

How can we compare core concepts in religious faith?

Key facts

- Nobody knows exactly when religion started, but it is thought to have developed between 30 thousand and 70 thousand years ago when language first developed.
- Early humans developed rituals or special ceremonies to help them link with the spiritual world in the hope that the spirits would protect them from bad luck and bring success.
 - The majority of the world's population follow a religious faith.
- All of the major world religions began in just two parts – the Middle East and India.
- In the 20th century, Ninian Smart thought that rather than try to define religion, it would be more useful to look at things that religion have in common.
- He concluded that, actually, religions are examples of 'worldviews': ways of looking at the world – and we all have those. He came up with Seven Dimensions of Religion.
- Religions use symbols as a powerful way of presenting their worldviews, confirming their identities and strengthening their communities.
- Although teachings are unique to each religion, most religions have ideas about God and what happens after physical death.
- Religious people try to understand more about their religion by looking to sources of authority. Many religious people believe that their holy books contain the words of God, and that gives them their authority.
 - All religions recognise that it is important for believers to worship together as it allows worshippers to strengthen their faith.

Key people

Guru Nanak – The founder and first Guru of the Sikhi faith.

Jesus – Seen by Christians as being the Son of God. One part of the Trinity, that comprises of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit.

Key Vocabulary

Church – Christian place of worship.

Compassion - Concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others.

Communal – Doing something together, with others.

Five Ks – Five items worn by Khalsa Sikhs.

Golden Rule – A basic principle that should always be followed.

Gurdwara – Sikh place of worship

Heaven – Eternal happiness with God.

Prophet – One called by God to warn others of how to live.

Muhammad – Founder of Islam, final prophet sent by Allah to give guidance to humans.

Myths – A story with a meaning or message.

Numinous – Have a strong religious or spiritual quality.

Pilgrimage – Spiritually motivated journey to a sacred place.

Reincarnation – The belief that the soul enters a new body after death.

Sacred – Connected to God or dedicated

to a religious purpose.

Sanctity of Life – The belief that all life is precious and special and therefore should not be taken.

Scriptures – Holy books.

Seven Dimensions of Religion –

According to Ninian Smart, a religious framework composed of seven dimensions that capture the nature of religion.

Soul – The eternal/spiritual part of a person.

Stewardship – The job of supervising or taking care of the earth for God.

Synagogue – Jewish place of worship.

Trade routes – The pathways created and used to transport goods for sale, such as taking one product to another place to sell.

Transcendence – Beyond or above the range of normal or physical human experience.

Trinity – Three persons in one God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Muhammed – Seen as the final prophet by Muslims.

Ninian Smart – Professor of religious studies. He came up with the Seven Dimensions of Religion.

Siddhartha Gautama - An Indian prince born in 563BCE who became the Buddha. He died in 486BCE.