

# Religion, the Individual and Society

## The search for meaning

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Name and date begun:

### Time allocation:

3 lessons

### Learning objectives:

- Students should understand that phenomenology deals in the meanings that individuals create for themselves as well as for others.
- Students should be able to understand the nature of the social construct.
- Students should apply their understandings of phenomenology to the study of religious fundamentalism.
- Students should recognise the importance of religious fundamentalism as a source of social action and political change.

### Key Concepts and vocabulary

See your lesson notes in addition to the following:

- Phenomenology
- Fundamentalism
- Social construction
- Charisma
- Resistance theory
- Modernity
- Liberalism
- Religious canopy
- Plausibility structures

### Additional reading and references

Selfe and Starbuck (1998) *Access to Sociology: Religion* p 42 - 6

Haralambos and Holbourn (1995) *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* p 456 - 7

Taylor *et al.* (1996) *Sociology in Focus* p 506 - 8

O'Donnell (1997) *Sociology 4<sup>th</sup> edition* p 539 - 42

**Make a note of any additional sources that you have used below**

## **Personal Development ideas**

- Find out as much as you can about Islamic fundamentalism and the politics of the Middle East.
- If you do not have strong religious belief yourself, talk to people who are from an Islamic background and attempt to understand the attractions of Islamic faith and tradition to those who practice it. If you are a Muslim, then attempt the same exercise with a born again Christian. Do not argue beliefs, but understand the meaning and attraction of strong belief. Pool your observations with others from the group.
- Find out more about Christian fundamentalism by asking for leaflets and information from a Christian. Do not mislead the person into thinking that you are interested in conversion if your interest is purely academic.

## **Overview of the debate**

- Why do people feel a need to have strong belief?
- What form does this strong belief take?
- What are the political and social implications of the strong belief that people have?
- In what ways are phenomenology and functionalism similar theories?

## **Revision tips**

This is a complex area so you need to have two sets of understandings clearly in your mind.

- How do phenomenologists interpret the significance of religious belief in a theoretical sense?
- What is religious fundamentalism? What social and political forces does it represent?

## **What you should have in your folder when this work has been completed correctly:**

- A clear explanation of each of the glossary terms
- Acceptable lesson notes.
- Evidence that you have looked at least two textbooks and made notes on phenomenology.
- Evidence that you have looked at more than one source to find out something about religious fundamentalism.
- Notes taken from conversations and observations listing the attraction of strong religious belief.

