

Core Curriculum

1 God, Religion and Islam: An Introduction

1.4 **What is “Religion” and What’s the Point of it Anyways?**

At first glance, we all think we know what religion is. Religion is often defined as a system of thought organized around the belief of a supernatural entity, usually some form of god or gods and a series of rituals and social regulations that stem from this belief.

Religion in this sense can be in many different forms. For one, there is animism where totems and magic rituals form a central part of its worldview concerning the supernatural and the natural.

Then there are other forms of polytheism which posit the existence of many gods who perform tasks specific to them, such as controlling the rain, love or fertility.

Then you have monotheistic religions that believe in one creator God and that there is no deity aside this God. Among these religions we find Judaism, Christianity, Islam etc.

What purpose do all these religions serve?

Well, it isn’t really clear what religion means, nor is there an agreement as to what its purpose is, at least in current academic Western debates. Something we think so simple is actually quite complex. Even explanations of why “religion” is failing is full of disagreements.

Despite this, Islam has its own definition of what religion means and what its purpose is.

To learn more on this subject, please tune into the full version of this lesson.