

Buddhism

What they Believe.

1) **Summary Information**

- a) 488 mil. Worldwide, 2.5 mil. US
- b) The Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) began his ministry in 500BC
- c) There are 1000 Buddhist temples and monasteries in the US.
- d) Life is suffering, caused by desire.
- e) We must practice the Middle Way in all things.
- f) Karma – the effect of a persons past lives which determines his future destiny.
- g) Rebirth – similar to Reincarnation for the Hindu except the soul does not move from one body to another. Each rebirth is a new creation.
 - i) Unlike Hinduism this represents a re-arrangement of the “self” rather than a re-birth of the soul.
- h) Nirvana – deliverance from suffering (re-birth)
- i) Many different groups with many different doctrines.
 - i) Theravadas – “lesser way” - Conservative- Atheistic
 - (1) Based on Buddha’s original teachings.
 - (2) Few will find Nirvana
 - (3) Stress a monastic life.
 - (4) Burma, Thailand, Cambodia
 - ii) Mahayanas – “greater way” -Liberal –Polytheistic and idolatrous
 - (1) By far the majority of Buddhists
 - (2) Korea, China, Japan
 - (3) Zen – Subset - Japan - Enlightenment through highly disciplined meditation and mental exercises.
 - iii) Tibetan - Occult - Dalai Lama leader and includes magic, the supernatural, spells and chants.
- j) No individual has a soul.
 - i) True enlightenment comes when a person realizes they have no soul, thereby reaching a state of nothingness.
- k) The ultimate reality is the impersonal Void.

2) **History** – Buddha came from a wealthy Hindu family.

- a) Most of his early life he was kept sheltered from the outside world.
- b) At 29 he left his sheltered life and for 6 years he practiced asceticism (extreme self-denial or self-mortification).

Why What they Believe is Wrong

1) **Summary Information**

- a) Life is not suffering. A spirit filled life is full of joy.
 - i) John 15:11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.
 - ii) John 17:13 “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.
 - iii) Matt 13:44 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.
 - iv) Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.
 - v) Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
- b) Rebirth is false.
 - i) Hebrews 9:27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,
- c) Individuals do have a soul....There are three parts to a person.
 - i) Physical body – our physical self which is mortal.
 - ii) Spirit – the highest part of man that enables him to communicate with God (the indwelling of the Holy Spirit)
 - iii) Soul – the part of man that makes him conscious of himself (self awareness) and his existence. This is a real part of man just as mankind and the universe we exist in is real and created by the Creator.
 - (1) Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
 - (2) Job 33:4 The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.
- d) The ultimate reality is Heaven or Hell.
 - i) 2 Cor 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Buddhism

What they Believe.

- i) Starvation, self-torture, etc.
 - c) Through deep meditation he found balance between the two lifestyles above and called it the Middle Way, at which point (525 BC) he became the Buddha or Enlightened One.
 - i) Middle Way is like a stringed musical instrument – if strings are too tight they will break, if too loose the instrument can not be played.
 - d) Out of compassion for others he choose to teach his theology.
 - e) Died of food poisoning at 80.
- 3) **Authority** – Dharma (the teachings of Buddha).
- a) Oral Tradition was used for the first 400 years. This is the primary cause of so many factions within Buddhism. Eventually in 80 BC Buddha’s teachings were written down in the Pali Cannon.
 - b) Four Noble Truths – the basis for all Buddha’s teachings.
 - i) Life is full of pain and suffering.
 - (1) A curse that will never end until deliverance (nirvana).
 - ii) Suffering is caused by the desire or thirst for pleasure, existence and prosperity.
 - iii) Suffering can be overcome by eliminating these desires.
 - iv) Desire can be eliminated by following the Eightfold Path. These are not steps but an approach to daily life.
 - (1) Right views (understanding the Four Noble Truths)
 - (2) Right aspirations (intentions or ambition)
 - (3) Right speech (overcoming falsehood and promoting truth)
 - (4) Right conduct (no stealing, killing, lying, adultery, or drinking intoxicants)
 - (5) Right livelihood (no slave traders, tax collectors, soldiers, fisherman , exterminator or butchers) – infliction of pain.
 - (6) Right effort (trying hard to reach his goal)
 - (7) Right mindfulness (self-analysis, self-reflection)
 - (8) Right meditation (techniques such as Yoga)
- 4) **God** –
- a) Theravadas – Buddha taught there was no deity. Buddha himself was just a man.
 - b) Mahayanas (Liberal) actually revere Buddha as a god.

