Therefore, the goal of a Buddhist is to purify one's soul (or 'Atman') and to let go of all yearnings toward sensual desires and the attachment to oneself.

Many Buddhists follow a list of religious principles and practice meditation. Buddhists meditate for self-discipline. Through practiced meditation a person may reach Nirvana -- 'the blowing out' of the flame of desire.

The Four Noble Truths

The Buddha's Four Noble Truths explore human suffering. Put simply, these are:

Dukkha

Suffering exists, such as loss and sickness.

Samudaya

There is a cause for suffering. It is the desire to have and to control things.

Nirodha

There is an end to suffering. Suffering ceases with the final liberation - Nirvana.

Magga

In order to end suffering, you must follow the Eightfold Path.

The Buddha's Eightfold Path consists of:

- Right understanding of the Four Noble Truths
- Right thinking and to be following the right path in life
- Right speech; no lying, criticism, condemning, gossip, harsh language
- Right conduct by following the Five Precepts
- Right livelihood; support yourself without harming others
- Right effort; promote good thoughts and conquer evil thoughts
- Right mindfulness; become aware of your body, mind and feelings
- Right concentration; meditate to achieve a higher state of consciousness or understanding

The Eightfold Path

The Five Precepts

These are recommended rules to live by. Believers are expected to use their own intelligence in deciding exactly how to apply these rules:

1. **Do not kill.** This is sometimes translated as 'not harming', or an absence of violence
2. **Do not steal.** This is generally interpreted as including the avoidance of fraud and economic exploitation
3. **Do not lie.** This is sometimes interpreted as including name calling, gossip, etc
4. **Do not misuse sex.** e.g. adultery or any sexual harassment or exploitation
5. **Do not consume alcohol or other drugs.** The main concern here is that intoxicants cloud the mind

★ Attitudes to LGB identities

The relationship between Buddhism and sexual orientation varies by tradition and teacher. According to some scholars, early Buddhism appears to have placed no special stigma on same-sex acts since the subject was not mentioned. Some later traditions do feature restrictions on same-sex sexual activity and contact.

This may be based upon the Buddhist principle of resisting desire as it is believed that lust and want creates suffering. Any restrictions on same-sex love/acts are cultural or due to the teacher, country or culture where Buddhism is preached (e.g. India or the USA).

★ Attitudes to trans identities

In Buddhism, there is very little written regarding trans identities. Buddhism teaches that we should not become distracted from spiritual growth by worldly matters, including gender and sexuality.

In Thai Buddhism, being katoey (an umbrella term that includes a range of things from being transsexual to being a gay man) is seen as being part of one's karma. The response is one of 'pity' rather than 'blame'. Katoey are generally seen as unlikely to form lasting relationships with men, and this is a karmic punishment. Some people believe that in a past life they have treated marriage without respect and now they are doomed to never marry.

Core Christian Beliefs



The main Christian beliefs concerning God

- There is only one God
- God is a Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- God is all powerful, is everywhere, and knows everything
- God created the universe and keeps it going
- God loves everyone unconditionally (though some Christians believe that people have to comply with various conditions in order to achieve salvation)
- Human beings can get to know God through prayer, worship, love, mystical experiences and through God's grace (love)

Justification by faith

Most Christians believe Jesus is the son of God and came to earth as God. They believe he suffered and died to take away the sins of the world. Christians believe that through their belief in Jesus as the Son of God, and in his death and resurrection, they can have a relationship with God. They believe God's forgiveness was made once and for all through the death of Jesus Christ.

Life after death

Christians believe that there is a life after earthly death. While the actual nature of this life is not known, Christians believe that many spiritual experiences in this life help to give them some idea of what eternal life will be like.

The saints

These days, the word saint is mostly used to refer to a Christian who has lived a holy life on earth, and with whom miracles are claimed to have been associated

The Main Christian Values

The term 'Christian values' historically refers to the values derived from the teachings of Jesus and were taught by Christians throughout the history of the religion. e.g. love of God, faithfulness, giving up all worldly goods, rejection of violence, forgiveness of sins, unconditional love.

Many Christians follow the Ten Commandments, also found in the Hebrew Bible (Judaism), and used in Islam;

The 10 Commandments List



1. You shall have no other gods before Me
2. You shall not make idols
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy
5. Honour your father and your mother
6. You shall not murder
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour
10. You shall not covet

In the New Testament, Jesus was asked which is the most important commandment. He said that it was to love your God and to treat others as you would like to be treated yourself.

