

EIGHT ELEMENTS OF RELIGIONS

1. **BELIEF SYSTEM** or **WORLDVIEW**: Many beliefs that fit together in a system to make sense of the universe and our place in it.
2. **COMMUNITY**: The belief system is shared, and its ideals are practiced by a group.
3. **CENTRAL STORIES/MYTHS**: Stories that help explain the beliefs of a group; these are told over and over again and sometimes performed by members of the group. They may or may not be factual.
4. **RITUALS**: Beliefs are explained, taught, and made real through ceremonies.
5. **ETHICS**: Rules about how to behave; these rules are often thought to have come from a deity or supernatural place, but they might also be seen as guidelines created by the group over time.
6. **CHARACTERISTIC EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES**: Most religions share emotions such as awe, mystery, guilt, joy, devotion, conversion, inner peace, etc.
7. **MATERIAL EXPRESSION**: Religions use *things* to perform rituals or to express or represent beliefs, such as: statues, paintings, music, flowers, incense, clothes, architecture, and specific sacred locations.
8. **SACREDNESS**: Religions see some things as sacred and some not sacred (or profane). Some objects, actions, people and places may share in the sacredness or express it.

The Elements of Religion in Your Life

If you do not feel comfortable answering these questions, or if you do not practice a religion, you may find a friend or family member who will share his/her beliefs and practices with you. Or, if you like, find answers from doing your own research on one specific religion (it doesn't have to be Judaism, Christianity or Islam).

1. **BELIEFS:** What is one central belief of your religion?
2. **COMMUNITY:** How is your religion shared with others in your religious community?
3. **CENTRAL STORIES/MYTHS:** What is one of the myths or stories from your religion?
4. **RITUALS:** What ritual do you find meaningful in your religion?
5. **ETHICS:** What is one rule from your religion you are supposed to follow?
6. **EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES:** Have you ever had an emotional religious experience? What was it like?
7. **MATERIAL EXPRESSION:** What is one thing used in your religion? What is it used for?
8. **SACREDNESS:** Can you think of a sacred place associated with your religion? Why is it sacred?