Why What they Believe is Wrong

- 3) **Authority**– The Bible
- a) 2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is God –breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
 - b) Many of the teachings of Buddha fit well within the context of Biblical-Christianity as taught by the Bible. However, the source of authority is not the Scriptures and so they must be viewed against the inerrant unchanging Word of God.
 - i) Exodus 20:14-16 “You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”
 - c) Though Buddhists have no formal doctrine of Sin, clearly the Eightfold Path recognizes the reality of sin.
- 4) **God**– the Trinity as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- a) 2 Cor. 13:14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Buddhism

What they Believe.

- i) Buddha was a sacred manifestation. His body and physical actions were merely an illusion.
 - ii) Strong emphasis on idol worship (Buddha as the idol).
 - (1) There are many Buddha's and Buddha helpers who are worshipped as gods.
 - (a) They too must go through the cycle of rebirth seeking nirvana.
- 5) **Man** – Buddha said, 'You are to be an island unto yourself.' 'If someone is suffering, that is his karma.'
 - a) This is probably more a Theravadas belief than Mahayanas.
- 6) **Salvation** – Obtained totally by self-effort following the Four Noble Truths. There is no heaven.
 - a) Theravadas – available to anyone (at any caste level) who becomes a monk and obeys the monastic laws.
 - b) Mahayanas – available to all true seekers (do not have to be monks).
 - i) Self effort through rebirth may not be necessary. Some can pray to Buddha and go right to nirvana.
 - ii) The most important goal is to help others reach nirvana (not necessarily reaching it ones self).
- 7) **After Physical Death** – Rebirth until nirvana is reached.
 - a) Rebirth is not a good thing because it brings continued suffering and pain.
 - i) The Law of Karma (cause and effect) resulted in our the cycle of lives that would either improve or get worse based on our ability to handle suffering and resisting lusts and desires.
 - b) Nirvana is not heaven. It is a state whereby man realizes he is not real and the physical world he exists in is not real which is called the totally impersonal Void.

Why What they Believe is Wrong

- 5) **Man** – We are the body of Christ, the Church. Fellowship and carrying each others burdens are part of the Christian experience.
 - a) Romans 12:4-5 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.
 - b) Gal 6:2 Cary each others burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
- 6) **Salvation** – Grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone.
 - a) Eph 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith— and this not from yourselves, it is a gift from God--not by works, so that no one can boast
 - b) Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."
 - c) John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
- 7) **After Physical Death** – There are two places one can go.
 - a) Heaven – Mat. 25:34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'"
 - b) Hell – Mat. 25:41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angles.'"

Buddhism

<u>What they Believe.</u>	<u>Why What they Believe is Wrong</u>
i) Man's physical existence is like watching a movie. There is nothing permanent it is all temporary and an illusion. Man's reactions to life is like having emotions while watching a movie. We should not show (or have) emotions for something which is only an image on a screen. ii) Man is like the flame of a candle which is blown out when nirvana is reached. Man disappears into the Impersonal Void.	

Witnessing to a Buddhist — from love not from theology.

Asking a Buddhist to convert to Christianity is asking him to deny family, friends culture and heritage. Often they have no concept of western doctrines such as sin, atonement, repentance, resurrection, justification, sanctification, Trinity, the Bible, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, etc.

Where to begin...

- a. Consider starting with the concept of Nirvana, which holds very little appeal for the individual as he works toward an impersonal Void. Compare and contrast that to the assurance the Biblical-Christian has in eternal joy in heaven.
- b. Consider a review of the prophecies contained in the Bible that may provide credibility that it is divinely inspired. Contrast to the Dharma (teachings of Buddha) which are considerably longer than the Bible and are contradictory .
- c. Emphasize the fellowship of believers, that we support each other working together like the parts of the body.
- d. Consider the beauty and complexity of the world that clearly calls for a Creator. Challenge the Buddhist to offer his view of the creation of the physical universe. (Keep in mind that it is not that he does not believe in the physical world more than he sees no purpose in it because it is so temporary, given his ultimate destiny, the Impersonal Void.)