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All words spoken by Jesus Christ are in **red text**.

(Hyperlinks are surrounded by parenthesis and are underlined.)

Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to reference scripture that identifies key aspects of Christianity that are different from religions, and written with an intent of not conveying any negatives about religions.

Comparison	Religions	Christianity	Scripture (click links to read)
God	God is perceived as a higher being or more than one entity.	God is a trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.	(1 Cor. 8:6 ; 2 Cor. 13:14 ; John 1:14, 10:30, 14:16-17 ; Luke 1:35 ; Mat. 3:16-17, 28:19 ; Rom. 14:17-18 ; 1 Pet. 1:1-2 ; 2 Cor. 1:21-22 ; Acts 2:38)
Connection	Reaching “upward” to seek God.	God reaches “downward” to draw us into an eternal relationship with Him.	(John 3:16, 10:10, 16 ; Luke 19:10 ; Eph. 2:5-9 ; Rom. 5:6-8, 6:23, 8:28 ; Rev. 3:20)
Human Condition	Persons have varying degrees of imperfections.	All persons have an inherent sinful nature which rebels against and separates us from God.	(Gal. 5:17-21 ; Rom. 7:15-18, 8:6-8 ; Ps. 51:5 ; Rom. 3:23 ; 1 John 1:8 ; Jer. 17:9 ; Ecc. 7:20 ; Is. 64:6 ; Isaiah 1:18 ; Col. 3:5 ; John 3:6-7)
Improvement	Occurs by one’s own efforts.	Not able to change by our own efforts—only by God.	(Rom. 12:2 ; 2 Cor. 3:18, 5:17 ; Gal. 5:22-23 ; Col. 1:10 ; Eph. 2:13)
Transformation	Transformation occurs by teachings and following a prescribed moral path.	Transformation begins when we ask the Father for forgiveness, accepts Jesus as Lord, and are led by the influence of the Holy Spirit.	(John 14:26 ; Acts 1:8 ; Rom. 8:1-11 ; 2 Tim. 1:7 ; Gal. 2:20, 5:22-23 ; Eph. 4:22-24 ; Titus 3:5 ; Phil. 2:13 ; 1 Peter 2:24 ; 1 Cor. 1:18)
God’s Acceptance	Occurs via compliant behavior and performance of good deeds.	By faith in Jesus Christ.	(John 3:16 ; Eph. 2:8-9 ; 1 John 5:13 ; Rom. 1:16-17, 5:1, 10:9 ; 1 Pet. 1:8 ; 2 Pet. 1:3-11 ; Heb. 11:6, 12:2 ; 2 Tim. 4:7 ; 2 Cor. 5:7 ; Gal. 2:16 ; Acts 16:31)
Daily focus	Improvement of self.	Becoming a “vessel” for God for Him to share His love by becoming more like Jesus and less like ourselves.	(Eph. 5:8 ; 2 Cor. 3:5, 4:7, 5:20 ; 2 Tim. 2:21 ; Rom. 12:1 ; 1 Pet. 2:9 ; Mat. 5:16 ; Gal. 2:20 ; Mat. 5:14-16)

Note: Christianity has the largest number of followers in the world. ([Source](#))

From a high level perspective, the key differences between Christianity and religions are:

- Every person has a sinful nature, which:
 - Creates desires within us to sin.
 - Conflicts with the holiness of God.
 - Separates us from God.
 - We are unable to overcome by our own efforts.
- Because of God’s grace and love, He has provided a means through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, to:
 - Overcome the influential power of our sinful nature (aka “flesh”) to sin.
 - Be viewed by God as having the righteousness of Jesus.
 - Establish an eternal relationship with God.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23

Man's Sinful Nature

Our sinful nature is an inherent component that influences the behavior of every person. It is a condition of the heart that conflicts with (and rebels against) the righteousness of God—which creates a spiritual barrier between us and Him.

- “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23
- “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” 1 John 1:8

The inherency of our sinful nature is evidenced by a very young child who will lie in the face of truth. For example, the mother asks the child, “Did you eat the cookies I told you not to eat until after dinner?” The child responds (with cookie crumbs on the face and in their mouth), “No.” And the child will attempt to continue the lie when presented with truth-based facts. The child was not taught nor learned how to lie...because lying is just one aspect of our sinful nature.

Additional examples of our sinful nature are demonstrated by our own behavior (words and deeds); surface within the behavior of those whom we encounter; and is responsible for the constant devastating turmoil that exists upon earth (past, present and future).

The Apostle Paul declared his struggles with his sinful nature. “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells...For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” Romans 7:18-20

The Holiness of God

God's holiness is characterized by His moral perfection and flawless purity.