★ Attitudes to LGB identities

There are many branches or 'denominations' of the Christian church, so views may vary widely across these different branches. Christian teaching is generally that sexual intercourse is wrong unless it happens within a marriage. In the Church of England, the marriage service says that marriage is a remedy against sin, and to avoid sex outside marriage. The Catholic Church and some Protestant Churches believe marriage can only exist between a man and a woman. It is sometimes taught that for LGB people it is better not to have sex than to marry. As well as saying that sexual relationships should only take place within marriage, Christian teaching has often been opposed to same-sex sexual acts.

There are a couple of passages in the Bible which have been interpreted to mean that men committing sexual acts with other men is condemned. Despite this teaching, a growing number of Christians today believe that same-sex relationships do not go against God's wishes. Some denominations are more open about their support for LGBT people, such as the Unitarian Church.

★ Attitudes to trans identities

In some parts of Christianity there is a greater acceptance of non-binary gender identities and a recognition that people do not always fit either male or female roles from birth. In general, trans people can be married in many churches and can become ministers (leaders).

Some branches of Catholicism do not accept transition and are unwilling to accept the gender identity to which a person transitions. Trans people are not able to marry, become a church leader or be a god parent in these churches.

This may be related to a belief that people are created in God's image, so if trans people make changes to their bodies, this may be seen by some people as going against God's creation.

Core Hindu Beliefs

Some Hindus believe in moving towards ultimate oneness (Brahman), whilst others worship one god or many gods and goddesses in infinite forms. These various gods and goddesses become live within images, temples, gurus, rivers, animals, etc.

Hindu belief in Reincarnation

This is the belief that when we die we are reincarnated, are reborn or "come back" as a new person or other creature. We are given a chance to live a better life, until we can reach Nirvana or the afterlife.

Some Hindus believe their position in this present life was determined by their actions in a previous life. If a person's behaviour before was evil, they might justifiably experience tremendous hardships in this life. Some Hindus believe that pain, disease, poverty or a disaster like a flood, is deserved by that person because of their own evil actions, usually from a previous lifetime.

Most Hindus believe in reincarnation and the law of karma. These two concepts are interlinked.

The law of karma says that one reaps as one sows.

A Hindu's goal is to become free from the law of karma. Hinduism gives a person freedom to choose how to work towards spiritual perfection. There are three possible ways to end this cycle of karma:

1. Be lovingly devoted to any of the Hindu gods or goddesses
2. Grow in knowledge through meditation of Brahman (oneness)...to realize that circumstances in life are not real, that self hood is an illusion and only Brahman is real
3. Be dedicated to various religious ceremonies and rites

The Law of Karma

Core Hindu Values

Satyam – Hindus believe they should speak the truth. However, truth must be balanced with kindness and compassion when needed.

Ahimsa – means non-violence, or not doing violence beyond that bare minimum, without which we ourselves cannot survive.

Asteyam – means not taking things that do not belong to us, or taking more than our fair share.

Daya – means compassion and sympathy for all living creatures. Hinduism is a religion of love, kindness, mercy and selflessness.

Kshanti – means patience, forgiveness and tolerance, and withstanding suffering. Most Hindus believe in living their lives and letting others live their own.

Arjavam – is simplicity, straightforwardness and absence of deceit. Most Hindus believe in such openness and trying to be free from hypocrisy in the way they live their life.

Madhuryam – This means possessing sweetness of disposition and a pleasing and pleasant personality, to not be rude or impolite and be a balanced and likeable person.

Dama – This is self-control or the control of passions. Most Hindus try not to allow themselves to be led by emotional impulses or lust.

Dana – This means to give, to teach, to distribute, to share, to purify and to protect. A Hindu is ever ready with these attributes.

Akalkata – This means being free of sin, preventing yourself from reacting negatively to perceived evil. This is through not being judgmental of somebody without a full appreciation of the facts and circumstances.

★ Attitudes to LGBT identities

Men and women are believed to have a religious duty to be married and produce children so opposite-sex relationships are generally regarded as the norm. Sex is considered a good thing, which is to be enjoyed as one of the duties of married life. Sexual intercourse is generally expected to be between married couples, although the attitudes of some Hindus are changing, especially where they live in societies with more liberal attitudes.

There is no mention of same-sex relationships/sexual acts in Hindu scriptures. LGBT identities are a taboo subject for many Hindus, although there is some debate particularly in countries where LGBT people are generally accepted.

