

Do all religions lead to God?

Welcome (7.30)

What contact have you had with members of other religions? How has such contact affected you? Why do you think you responded as you did?

Word (7.45)

Read Acts 17.16-31

1. ***Make a list of how Paul responds to the presence of other religions in Athens?***
2. ***To what extent do you think that Christians today can use Paul's response in Athens as a model for how we respond to other religions? (Go through your list and comment on each area.)***
3. ***Is there anything else which strikes you from this bible passage?***

Christianity teaches that elements of truth can be found in other religions because

- God can be known through creation (Psalm 19.1, Romans 1.20)
- Human beings made in the image of God - and made to relate to God (Romans 2.14-15, Ecclesiastes 3.11, Acts 17.28)

As a Christian you do not have to believe that all the other religions are wrong all through.... As in arithmetic - there is only one right answer to a sum and all the other answers are wrong, but some of the wrong answers are closer to being right than others.
C.S. LEWIS

4. ***How would you answer someone who suggested that if Jesus is the only way to God - all other religions must be misguided or demonic?***
5. ***How would you respond to someone who said, "All religions are equally true"?***

Worship (8.35)

Focus on the uniqueness of Jesus - Use a song such as "Jesus, be the centre" or "There is none like you"

Witness (9.00)

Pray for those you know with different beliefs from your own. Thank God for all you learn through them and pray they may come to know God more fully through Jesus.

Watch a dvd clip about the Who Cares? Project, taking place in this benefice from June to beginning of August. One of the universal experiences of people of all faiths and none is getting hurt. Rob Tervet, the pioneer of Who Cares? in Norfolk says "Everybody hurts. But not everybody has hope." Pray that God will send enough people willing to ask this simple question and later on to respond in bringing love and hope into areas of pain. What can you/ your cell offer? There is a training and information evening on May

CELL LEADERS NOTES: DO ALL RELIGIONS LEAD TO GOD?**Word**

1. Split into groups of 3 or 4 to make this list if your group is larger than 5 and then get the groups to share with each other. Here are some of the points which will hopefully come out:

- Paul is distressed by faith placed in the wrong place (v16)
- He has discussions with people of different beliefs (v17) - Jews, Greeks with Jewish sympathies and the ordinary Athenians who worshipped the idols.
- These discussions were in public places
- He is not put off by opposition. Not everybody understood Paul or agreed with him but these conversations gave rise to questions and curiosity which gave him the chance to speak later (v.18-21)
- He carries on the conversation with people who are interested. This speech then led to some discounting Paul's views, some becoming Christians and others exploring more deeply (32-34)
- Paul has paid attention to learn about what other people believed before putting forward the Christian view (v.23 "looked carefully")
- Paul recognises truth in other peoples point of view, quoting from their poets (v. 28)
- He does not hold back from saying parts of their religion are wrong (v29)
- He sees God as both merciful and calling people to change their minds (v30) NB the word repent metanoia in Greek literally means to change your mind.
- He sees the resurrection as proof of Jesus claims.

2. Does it matter that modern religions are not the same as the idol worship of the Athenians? There are principles here of listening and respecting others which can be applied to any world view. Similarly, the principle of not being afraid to state areas of disagreement still applies: Although many contemporary religions do not involve idols made of stone or wood, there may be other things which we need to state are contrary to what Christians believe..

4-5. There will probably be different views within your cell in this. Allow people to speak freely but if asked, be clear about the teaching about the uniqueness of Christ in this benediction which is that

All people are made in the image of God - and made to relate to God (Romans2.14-14, Ecclesiastes 3.11, Acts 17.28) so that people of all faiths may have insights into God. At the same time all will have some errors - even Christians - for the different churches disagree on some things. One essential truth for all Christian churches is that Jesus is the fulfilment of all people hope to find in religions - He alone is "The Way, The Truth and the Life": Nobody comes to the Father except by him.

Further Reading. There are relevant chapters on this issue in Searching Issues, Nicky Gumble & But is it Real? Amy Orr Ewing

Cell Leaders - please let Sally know how well the sessions work so she can modify future sessions accordingly.

Witness**WHO CARES**

- The introductory video clip can be found at www.who-cares.org.uk/the-mission/
- Please let Sally know how your cell responds... eg You might organise an evening of prayer for Who Cares on one of your cell nights or some members of your cell might be prepared to be involved in visiting with the questionnaire with others supporting them in prayer.