- “Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods. Who is like You, glorious in holiness? Exodus 15:11
- “No one is holy like the Lord, for there is none besides You.” 1 Samuel 2:2
- “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness.” Habakuk 1:13
- “Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of Holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!” Psalms 96:9
- “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” Isaiah 6:3

God disdains man's sin.

- “The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.” Proverbs 15:9
- “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” Romans 1:18

Read ([Romans 1:18-32](#)) to enhance your understanding of the various types of sin and the consequences of sin. As you read, note how God has separated Himself from man because of sin—as He gave them up to uncleanness, their vile passions and a debased mind.

Sin Separates Us From God

- “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you.” Isaiah 59:2
- “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” Romans 8:7
- “Therefore I will number you for the sword, and you shall all bow down to the slaughter; because, when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not hear, but did evil before My eyes, and chose that in which I do not delight.” Isaiah 65:12

We Are Unable to Overcome Our Sinful Nature By Our Own Efforts

Mankind lacks the required resources and capabilities to overcome our inherent sinful nature and replace it with the righteousness that God desires. Many will attempt to do their best in overcoming undesirable and destructive things in life by trying to be a better person. But in truth, we are only able to change those things that are on the “outside” and not the spiritual things that are in the depths of our heart and soul (where the real, spiritual and God desired transformational changes must occur).

God designed us with an inability to overcome ourselves for a reason. If God gave humans an ability to make autonomous self-directed changes unto righteousness...we would not need Him, and it would result in a prideful (and often hardened) heart. Plus, it would create a spiritual barrier with God because He desires humility and meekness within those who seek Him.

- **Humility** reflects our weaknesses, limitations and dependence upon God. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” James 4:10
- **Meekness** demonstrates our willingness to yield to God and respond gently to others. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Mat. 5:5

So...humanity has a dilemma because we are unable to overcome our sinful nature and become the righteousness God desires. However, God has provided a way for all of us to overcome our sin by His grace, love and forgiveness.

God’s Grace and Love

God has provided us with a means to overcome our sinful nature through our faith in Jesus.

Faith

God designed us with multiple attributes that facilitate connecting with Him so that He can spiritually transform us from within and prepare us for eternity with Him. One of the most important of all the attributes is faith.

- “God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” Romans 12:3
- “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Hebrews 11:6

Jesus

God did something amazing and wonderful that has confounded mankind for more than 2,000 years. He forgave us for our sins through the crucifixion of His Son, Jesus Christ. In effect, Jesus—who never sinned and exemplified God’s righteousness in every aspect of His life—took the punishment for our sins into His body when He died on the cross and shed His blood. In effect, the sacrificial death of Jesus created a “**bridge to God**” that provided a means to be forgiven—by faith—for our sins.

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:21



“For by grace you have been saved **through faith**, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:8-10

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."
Eph.1:7

Think about it...in contrast to reaching upward toward God and searching for Him...Christianity is based upon God reaching down and searching for us via His Son. Jesus declared, **"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."** John 3:17

The Desires of the Heart

God is more interested in the desires of the heart than He is with sin—because He is able to transform our heart by His grace and Love. **"For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."** 1 Samuel 16:7 **"I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind."** Jeremiah 17:10

God designed us to have a relationship with Him, and is searching for those who have reached the point where they hate their sin and desire His righteousness. God gave man a free will and He will not attempt to change someone who prefers to sin. So, the question each person must internally reflect upon and determine is:

- Do I prefer to continue fulfilling the lusts of my sinful flesh...or...
- Do I have a heart-felt desire for the righteousness of God.

Preference to Fulfill the Lusts of the Flesh (Sinful Nature)

Those who prefer to continue in sin will reject God by embracing lies that:

- Reinforce their decision to sin.
- Discount the existence of God, His Love, His grace, and the eternal benefits of repentance and turning towards Him.
- Causes them to remain in darkness and under the power of Satan.

"But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." 2 Cor. 4:3-4

"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." John 3:19-21

Desire the Righteousness of God

The caustic consequences of sin is like a spiritual cancer that destroys the body, heart, soul and spirit. Those who turn towards God will do so with a contrite and humble heart—because they realize they have made a mess of their life and the lives of others, and God is their only hope (a spiritual enlightenment driven by the Holy Spirit). The transition begins when one:

- Believes in God's grace, love and forgiveness that was demonstrated in the crucified death of Jesus Christ.
- Repents (turn away from sin and towards God) and depends upon Him to make the changes.

Jesus declared, **"I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness."**
John 12:46

Jesus instructed Paul to, **"Open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."** Acts 26:18

Is There Any Other Way?

Anything apart from God's grace through Jesus is in vain. No matter how hard we try, we cannot eliminate the influence of our sinful nature—nor cease the consequences of our sin—by our own efforts.