★ Attitudes to trans identities

Hindu philosophy has the concept of a third sex or third gender. This category includes a wide range of people with mixed male and female natures such as gay people, transsexuals, bisexuals, and intersex people. Such people are not considered fully male or female in traditional Hinduism, but are considered a combination of both. They are mentioned as third sex by nature (birth) and are not expected to behave like ordinary men and women.

Historically, they performed specific occupations (such as masseurs, hairdressers, flower-sellers, domestic servants, etc.) and were generally respected as spiritual. Their participation in religious ceremonies, especially as cross dressing dancers and devotees of certain temple gods/goddesses, is considered usual in traditional Hinduism. In Hinduism, the universal creation is honoured as unlimitedly diverse and the recognition of a third sex is simply one more aspect of this understanding.

Core Islamic Beliefs

Most Muslims believe in the following

6 articles of Faith



Oneness of Allah (God)

Most Muslims believe in one Allah, Supreme and Eternal, Infinite and Mighty, Merciful and Compassionate, Creator and Provider. Allah has no father or mother, no son or daughter. None is equal to Him. Muslims believe he is Allah of all humankind, not of a special tribe or race.

Messengers and Prophets of Allah

The Holy Qur'an mentions the names of 25 messengers and prophets (teachers) e.g. Adam (the first Prophet), along with Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (the last of the Prophets).

Revelations and the Qur'an

The Qur'an is a book. Muslims believe it is the direct words of Allah. Most Muslims recite it and turn to it for guidance in all aspects of their life.

Angels

Muslims believe angels are a creation of Allah. They are purely spiritual and splendid beings that spend their time worshiping Allah. Angels do not have free will – they can only obey Allah and do not have the ability to disobey Him.

Day of Judgement

Most Muslims believe in the Day of Judgment. The world as we know it will come to an end, and the dead will rise to stand for their final and fair trial. On that day every one will be resurrected from death. Everything we do, say, make, intend and think are accounted for and kept in accurate records. They are brought up on the Day of Judgment.

If some good deeds are seen not to get full credit in this life, they will receive full compensation on the Day of Judgment.

Predestination

Many Muslims believe in the ultimate knowledge and power of Allah to plan and execute His plans. Muslims believe Allah is wise, just, and loving, and whatever He does, must have a good motive. The believer should have strong faith in Allah, recognizing that their own knowledge is limited, and their thinking is based on individual consideration. Allah plans for an entire world, not just one individual. Humans should put their trust in Allah. If things happen as they want they should praise Allah. If things do not happen as they want they should still praise Allah, recognising that He knows best what is good for the affairs of humankind.

The Five Pillars of Islam are five basic rules that most Muslims follow.

1. **Declaration of faith (The Shahaadah)** – "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet."
2. **Prayer (Salah)** – Praying five times a day towards Mecca, using specific movements and prayers.
3. **Charity or almsgiving (Zakat)** – Muslims should give money to charity (usually 2.5% of their wages). If a person does not have much money, they can do other things instead.
4. **Fasting during the month of Ramadan (Sawm)**
5. **A pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)** – Muslims should go to Mecca on a pilgrimage at least once in their lives.



The Five Pillars are

★ Attitudes to LGB identities

Islam has very strict views on love and sex. These are based on passages from the Qur'an and Hadith (the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad). Muslims view sexual intercourse as an act of worship that fulfils emotional and physical needs, as well as being procreative. Having children is the way in which humans can contribute towards Allah's creation.

Islam encourages people to marry and not to lead celibate lives. Marriage places a responsibility on both the husband and the wife to meet each other's sexual needs. Sexual intercourse should only take place within married relationships.

Same-sex sexual relationships are forbidden by Islam because of these strict rules. Some Muslim lawyers have argued that it is a crime which should be punished by death.

★ Attitudes to trans identities


In Islam the term mukhannathun is used to describe gender-variant people, usually male-to-female transsexuals. This term is not in the Qur'an, but the term does appear in the Hadith, (the sayings of Muhammad), which have a secondary status to the central text.

Iran, a Muslim/Islamic country, carries out more gender reassignment operations than any other nation in the world except for Thailand. It is sanctioned as a supposed 'cure' for homosexuality, which is punishable by death under Iranian law. The government even provides up to half the cost for those needing financial assistance, and a sex change is recognised on the birth certificate.

Core Jewish Beliefs

The relationship with G-D

(the full word 'God' is not usually written by Jewish people)



Most Jews believe that there is a single G-d who created the universe, and with whom every Jew can have a relationship. They believe that God continues to work in the world, affecting everything that people do. The Jewish G-d has no body, so can be neither female nor male.

