SALVATION
HUMANISM

Nearly every people group in the world has a religious system. Many believe that religion was created as a way for people to explain the unexplainable or as a way to control the hearts and actions of people. It is also possible that there is something in the heart of mankind that longs for "something" beyond and direction by which to live purposely. In this module we will explore the frameworks of various religions and set the table in the next module to explain Jesus and Christianity within a contrasting context of other world religions.

THEOLOGICAL POINTS

Every religion points to a problem and resolution between a deity/god and people. Predominant philosophies equally identify a "problem," but without the centrality of a deity. This module works in conjunction with our previous modules on salvation where we objectively looked Isalm and the philosophies of Buddhism and Humanism. In this module we will consider the beliefs of Christianity in the same context in which we looked at other views. We will look at Christianity and it's unique clams for:

1. Identification of the problem
2. Understanding of the solution and what must be done to satisfy
3. What the outcome the religious system or philosophical system promises

DISCUSSION: HUMANISM

Every religion points to a problem and resolution between a deity/god and people. Predominant philosophies equally identify a "problem with humanity," but without the centrality of a deity. Within this module we will consider the views of Isalm and the philosophies of Buddhism and Humanism. Clearly there are more faith systems, but these were chosen because they are the primarily influencers of spirituality of our age. The framework we will use for this process is to discuss three aspects every faith system has in common. We will identify the problem this faith system addresses, look at the proposed solution, and consider the outcome of faithful obedience.

In this module we will outline the foundational beliefs of Humanism. Humanism is the predominant non-spiritual philosophy of our age. Some consider it to be a religion of science and logic. Simplified, Humanism is a belief in the natural good, or potential of human beings.

**The topic of Humanism is large, with many books dedicated to explaining it in great detail. This discussion guide is intended only as a summary and a means for an open conversation on the subject.

MY STORY | Starting Place

Do you remember your first spiritual thoughts? When did you consider if there was a God or anything beyond the physical world around us? What led you to thinking about such things?

If you were not "influenced" to think about spiritual things, do you think you would have? Explain.

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DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

A simple online definition of humanism is an outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters. Humanist beliefs stress the potential value and goodness of human beings, place an emphasis on common human needs, and seek solely rational ways of solving human problems.

The early formation of Humanism is unknown, however many scholars trace it back to the Greek philosophers. Though they lived in a highly polytheistic (many gods) culture, the Greeks are known to discuss and document many original writings on the potential of humanity without a notion of Deity. Humanism has continued to evolve and began taking clear shape during the enlightenment when science, reason, and intellectualism advanced, and the mind replaced God as the means with which to understand the world. Divinity was no longer dictating human morals, and humanistic values such as tolerance and opposition to human oppression started to take shape.

John Lennon's 1971 song *Imagine* is probably one of the best examples of a humanistic worldview.

Imagine there's no heaven, It's easy if you try
No hell below us, above us only sky
Imagine all the people, livin' for today
Imagine there's no countries, It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for, and no religion, too
Imagine all the people, livin' life in peace
You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will be as one
Imagine no possessions, I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger, a brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people, sharing all the world

Identification of the problem

The main problem Humanism seeks to address is to identify and eliminate the barriers to human growth, evolution, and thriving. The core tenants, or elements, of humanistic thought are reason, education, individualism, and a strong belief in the universality of human nature. The problem humanism seeks to address is to identify and eliminate anything that hinders these. Using the Christian idea of "sin" as a frame of reference, in humanism, "sin" is anything that hinders individual potential because, in limiting the individual we are limiting both their flourishing and the forward movement of humanity. This could be oppression in various forms, lack of access to education, authority structures, traditions and norms, religion, cultural hierarchies, etc...

How have you seen this played out in the world around us?
Is it subtle, or direct and clear? Explain.

Where do you see Humanism most prevalently in our culture?
Where do you see it more subversively influencing culture?
Are there specific people you see as prominent proponents of Humanism?

Are there any problems with reason, education, and individualism? Are the three priorities universally good or should there be any caveat attached to any of them?

What are some healthy aspects of this non-supernatural philosophical perspective?

Are there contradictions that you see? Explain.

Without God, there is no divine accountability. Why would this seem freeing to the humanist? Equally there is no divine justice. How could this be frustrating to the humanist?

The solution and what must be done to satisfy
Humanism is strongly built on reason, therefore it is believed that science, education, and individualism are paramount for human flourishing. If "sin" is a barrier to individual freedoms, the solution, or "salvation" in our nomenclature is to liberate individuals from these barriers and allow them to evolve and prosper as they desire. This is where humanism surfaces in our culture in its various forms such as the equal rights movement, racial equality, sexuality and gender movement, and political movements such as socialism.

To better engage this subject, make a list of the possible barriers to human thriving.
Make a list of movements that set out to address a barrier of human potential.

What are some positive changes we have seen come from Humanism within our culture?
How have you seen Humanism divide or create unhealthy culture?

In direct response to the biblical Ten Commandments, many humanists have written "alternative ten commandments." Below are those presented in 2014 in a book titled *Atheist Mind, Humanist Heart*, written by Lex Bayer and the Stanford Humanist Chaplain, John Figdor.

1. The world is real, and our desire to understand the world is the basis for belief.
2. We can perceive the world only through our human senses.
3. We use rational thought and language as tools for understanding the world.
4. All truth is proportional to the evidence.
5. There is no God, (and so, our decisions do not need to take divine accountability into consideration).
6. We all strive to live a happy life. We pursue things that make us happy and avoid things that do not.
7. There is no universal moral truth. Our experiences and preferences shape our sense of how to behave.
8. We act morally when the happiness of others makes us happy.
9. We benefit from living in, and supporting, an ethical society.
10. All our beliefs are subject to change in the face of new evidence, including these.

What points stand out to you? Why?
What "better world" do these lead to?
What are the possible pitfalls of such a worldview and lifestyle?

The outcome and fruit of faithful obedience
The goal of humanism is to see humanity thrive and prosper. With the elimination of barriers, it is believed that humans will continue to evolve, become all that we can, and build a utopia together by our reason, intellect, and determination.

Since humanism is based on logic and empirical evidence, there is no belief in the supernatural, including the afterlife. When one dies, their contribution to humanity is all that remains.

Humanism differs from evolution in the fact that the Humanist believes they can, and should, control the process of human evolution. Is this logical? Arrogant? Other?

What would be attractive about this philosophy and worldview?

GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship

In studying humanism, what has it stirred up in your own heart and mind?
In your life, how have you been influenced by or resisted this view?

How hard is it to hold to your own faith and convictions in a Humanistic culture?

MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action

How can a Christian have a positive influence in a relationship with an atheist or someone with a Humanistic worldview? What advice would you give that Christian?

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