

Being a

**WITNESS**

to a Buddhist

# Understanding BUDDHISM

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Buddhism was founded around the 5th century B.C. by an Indian prince named Siddhartha Gautama.

Troubled by scenes of human pain and suffering, on his 29th birthday Gautama left his family in search of truth and the meaning of life. By age 35, the prince felt he attained understanding and arose as the Buddha – the “Enlightened One”. He spent his remaining 45 years teaching the path to liberation from suffering (the dharma) and establishing a community of monks (the sangha).

In the 2500 years since Buddha’s enlightenment, Buddhism has evolved into three main philosophies: Theravada (the “Doctrine of Elders”, closest to the original atheistic philosophy), Mahayana (the “Greater

Vehicle”, accommodates many different Asian beliefs and worships Buddha as God), and Vajrayana (also known as Lamaism or Tantrism, has added elements of shamanism and the occult).

The beliefs, practices, rites and ceremonies, customs and habits of Buddhists can vary in different countries, making them especially difficult to define.

# Understanding THEIR BELIEFS

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## CONCEPT OF GOD

Buddhism is atheistic. Their belief system acknowledges no supreme God.

## SOURCE OF WRITTEN REVELATION

There is no single source of written revelation.

Buddhism is built on the Four Noble Truths:

1. Life is full of suffering;
2. Suffering is caused by desire;
3. Suffering can be conquered by removing desire; and
4. Desire is removed by following the Eightfold Path.

The Eightfold Path is:

1. Right knowledge;
2. Right aspirations;
3. Right speech;
4. Right conduct;
5. Right livelihood;

6. Right effort;
7. Right mindfulness; and
8. Right meditation.

## JESUS CHRIST

There is a wide variety of opinion about Jesus.

Most think He is a great teacher, and very few think He may have been elevated to Buddha status. They deny His deity.

## SIN

The concept of sin is downplayed in Buddhism. Interestingly, though, Buddhist monks have ten abstentions: killing, lying, stealing, sexual intercourse, intoxicants, eating after midday, worldly amusements, using cosmetics and jewelry, luxurious mats or beds, and accepting gold or silver.

## SALVATION

Salvation is humanistic. It is attained only through self-effort, the help of others, or by faith in Buddhist holy men.

## AFTERLIFE

Buddhists believe in Nirvana, a state of nothingness that is achieved after many reincarnations.

## Referencing BIBLICAL PASSAGES

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PSALM 14:1

Only a fool does not believe in God.

MATTHEW 12:36

This verse appeals to Buddhists placing high value on right speech.

JOHN 5:28-29

Both the saved and unsaved will be resurrected, NOT reincarnated.

JOHN 14:6

Jesus is THE way, THE truth, and THE life (right knowledge).

ACTS 4:12

Salvation is in no one but Jesus Christ (right knowledge).

1 CORINTHIANS 15:5

Christians look forward to resurrection, not reincarnation.

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

Merit comes only from the grace of God, not from any human work.

HEBREWS 1:3

Purification from sin comes from the cross, not Karma.

HEBREWS 9:27

Man dies ONCE, and then comes judgment.

REVELATION 21:4

This verse can impact Buddhists since in their religion they know nothing of relief from suffering. This verse describes heaven.

## Being a WITNESS

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It's clear from the teachings of Buddhism that this is another works-righteousness religion, with a fear that if righteousness isn't attained, there will be another rebirth into this world of suffering.

However, a little conversational probing shows that they haven't given much thought about their belief: Who is in charge or giving out bodies? What is God's (or whoever's in charge) criteria for doing so? If they are hoping to come back as royalty or a great stallion, what do they have to do in this life to merit such a reward? Or what does one have to do or be to end up coming back as a cockroach? What were they in past lives, and what did they do to merit the life they have now? Asking some of these questions may help them see that their belief is illogical, and has no proof.

Then share with them the Good News, that if they want to go to be with God where there is no more suffering, there's only one Way for that to happen – and it's a belief that can be backed up by verifiable proof.

As in other religions, Buddhism uses some of the same words as Christianity, but with entirely different meanings. For example, to avoid confusion, don't tell the Buddhist that he must be "born again". Since the Buddhist's goal is to avoid being reborn, that phrase indicates failure and gives a negative view of what becoming a Christian means. Instead, explain to him that he can be born as a new person spiritually and saved eternally through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

## Additional RESOURCES

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### PRINT

*The School of Biblical Evangelism* by

Kirk Cameron and Ray Comfort

(Available at the Harvest London Resource Centre and online at [livingwaterscanada.com](http://livingwaterscanada.com))

### WEB

[www.christiananswers.net/evangelism/beliefs/buddhism.html](http://www.christiananswers.net/evangelism/beliefs/buddhism.html)

For more information on evangelism training with The Cross Current, visit:

[www.thecrosscurrent.com](http://www.thecrosscurrent.com)

## About THE CROSS CURRENT

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The Cross Current is a local missions ministry and outreach broadcast bringing glory to God's Name by unifying His Church in His Gospel and helping pastors equip all Christians under their care to be Christ's witnesses everyday, everywhere, to everyone, as one body serving in accordance with the various gifts He has given each.





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