Judaism is the faith of a Community. Jews believe that G-d appointed the Jews to be his chosen people, in order to set an example of holiness and ethical behaviour to the world.

Jewish life is very much the life of a community, and there are many activities that Jews must do as a community. Jews also feel part of a global community with a close bond to Jewish people all over the world. A lot of Jewish religious life is based around the home and family activities. One example is the Sabbath meal, when families join together to welcome in the special day.

Who is Jewish? Jewish people mostly believe that a Jew is someone who is the child of a Jewish mother; although some groups also accept children of Jewish fathers as Jewish. A Jew, traditionally, can't lose the technical 'status' of being Jewish by adopting another faith, but they do lose the religious element of their Jewish identity.

Judaism means living the faith. Almost everything a Jewish person does can become an act of worship. Doing things in the way that pleases G-d and following G-d's laws is an act of worship.

Jewish Values

Respect

Judaism teaches people to treat everyone with respect. Respect or Kavod is a feeling of regard for the rights, dignity, feelings, wishes, and abilities of others. Judaism teaches people to respect other people's differences.

Peace in the Home

Jewish community centres, synagogues, youth groups, and camps are often perceived as Jewish people's second homes. Most Jewish people believe that everyone needs to feel comfortable, safe, welcome, and respected at home. Jewish people should strive to settle disagreements in peaceful and respectful ways.

In G-d's Image

The Torah (Hebrew bible) states that all people are created in the image of G-d so there is humanity and dignity in all people. True inclusion is built upon this foundation.

Communal Responsibility

This means that everyone must take action and inspire others to create a community in which everyone can take pride.

"Love your neighbour as yourself"

This idea is the foundational value of the Torah. It begins with loving yourself, and extending that love and acceptance to others.

Solidarity

This is the idea that Jewish people must stick together, not separate themselves from the community and not isolate themselves.

★ Attitudes to LGB identities

Traditional Judaism has very strict views on love and sex. These are based on passages from the Hebrew Bible, also known as the Tanakh.

Judaism believes that sexual intercourse is a very important part of human relationships but only as part of marriage. The religion says that it is not natural for people to choose not to have sex because marriage and children are such an important part of Jewish teaching. Marriage is seen to sanctify the relationship between men and women.

Same-sex acts are seen to be forbidden in the religious texts. This attitude is also supported by the way in which some people understand the reason for the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Many Jews now think that this teaching needs to be looked at again, and accept same-sex couples into the Jewish community.

★ Attitudes to Trans identities

Many parts of Judaism are accepting of non-binary gender identities. Reformist Judaism has campaigned to have trans rights written into their practices and policies, and trans people are able to marry, be religious leaders and have a full role in the faith as the gender to which they have transitioned.

Orthodox Judaism has a different view and is often less accepting.

Core Sikh Beliefs



Sikh beliefs about God

- There is only one God
- God is without form or gender
- Everyone has direct access to God
- Everyone is equal before God
- A good life is lived as part of a community, by living honestly and caring for others
- Empty religious rituals and superstitions have no value

Sikhs and community

Most Sikhs focus their lives around their relationship with God and being a part of the Sikh community. The Sikh ideal combines action and belief. To live a good life a person should do good deeds as well as meditating on God.

God and the cycle of life

Sikhs believe that human beings spend their time in a cycle of birth, life, and rebirth. They share this belief with followers of other Indian religious traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

The quality of each particular life depends on the law of Karma. Karma sets the quality of a life according to how well or badly a person behaved in their previous life. The only way out of this cycle is to achieve a total knowledge of God and union with God.

Getting close to God

When a Sikh wants to see God, they look both at the created world and into their own heart and soul. Their aim is to see the divine order that God has given to everything and through it to understand the nature of God.

Sikhs believe that God is inside every person, no matter how wicked they appear, and so everyone is capable of change, and should challenge their own pride and concern for physical things.

God beyond ourselves

Many Sikhs believe that God's message can be found in several ways:

- By looking at creation and believing the universe exists because God wills it to exist
- By following the words and lives of the Gurus
- Through the teachings of scripture

The three duties that most Sikhs believe they must carry out can be summed up in three words:

Pray – Keeping God in mind at all times.

Work – Earning an honest living. Sikhs avoid gambling, begging, or working in the alcohol or tobacco industries.

Give – Giving to charity and caring for others.

The three duties



The five vices



Sikhs try to avoid the five vices that make people self-centred, and build barriers against God in their lives.

