

Buddhism & Christianity

REVIEW

Key Bible Verse for All Apologetics: _____

Bible Study: The Insufficiency of Self-Reliance Proverbs 14:12 & 16:25

There is a way that seems right to a man,
but its end is the way to death. Prov. 14:12 (ESV)

Any denial of the one true God as revealed in Scripture as the Holy Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit must be rejected as the deception and sin induced ideology that keeps people separated from the hope, love and forgiveness that they need and that only faith in Jesus Christ provides.

Basic Buddhist Teachings

3 Main Schools of Buddhist Thought:

1. Theravada (Doctrine of the Elders)
 - Buddha not treated as deity
 - Sees Buddhism as a worldview, not a type of worship
 - *Dominate in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam*
2. Mahayana (Greater Value)
 - Many different beliefs and worships Buddha as a god
 - In Japan, one variation balances militant or aggressive Buddhism by seeking tranquility and peace in the struggles of life
 - *Dominate in China, Korea, and Japan*
3. Vajrayana (Diamond Vehicle) or Tantric Buddhism or Lamaism
 - Added elements of shamanism and the occult
 - Including taboo breaking (intentional immorality) as a means of spiritual enlightenment
 - *Dominate in Tibet, Nepal, and Mongolia*

Core Beliefs

Buddhism is an impersonal religion of self-perfection, the end of which is death (extinction) not life

Main Teachings: _____

1. Life is full of suffering (dukkha)
2. Suffering is caused by craving (samudaya)
3. Suffering will cease only when craving ceases (nirodha)
4. This can be achieved by following the Noble Eightfold Path

The _____

1. Right views
2. Right aspiration
3. Right speech
4. Right conduct
5. Right livelihood
6. Right effort
7. Right mindfulness
8. Right contemplation

Other Key Doctrines:

- Nothing in life is permanent (anicca)
- Individual selves do not truly exist (anatta)
- All is determined by impersonal law of moral causation (karma)
- Reincarnation is an endless cycle of continuous suffering
- The goal of life is to break out of this cycle by finally extinguishing the flame of life and entering a permanent state of pure nonexistence (nirvana)

How to engage in Gospel conversations

Areas where you can begin with common concern and transition to clear Gospel presentation:

Suffering

- Suffering is real and extremely damaging
- Yet denial of suffering does not fix the problem
- Jesus faced the reality of suffering and overcame it by solving the problem of sin, the real source of suffering
- Our hope to overcome and cope with suffering is Jesus

“We fix our eyes not on what is seen (suffering), but on what is unseen (eternal life free of suffering). For what is seen (suffering) is temporary, but what is unseen (future good life with Christ) is eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18 NIV).

Meaningful Self

- Buddhists must work to convince themselves they have no personal significance, even though they live daily as though they do.

Jesus, on the other hand, taught each person has real significance because each is made in the image of God.

Hope

- The hope of nirvana is no hope at all - only death and extinction

Scripture makes it clear that there is an eternity which will be spent in the presence of God through faith in Jesus Christ in a literal place called Heaven or separated from God in a literal place called hell.

Law

- Because karma, the Buddhist law of moral cause and effect, is completely rigid and impersonal, life for a buddhist is very oppressive.
- Under karma, there can be no appeal, no mercy, and no escape except through unceasing effort at self-perfection.

Christians understand that the moral force governing the universe is a personal God who listens to those who pray, who has mercy on those who repent, and who with love personally controls for good the lives of those who follow Christ.

Merit

- Buddhists constantly struggle to earn merit by doing good deeds, hoping to collect enough to break free from the life of suffering.
- They also believe saints can transfer surplus merit to the undeserving.

Jesus taught no one can ever collect enough merit on his own to earn everlasting freedom from suffering. Rather, Jesus offers to exchange his perfect sinless life, death and resurrection in place of each person's sin stained lives for all who will believe. All that is needed is complete faith and surrender to Jesus Christ.