- “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots?” Jeremiah 13:23
- “‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ Says the Lord, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’” Isaiah 1:18
- “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9
- “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7
- “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” 1 Peter 1:18-19
- “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” Titus 3:5

Summary

Christianity is different from religions because it is based upon faith in Jesus Christ, who:

Is a gift from God.	(John 3:16, 4:10, Rom. 5:15, 6:23; 2 Cor. 9:15; Eph. 2:8)
Was not born of man's seed.	(Isaiah 7:14; John 1:13-14; Mat. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35)
Was incarnate: God in the flesh	(John 1:1, 14, 10-11, 10:30, 38, 12:44-50, 14:9-11)
Experienced a horrible death on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins.	(Isaiah 53:5; Lev. 17:11; 1 Pet.2:24; Heb 9:26-28, Rev 1:5; Eph. 1:7; Rom. 3:25; John 10:11, 11:25-26, 15:13)
Resurrected from His death.	(John 2:19, Mat. 20:17-19; John 14:1-2, 19-20, 21:1-14; 26:64; Mark 16:1-20; 1 Cor. 15:1-11, 20; Luke 24:36-43; Acts 1:3; Rev. 1:18)
Our faith in Him bridges the gap between who we are and what we do...and God.	(1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:2; 1 Peter 2:9, 3:18; John 1:12, 14:6; 17:21; Heb. 7:25; 2 Cor. 5:18)
Because of our faith in Him, God views us as being righteous.	(Rom. 4:3-5, 4:13, 3:22, 1:17, 3:28, 4:5, 5:1, 10:4-10; Heb. 10:38; Phil. 3:9; Gal. 2:16, 3:24)
Provides us with a means to be indwelt and guided by the Holy Spirit.	(John 14:26, 17, 16:7, 13; Luke 11:13; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:22; Titus 3:5-6; Acts 2:38, Rom. 8:9, 11, 16; Gal.5:25, 16; Eph. 1:13-14, 3:16; 1 John 4:13; 1 Cor. 2:12)
Established an opportunity to develop an eternal relationship with God.	(Pro. 8:17, 3:5-6; Psalm 37:23-24, 103:12, Isaiah 43:25; 139:1-2; Mat. 6:8, 10:30-31; 22:37-40; Rev. 21:1-4, 22:1-7)
Fulfilled all prophetic scriptures regarding the Messiah in the Old Testament.	Read “Is Jesus Christ the Messiah?” on UniqueBibleStudies.com for additional information and supportive scripture.
Will return to fulfill all future biblical prophecy and all God's promises He made to the Israelites.	

Interesting Note: Given the multitude of Old Testament prophecies that Jesus fulfilled, the probability of one person fulfilling just eight of the best-known prophecies is 1 in 100 quadrillion. This is similar to covering the state of Texas 2 foot deep in silver dollars; writing a check mark on one silver dollar; hiding it somewhere in the vastness of Texas; then blindfolding a person and asking them to find the marked silver dollar...and they find it their first try.

Source: http://sciencespeaks.dstoner.net/Christ_of_Prophecy.html#c9

Given all of the aforementioned, there is one declaration made by Jesus that “crystalizes” the key differentiation between Christianity and religions.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” John 14:6

The spiritual power and absoluteness of His words become more evident when you consider their ramifications. Jesus said He is the only way to find truth, the only way to experience a fulfilled life, and the only way to connect with God.

Paraphrasing C.S. Lewis in his book *Mere Christianity*—based upon the words Jesus spoke and who He claimed to be—Jesus Christ was either a lunatic or the Son of God. These words by C.S. Lewis are a bold and provocative statement. But when you think about it...he right: it's one or the other. In addition, there's no middle-of-the-road statement such as, “Well, he was simply a prophet, or a good teacher, or a godly man.”

What to Do



1. Determine the desires of your heart:
 - Continue to sin, or...
 - Yield to the Lordship of Jesus
2. Decide whom you will serve.

Jesus explained, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”** John 8:34 & 36

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” Rev. 3:20

If you made a decision for Jesus, the next step is to pray to God for forgiveness. It is important that you speak from your heart with your own words. Here is an example of what you might pray.

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus...whom I believe was crucified for my sins...I ask for forgiveness for all that I have done. I open my heart and welcome Your Holy Spirit to change me from within so that I become all that You desire of me.

I highly suggest reading the following two lessons on UniqueBibleStudies.com:

1. 4 Types of Death 1 Source of Life
2. What is a Born-Again Christian



Worthy is the Lamb who was slain for the redemption of humanity. (Rev. 5)

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.” Rev. 22:12-13

All for His glory!
Harold D. Thomas