Lust, covetousness and greed, attachment to things of this world, anger, and pride

Most Sikhs believe if you can overcome these vices then you are on the road to liberation.

★ Attitudes to LGB identities

Many Sikhs believe that the body has to be kept clean and perfect. Anything that may harm the body has to be avoided. Sex has to be limited to married couples and sex before marriage or outside marriage is forbidden. Marriage in Sikhism is seen as a union of souls, and the soul is seen as genderless, with the outward appearance being a temporary state. Family life is the aim for every Sikh in order to conceive and nurture their children and contribute to creation. Any other way of living is discouraged, including not having sex. There is very little written that condemns or supports same sex relationships in Sikh texts.

★ Attitudes to trans identities

Very little is written about trans identities in Sikh texts. The main principal of Sikhism is that it is the eternal soul which is important, rather than the temporary outward appearance of gender. However, it is important to note that many Sikhs do not believe in any form of body modification or changing our outward appearance, including having a hair cut, so bodily changes to a person's gender may not be seen as acceptable.

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD & THEIR SYMBOLS



Christianity



Judaism



Islam



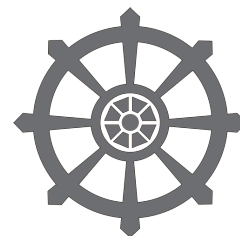
Sikhism



Taoism



Jainism



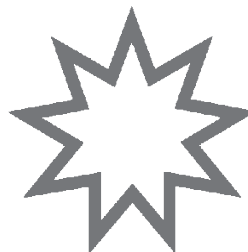
Buddhism



Shinto



Hinduism



Bahai



Confucianism

STANDING UP FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN !

People believe in a wide range of things, whether it is a recognised religion, a philosophical belief or even that their football team are the best in the world!

Below are some photos of people who are well known for being part of a group, sub-culture or team which other people may support. They could also be described as LGBT.



"For the last 10 years I've always cared too much what other people think. I was frightened of the stereotypes, frightened of what other people might say, especially through social media."

Casey Stoney

(1982-) is a footballer who plays for Arsenal Ladies and was captain of the England Women's football team.

She came out publicly as gay in 2014, when she and her partner announced they were expecting twins.



"No person is your friend who demands your silence, or denies your right to grow."

Alice Walker

(1944-) is a novelist, poet and activist. Famously, she wrote the novel "The Color Purple" and has spent her life standing up for what she believes in.

Alice Walker believes in equality and has campaigned for the equal rights of people of colour, feminist issues, and for equal rights of LGBT people.



"A man will be imprisoned in a room with a door that's unlocked and opens inwards; as long as it does not occur to him to pull rather than push."

Ludwig Wittgenstein

(1889-1951) is a famous philosopher. He wrote about mathematics, theology, language and psychology.

Wittgenstein had romantic relations with both men and women.



In response to a marriage proposal:
"I will marry you
when the pine
leaves turn yellow."

Pine Leaf

(1820s) was an Indigenous North American.

In a raid on the Crow Indian tribe her brother was killed. Pine Leaf vowed that she would not marry until she had killed a hundred of her enemies. Pine Leaf was recognised by her tribe as 'two-spirit', which meant a gender-variant individual with deep spiritual connections and tribal authority.



Quote not available

St Marina the Monk

(born around 700AD), was an 8th-century Christian saint.

Unwilling to marry, Marina decided to live her life as a male monk. Whilst in the monastery Marina was accused of getting the inn keeper's daughter pregnant. Marina was forced to leave the monastery. Believing Marina to be the father of the child, the inn keeper left the baby with Marina to beg outside the Monastery. After ten years Marina was allowed to return as a monk.



"I don't feel that it
is necessary to
know exactly what
I am. The main
interest in life and
work is to become
someone else that
you were not in
the beginning."

Michel Foucault

(1926-1984) is one of the greatest philosophers of the 20th century. His work looked at the way power is used, and at what is 'normal'.

His theories are used in a number of different areas from how we view gender and sexuality, to how prisons should be set up.

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE IN?

There are many things that people believe in, not just religion. Here are some examples below:



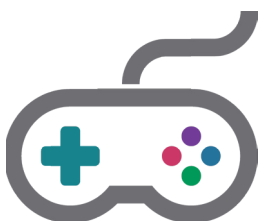
"I support Arsenal and I believe my football team will win the treble!"



"I listen to my favourite band every day and feel like their lyrics are about my life."



"All the coolest people go to geek meets. Manga books are the best fiction writing, and the best events are Comic-Cons!"