Desire

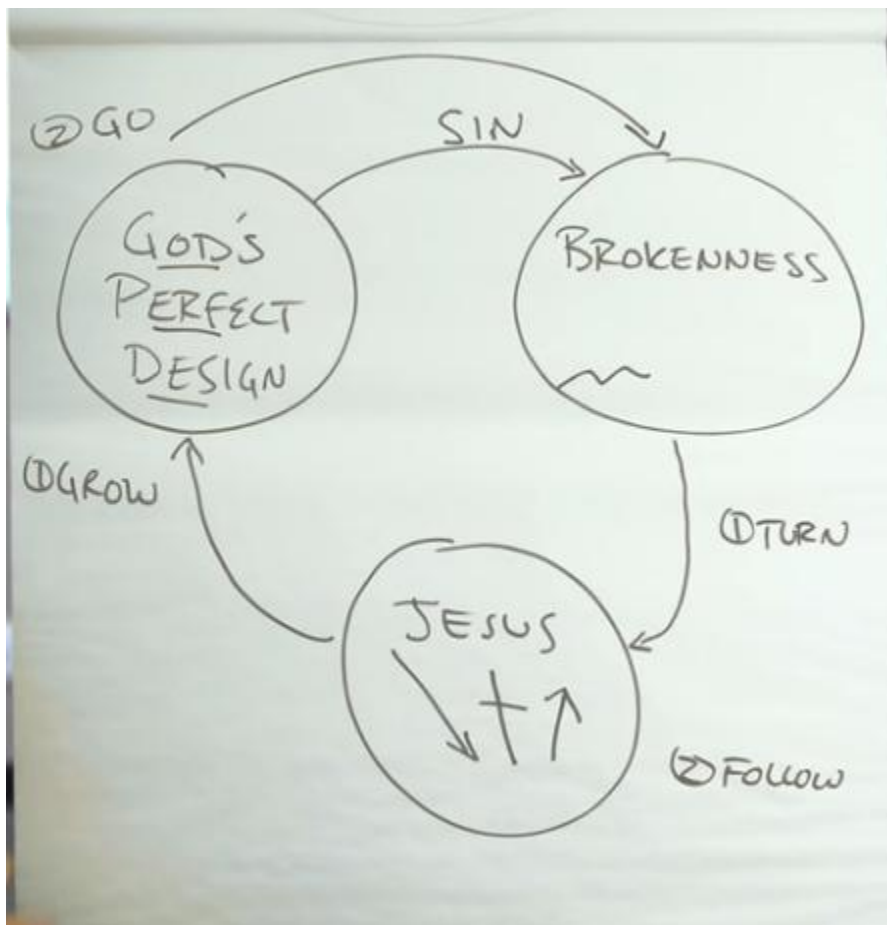
- Buddhists live a contradiction - they seek to overcome suffering by rooting out desire, but at the same time they cultivate desire for self-control, meritorious life, and nirvana.

Christians are consistent in seeking to reject evil desires and cultivate good desires according to the standard of Christ.

See "Jesus and the Eightfold Path" in the NAMB handout, Buddhism for a great tool to help you engage Buddhists in gospel conversations.



3 Circles Conversation Guide



3 Opening Questions

1. Can I pray for you?
(if yes, pray then & there)
2. Do you consider yourself far from God or near to God? (listen to their story)
3. Can I show you a picture that changed my life and helped me to come near to God?

Circle #2: _____

Everywhere we look in our world we see brokenness. Our world is broken, imperfect, cracked, and as individuals, so are we. When God created the world, this was not His desire. In fact, He had a perfect design in mind.

Circle #1: _____

The Bible says we went from God's Perfect Design to Brokenness because of Sin.

(DRAW LINE BETWEEN circle #1 & circle #2, write SIN above line.)

Sin is basically anything I do against God or disobeys God.

But God had a plan to restore us.

Which is why we learn about this third circle - Jesus.

Circle #3: _____

Jesus is God

(UNDERLINE God in Circle #1)

Came down into our broken world.

(DRAW downward arrow under JESUS in Circle #3)

He was perfect

He didn't know sin

He knew no sin.

As He was perfect, He was willing to die on a cross to become the perfect sacrifice for our sin.

(DRAW cross under JESUS in Circle #3)

And then 3 days later He rose from the dead in order so He could restore us back to God's design.

(DRAW upward arrow under JESUS in Circle #3)

Jesus tells us no matter who we are how we can get back to God.

He tells us to do 2 things:

(WRITE between Brokenness and Jesus circles)

#1 - _____

From our sin and living life our own way.

#2 - _____

To follow Jesus and make Him our boss and make Him our Lord.

(DRAW line from Circle #2 to Circle #3)

If we do that, and if we choose to turn and follow, we can come to Jesus.

(DRAW line from Circle #3 back to Circle #1)

The Best thing happens when we do that.
All of God comes into us and He changes us.

He tells us and helps us do these next 2 things:

(WRITE under God's Perfect Design circle)

#1 - _____

In our relationship with Jesus so that it becomes stronger.

(WRITE above God's Perfect Design circle w/circle drawn to Brokenness circle)

#2 - _____

Back into the world of brokenness so other people, more and more people can
hear how they too can escape and become near to God.

(DRAW line from Circle # 1 to Circle #3 above the word SIN)

CLOSING QUESTION:

Everyone in the world is in one of two places - brokenness or God's perfect design.

_____ *place are you?*

Supplemental Material

Websites

- 3 Circles Life Conversation Guide
<https://www.namb.net/evangelism/3circles/>
- Also see Pastor Ray Vaughn's youtube presentation of the 3 circles here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYU-a2wlbxc>

Book Recommendations

- **Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations**
by Jimmy Scroggins & Steve Wright (3 Circles Evangelism)
- **The Compact Guide to World Religions**, David C. Halverson, Gen. Ed.
- **Christianity at the Religious Roundtable** by Timothy C. Tennent
- **Invasion of Other Gods** by David Jeremiah & C.C. Carlson

Handouts

1. Buddhism: An Overview by NAMB
<https://www.namb.net/apologetics/resource/buddhism/>
2. 4 Keys to Sharing the Gospel With Buddhists by ABWE
<https://www.abwe.org/blog/4-keys-sharing-gospel-buddhists>
3. How to Share the Gospel with a Buddhist by Dare2Share
<https://www.dare2share.org/worldviews/buddhists/>
4. How Do I Share the Gospel with a Buddhist by Stephen Lewis
<https://radical.net/articles/sharing-the-gospel-with-a-buddhist/>
5. Proclaiming the Glory of God among Buddhist Peoples by IMB
<https://www.imb.org/2016/09/28/proclaiming-god-among-buddhist-peoples/>

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