

Voices #3 - Religion

In order for a belief system to be valid, it must answer four questions:

- Origin - why am I here?
- Meaning - what brings me meaning?
- Morality - what's right and wrong?
- Destiny - what happens to me when I die?

So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows: "Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: 'To an Unknown God.' This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I'm telling you about.

"He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, and human hands can't serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries.

"His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' And since this is true, we shouldn't think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone.

"God overlooked people's ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him. For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead." Acts 17:22-31

Common tenants of all religions

- Goal - v. 22-23- a right standing with God
- Origin - v. 24-25- why am I here? God made the world and everything in it
- Meaning - v.27,28 - what brings me meaning? seeking after God and the longing to find him
- Morality - v.30 - What is right and wrong? Repent of your sins and turn to him
- Destiny - v. 31 - What happens to me when I die? God has set a day for judging the world with justice; resurrection of the dead

Righteousness=verdict of God that says you are 100% right in the eyes of God

We are constant sinners; how can people like us be saved? Is 64:5

We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags. Isaiah 64:6

Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from

having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. Romans 3:19-20

“Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose.” Matthew 5:17

But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. Romans 3:21-24

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. 2 Cor 5:21

The voice of the Gospel

- Right standing with God
 - When I couldn’t do enough to save myself, Jesus did enough to save me
- Origin - Why am I here?
 - My existence is a gift from the God who made me and loves me
- Meaning - what brings me meaning?
 - Spiritual rituals can improve my quality of life, but only my Savior can satisfy my soul
- Morality - what is right and wrong?
 - I don’t work for God’s love but I work because I am already fully loved by him
- Destiny - What happens to me when I die?
 - The enemy can no longer condemn in me what God has already condemned and crucified on the cross

The voice of religion says, “Do.” The voice of the gospel says, “Done.”

Make the voice of the gospel YOUR story

- Emphasize our spiritual life with God
- Tell the story of how God has worked through history to save people and how that incorporates into your own personal spiritual narrative
- Help people notice the presence of God already evident in their world.
- Listen and dialogue about the pain and disconnectedness they feel
- Help *them* to find their next step towards God, rather than what *we* think it should be
- Offer the unique part of the Jesus story that can resolve the disconnectedness or misunderstandings