"My life is all about playing online games. When I play with friends from all over the world, we join together to try to win the game. Some people say it is a waste of time, but I think it makes my world much, much bigger!"



"I love running and think everybody should run. It just clears your mind of all the stuff that worries you. After you've been running you feel amazing."

BIG BELIEFS



Many people connect the idea of belief to the major religions of the modern world. But there are many other types of belief-system. Here are a few:



Feminism	The advocacy of women's rights and the equality of the sexes.
Socialism	A political and economic theory which advocates that production, distribution, and exchange should be owned or regulated by the community as a whole.
Paganism	A religion that has many gods or goddesses, considers the earth holy, and does not have a central authority.
Humanism	A system of thought that puts human rather than divine or supernatural matters at its core.
Capitalism	An economic and political system in which trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state.
Equality	The belief that everybody should be equal, especially in status, rights, or opportunities.
Fascism	An authoritarian and nationalistic right-wing system of government and social organisation.
Communism	A system where all property is owned by the community and each person contributes and receives according to their ability and needs.
Atheism	Believing that no god or gods exist.
Agnosticism	The belief that nothing is known or can be known of the existence or nature of God.

BEFORE YOU RUN ACTIVITIES

FACILITATOR'S GUIDANCE



Some easy answers to some difficult questions!

Religion, faith and philosophy are complex and challenging subjects and nobody can expect you to have all the answers. You will receive lots of questions from young people you run activities with. Here are some ideas for discussing frequently asked questions, which will help you prepare for delivering sessions with young people.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

Try to encourage each group you work with to define what religion means to them, but a good definition could be:

A religion is an organised collection of beliefs, cultural systems, and world views that relate humanity to an order of existence. Many religions have stories, symbols, and sacred histories that aim to explain the meaning of life, the origin of life, or the universe.

Can you be religious and LGBT?

Yes! The relationship between religion and LGBT identities and practices has varied greatly across time and place; within and between different religions and denominations; regarding different forms of same sex attraction, gender expression and bisexuality. Present day beliefs of the world's major religions vary greatly towards LGBT people.

Among those parts of religions that are generally negative towards these identities, there are many different types of actions they may take: from quietly discouraging to explicitly forbidding same-sex sexual practices, actively opposing social acceptance of LGBT people, or even murder. Religious fundamentalism has been found to correlate with anti-homosexual feelings. Many argue that it is same-sex love or sex acts which are sinful, rather than the state of being LGBT itself, such as some Christians who say 'hate the sin, love the sinner'. Several organisations exist to try to 'convert' people who feel same-sex attraction; to try and make them heterosexual.

However, many religious people view lesbian, gay or bisexual identities positively, and some religious denominations bless same-sex marriages and support LGBT rights. The amount of people who do support LGBT rights and identities is increasing around the world, especially as many Western countries adopt laws supporting LGBT rights.

Trans identities are also treated in different ways, with some polytheist (many god) religions having non-gendered or multi-gendered gods, whilst other religions teach that for a person to not accept their body is a denial of how god has made them.

Is it harder to come out as LGBT if you are part of a religious family or community?

There can be additional challenges to coming out if you think people will not accept your identity due to their religious and cultural beliefs. People should always try to remain safe when they come out and it may not be safe for everybody to tell people about their gender and sexuality. Remind young people you work with that there are adults they can speak to, and direct them to local advice services or LGBT youth groups.

Can people choose not to be LGBT? If they wanted to, could they choose to be straight or cisgendered (not trans)?

Being LGBT is not a choice but a part of who you are, and you cannot change it any more than somebody who is straight or cisgendered (not trans) could choose to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans.

However, it is important to note that people in some communities or countries are not permitted, either socially or legally, to be LGBT. They may subsequently choose to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity, and follow the rules of that society. For example, this may be by getting married to somebody of the opposite sex and raising a family, or by being celibate and abstaining from sexual relationships.



Does
God
Exist?

THE BIG QUESTION!

