

Study guide for

Who Do You Say I Am?

By Calvin E. Shenk

Chapter 1 *Introduction to Religious Plurality*

1. What is meant by religious plurality? Why has religious plurality come as a surprise? What evidence can you cite that religious pluralism is a reaction to secularization?
2. What are some of the characteristics of religious subjectivity?
3. What has led to increasing self-criticism in the West?
4. How would you define relativism? What are its characteristics?
5. What is meant by religious pluralism as a fact and religious pluralism as an ideology?
6. How do you understand cultural pluralism?

Chapter 2 *Response to Religious Plurality—Exclusivism and Inclusivism*

1. What is meant by exclusivism? What Scriptures are used to support it? What are its strengths and weaknesses?
2. What is meant by inclusivism? How did Vatican II contribute to inclusivist understandings? What is the meaning of "anonymous Christian"?
3. Define "latent church," Cosmic Christ and Logos.
4. What are the positive and negative aspects of inclusivism?

Chapter 3 *Response to Religious Plurality—Pluralism*

1. Define religious pluralism. Describe its characteristics.
2. What is meant by "Copernician Revolution" in theology and theocentrism in contrast to Christocentrism?
3. How has the traditional understanding of Christ been reinterpreted by pluralism?
4. What are the basic issues that emerge when evaluating pluralism and its impact on Christian theology?

Chapter 4 *A Biblical Perspective on the Religions—Old Testament*

1. What is significant about the covenant of creation and the covenant with Noah?
2. Why is the covenant with Abraham important?
3. What is the attitude toward other gods as seen in the exodus from Egypt, the giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai and the encounter with Canaan?
4. Note the critique of idolatry and syncretism during the time of kingship, exile and restoration. What is syncretism?
5. What do the stories of Melchizedek, Abimelech, Baalam, Rahab, Ruth, Naaman, Job and Queen of Sheba contribute to our understanding of God's compassion for non-Israel people.
6. What is meant by God's providence? What is the impact of God's providential activity in the world?
7. What is the role of Israel in the midst of the nations?

Chapter 5 *A Biblical Perspective on the Religions—New Testament*

1. What is the purpose of Jesus' coming? How is his uniqueness expressed?
2. Note how Jesus in his kingdom is concerned for Jews and Gentiles.
3. Note how the New Testament balances Jesus' uniqueness and universality.
4. Contrast the New Testament attitude toward cultural pluralism and religious pluralism.
5. Be sure to note how God-awareness in other religions is emphasized by the Logos, Cosmic Christ, Cornelius, Lystra, Athens and Romans 1 and 2.
6. From a New Testament perspective what are the negative aspects of religion?

Chapter 6 *Theological Issues Concerning Religious Plurality*

1. What is meant by general revelation and special revelation? Does general revelation make special revelation unnecessary?
2. According to Shenk, are other religions alternate special revelations?
3. What is meant by world history and salvation history?
4. Note the four different kinds of universalism.
5. How does the Bible emphasize particularity and universality through Jesus?
6. Note the differing kinds of relativism. How should one evaluate the role of experience, action and belief in discerning truth? How should Christians respond to relativism?

Chapter 7 *Assessment of Other Religions*

1. Is Christian faith a religion? Note the place of belief, worship and ethics in religion and the place of objective religion?
2. Identify positive and negative aspects of religion. Why is it important to avoid generalization in describing religion?
3. What is meant by discontinuity in religion? Be able to provide evidence of discontinuity (or difference) in religion.
4. How should one understand continuity, preparation and fulfillment in religion? Is the religious quest fulfilled or are religious systems fulfilled?

Chapter 8 *Who Is Christ?*

1. How has the church misrepresented Christ? How have other religions misrepresented Christ?
2. How is Christ unique?
3. How is the Cosmic Christ and the Logos related to the incarnate Jesus?
4. Note the work of the Holy Spirit. How is Christ related to the Spirit?

Chapter 9 *Witness to Christ*

1. Note the multi-dimensional aspects of religion, the good and evil in religion. How shall we evaluate religions?
2. If one believes the most complete truth is in Jesus, how shall we deal with truth in other religions?
3. What is meant by cultural pluralism in the New Testament? How are we to understand the translatability of the gospel? Does the gospel affirm or critique culture?
4. Define contextualization and "inreligionization."

Chapter 10 *Forms of Witness: Presence, Service, Evangelism, Church*

1. Note carefully what is meant by presence. To what degree does one serve people of other religions or cooperate with them in service to others?
2. Evangelism and conversion often sound abrasive. Is the gospel conversionist? Who does the converting? How does the story of Peter and Cornelius help us in understanding conversion?
3. What are the unique characteristics of the church as community? How do dimension and intention help one understand witness?

Chapter 11 *Forms of Witness: Dialogue*

1. Note the biblical basis for dialogue. Identify several forms of dialogue.
2. Note how isolation, hostility, competition and partnership have an impact upon dialogue. Note also the need for dialogue as content and relationship.
3. What are the major concerns expressed in dialogue for understanding?
4. Can one believe in dialogue and also believe in witness? Note carefully the place for conviction, discernment, truth, conversion and the degree of openness in dialogue.
5. Does dialogue about Christ thwart real dialogue?

Chapter 12 *Those Who Have Not Heard*

1. What is the understanding of "wider hope"? How are the Old Testament and New Testament used to support "wider hope"?
2. What is meant by "explicit faith" and "implicit faith," Christian and believers?
3. What does one learn from the New Testament about judgment?
4. What are the important factors to keep in mind as one assesses "wider hope"? What is the major thrust of the sections on surprising grace and trusting God's sovereignty?

Chapter 13 *Style of Witness*

1. What concern should have priority in relationships?
2. What is the role of critique and judgment in witness? Should Christians threaten people with punishment in witness?
3. Note recommended attitudes for witness. How is tolerance defined? What is meant by vulnerability?