The chances are this question will arise. The following are some arguments for the existence of God:

1. **Pascal's Wager** – The logic of this argument is that it is better to believe in God and potentially receive a reward, than not to believe in God and potentially receive punishment in the afterlife. According to Pascal, the 17th century philosopher, belief in God is a gamble but one that you can only lose if you do not believe in God. Should you believe in God you will be rewarded if they exist, but nothing will happen to you if they do not exist. Should you not believe in God and they exist then you may receive punishment. However, if you are right and believe God does not exist, then there is no reward as there is no God to offer one.
2. **The watchmaker analogy** – The theologian Paley likened the universe to a watch, with many ordered parts working in harmony to further some purpose. Just as the complexity, order, and purpose of a watch implies intelligent design, he suggested that so too the complexity, order, and purpose of the universe implies intelligent design.
3. **The cosmological argument** – This is the argument that the existence of the world or universe is strong evidence for the existence of a god who created it. The existence of the universe, the argument claims, stands in need of explanation, and the only adequate explanation of its existence is that it was created by God.
4. **Religious experience** – In its strong form, this argument asserts that it is only possible to experience that which exists, and so that the phenomenon of religious experience demonstrates the existence of God. For example people who say they have seen angels, miracles or had their prayers answered.
5. **Kant's moral argument** – This begins with the thought that we have good reason to behave morally, and concludes that this is the case because there is a God that administers justice in the afterlife. In other words, why would people be good and have morals if there was no punishment or judgement from God?

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

1. **Darwin's theory of evolution** – The basic idea behind the theory of evolution is that all the different species have evolved from simple life forms. These simple life forms first developed more than 3 billion years ago, (the Earth is about 4.5 billion years old).
2. **Richard Dawkins: The Blind Watchmaker** – To dispel the idea that complexity cannot arise without the intervention of a creator, Dawkins uses the example of the eye. Beginning with a simple organism, capable only of distinguishing between light and dark in only the crudest fashion, he takes the reader through a series of minor modifications, which build in sophistication until we arrive at the elegant and complex mammalian eye. In making this journey, he points to several creatures whose various seeing apparatus are, whilst still useful, living examples of intermediate levels of complexity.
3. **The problem of evil** – In brief, if God exists, then he knows how to, wants to, and is able to prevent all suffering. If such a God existed, though, then we would expect him to prevent all suffering. Suffering, however, is a familiar part of the world around us; it has not been prevented, so how can such a God exist?



GLOSSARY OF LGBT TERMS



LGBT

An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans. Lesbian, gay and bisexual identities are all related to same-sex attraction. Trans identities are related to gender (being male or female or something else). LGBT is an umbrella term to include these gender and sexuality variations.

Gender or Gender Identity

This is how a person sees themselves, as a man or woman or something else, and how they choose to perform that identity.

For many people gender is not a binary choice of being either a man or woman and they don't identify with either, or they feel most comfortable identifying as a combination of both.

Some people may use the following terms to describe their gender identity:

- Gender queer – This can mean they identify as neither male nor female, but instead are in between or beyond genders, or are a combination of genders. (The word queer should be used with caution as it still carries negative connotations for many people)
- Gender fluid – they may identify as having a fluid or changing gender
- Gender neutral – they may identify as neither male or female

Sex or Sex Assigned at Birth

People are assigned or given a sex at birth, based on physical characteristics. A person may be assigned male, female or intersex. However, this may not be how they identify their sex or gender identity.

Sexual Orientation

This refers to whom a person is attracted. If a person is attracted to people with the same gender as them, they may describe themselves as gay or lesbian. People attracted to another gender may describe themselves as being straight (heterosexual). The word homosexual is considered an out-of-date term and should be avoided.

People who are attracted to men and women might describe themselves as being bisexual (bi meaning 'two'), although pansexual (pan meaning 'all') is becoming a more popular term, in recognition that gender is more complex than either male or female.

An asexual person is somebody who does not experience sexual attraction. Asexuality is a spectrum and so people will define and experience attraction differently. Asexual people may or may not feel romantic attraction.

Trans

This is an umbrella term for any number of identities and behaviours that cross society's gender boundaries. A person may feel that the sex they were assigned at birth does not match with their gender identity – e.g. someone who is assigned female who feels like, and identifies, as a man. This person may describe themselves as being transgender.

Cis

Means a non trans person; a person whose gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

For example, a person who was assigned female at birth, and who identifies as a woman.

Pronouns

These are words used to refer to someone when their name isn't used. They usually suggest a person's gender e.g. she, her, hers / he, him, his. Some people prefer or identify with neutral pronouns e.g. they, them, theirs/ xe, xem.

Intersex

A person is assigned intersex when their sex characteristics don't align with the medical definitions of male or female. The external characteristics of the body, as well as chromosomes and hormones, are assessed medically (often at birth) when assigning someone as intersex.

Heteronormativity / Cisnormativity

This is the assumption that everyone is heterosexual and/ or cisgendered and that this is the norm. This leads to people thinking that they hold a more valued position in society. The media often reinforces these images through negative stereotypes of people whose identities are not considered the norm.

Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia

A fear or hatred of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans. This can result in discrimination or violence.

It is correct to say 'someone was murdered due to homophobia'.

It is incorrect to say 'someone was murdered because they were gay'.



OTHER USEFUL DEFINITIONS



Anti-Muslim discrimination

Legislation or actions which, though not always or necessarily directed against the Muslim religion, effectively discriminate against people who are Muslim.

Anti-Semitism

Discrimination, hostility and hatred towards Jewish people, whether they be religiously or ethnically defined.

Apartheid

A government policy of absolute racial segregation, enforced in South Africa between 1948 and 1994, under which the white minority maintained complete control – economically, politically and socially – over all other groups.

Assimilation

Where people take on, by choice or by outside requirement, all aspects of a dominant culture including its attitudes, values, language and social mores.

Black

The way that people of African descent describe themselves in countries such as South Africa, the US and parts of Europe. In the UK the term was also used (and can still be) in a political sense by other minority ethnic groups, especially Asian people, who feel that their common experience of racism outweighs cultural differences.

BME/BAME

Black and Minority Ethnic or Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic is the terminology normally used in the UK to describe people of non-white descent. It may be useful to say Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnicities, to recognise that it is society that creates the idea of minorities.

Culture

The customs and norms of a particular nation, people or group.

Discrimination

To treat one group of people less favourably than others on the basis of characteristics they have e.g. their actual or perceived race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion, sexuality or gender. Discrimination can be either direct or indirect. Direct discrimination takes place when race, religion or nationality are used as explicit reasons for discriminating. Indirect discrimination applies when regulations and procedures (though not set up to discriminate) have the effect of discriminating against certain groups.

Ethnicity/Ethnic Group

A group of people whose members identify with each other through a common heritage, often consisting of a common language, common culture (which can include a religion) or a common ancestry. It is the way that most countries and peoples choose to separate groups, and has replaced the biological idea of race.

Extremism

The holding of immoderate opinions – formerly related to the left or right of the political spectrum. The term 'extremist' is increasingly used today to denote those who follow a radical form of Islam.

Holocaust

Slaughter on a mass scale, or genocide, and usually refers to the systematic killing in the 1940s by the Nazis of six million Jews, and hundreds of thousands of Gypsies, gay people, mentally ill people and Slavs who were considered to be polluting the 'Aryan race'.

Islamophobia

A fear of, or hostility towards Muslims. Islamophobia has, since 9/11 and the 'war on terror', become a feature of many western societies and manifests itself in a range of ways including legislation against visible aspects of Islam – such as the wearing of religious dress (e.g. the burka and niqab) and the building of religious buildings, such as mosques and minarets.

Integration

The inclusion of a minority group in an existing community/society on equal terms. It has normally meant that, unlike assimilation, BME people could retain their cultures and customs. In 1964 Roy Jenkins defined integration as "equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance".

Multiculturalism

A policy allowing for and/or encouraging a diversity of cultures to thrive in one society. 'Multicultural' also describes the social fabric of the UK which has acknowledged BME people's rights to maintain their own cultures, customs and religious beliefs. Monoculturalism – the official sanctioning of only one culture – is the opposite of multiculturalism.

Nationalism

An exaggerated feeling of commitment to one's country, people or ethnic group.

Person of Colour

(Plural: people of colour, persons of colour, sometimes abbreviated to POC) is a term used primarily in the United States to describe any person who is not white. The term encompasses all non-white groups, emphasizing common experiences of racism. It should not be confused with the term 'coloured' which is derogatory and offensive.

Prejudice

A negative or hostile attitude/opinion based, not on actual factual information, but on a prejudgement depending on stereotypes about a whole group.

Race

The classification based on physical characteristics into which people have divided human kind. The idea of separate biological races is no longer accepted as scientifically valid or ethically usable, especially after the Holocaust and the Nazi belief in a superior 'Aryan race'. Today people should use the term ethnic group, as race can be seen as a loaded term.

Racism

The belief that races have distinctive characteristics which gives some superiority over others. It also refers to discriminatory and abusive behaviour based on such a belief or ideology. In the UK, denying people access to goods and services on the basis of their colour, nationality, ethnicity, religion etc is illegal and called racial discrimination. Racism mostly occurs when white people position themselves above all other people.

Segregation

The enforced separation of people from different racial or ethnic groups. In South Africa and the USA in the last century this has included the provision of separate eating, drinking and socialising establishments.

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