



Session 4 **Buddhism**

Notes

Questions

1. In what ways do you see people searching for meaning?
2. What is your reaction to the 4 noble truths and the 8-fold path?
3. Which bridge do you see as the most compelling one for the Buddhist? Why? How will you use it?

Comparing Buddhism & the Biblical Worldview

	Buddhism	Christianity
God	Buddhists do not talk of a Creator God and his divine justice	God as Creator accepted who is seen as the dispenser of Divine Justice. He is self-existent and changeless.
	Mahayana Buddhists accept devas or celestial beings (Bodhisattvas) as revering enlightened beings. Zen Buddhists don't believe in deities.	Trinity: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit
Jesus	Not relevant to Buddhism. Some would consider him an 'Enlightened Master'	Son of the Living God and Savior of the world. Second Person of the Godhead.
Incarnation	Buddha is not an incarnation or reincarnation of a god/God (as claimed by some Hindu followers).	The Bible says that Jesus is the eternal Word of God made flesh.
Humanity	An impermanent collection of aggregates. This life is suffering, and the only way to escape from this suffering is to dispel one's cravings and ignorance by practicing the Eightfold Path.	God created man in His image. Man sinned and fell under its curse. We suffer because of the consequences of our sin. God redeems sinful man through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Those that come to Him through Christ, He redeems, He regenerates them, and they become "born-again".
Prayer / Meditation	Meditation and mindfulness are at the heart	Greater stress on prayer.
Means / Personal Effort	Emphasis on personal effort – self-reliance	Reliance on God. Greater focus on Grace.
Goal in life	To attain enlightenment and be released from the cycle of rebirth and death, thus attaining <i>Nirvana</i> .	To love God and obey his commandments while creating a relationship with Jesus Christ and spreading the Gospel so that others may also be saved.
Sin & Redemption	Strive hard to dismiss the evil deeds by the ways as taught by teachers	All have fallen. Redemption is available through Jesus.
Means of salvation	Buddhism aims for Nirvana, not "salvation." Achieving it involves letting go of desires, cravings, attachments, and dispelling ignorance.	Through Christ's death and resurrection. Salvation is by grace, through faith. Not by works, lest anyone boast.
Life after death	Until one has attained Nirvana, he or she will be reborn into any of the 31 planes of existence repeatedly, due to his/her <i>karma</i> .	Humans die once and then face judgment. Believers go to heaven, while those who reject God face hell. After the Book of Revelation, all believers will be resurrected.

A Biblical Approach to Buddhism

Jesus came to this world as a man and fulfilled all the prophecies concerning the Messiah in the Old Testament. Buddha could not reconcile the existence of suffering with an all-powerful, loving God and so rejected the Scriptures and teachings of Hinduism.

Dukkha: Life is full of suffering

Samudaya: Suffering is caused by craving/desire.

Nirodha: Suffering will cease only when craving ceases

Marga/ Nirvana: Suffering can be eliminated by following the Noble Eightfold Path (see fig.).



Buddha has shown his way to live: his Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. Christians believe that God reveals His way; He has revealed His truth and has shown us how we are to live. “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (John 14:6). While in Buddhism one is left to his own to work out his life, to a believer in Christ, the Bible states that Jesus and the Spirit of God will do the leading (Matthew 28:20; John 16:13).

Here is a Biblical perspective of ‘The Eightfold Path’.

1. **Right View** - “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is” (Ephesians 5:17).
2. **Right Intentions** - “He who has a wayward and crooked mind finds no good. . .” (Proverbs 17:20).
3. **Right Speech** “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. . .If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless” (James 1:19, 27).
4. **Right Action** - “Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (James 2:17).
5. **Right Livelihood** - “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).
6. **Right Effort** - “Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).
7. **Right Concentration** - “Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth” (Colossians 3:2).
8. **Right Mindfulness** - “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18).

A comparison between Christianity and Buddhism reveals that both acknowledge the reality of suffering. The Bible teaches that suffering began when mankind rejected God. When we refuse to recognize the reality of God in our lives, it results in suffering for both us and those who are affected by our choices. Separation from God results in temporary suffering on this earth and everlasting suffering in Hell. Unlike Buddhism, Christianity teaches that suffering ends only in the presence of God in Heaven. We cannot get to heaven without Christ.

Biblical Truths - Addressing Buddhist Ideas

- **Suffering has meaning and purpose in God's plan**
“We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance...”
(Romans 5:3-5)
- **Man cannot save himself**
“There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10); we need a Savior, not just a path.
- **God is not impersonal**
“The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love”
(Psalm 145:8)
- **Jesus offers rest from striving**
“Come to Me... and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28-30)

Gospel Approach for Buddhist Friends

- ✓ **Recognize their sincerity** – Many Buddhists are deeply moral and peaceful.
- ✓ **Connect on shared concerns** – suffering, peace, compassion, spiritual growth.
- ✓ **Gently reveal where the path leads** – self-effort cannot erase sin or overcome death.
- ✓ **Introduce Jesus** – not as another teacher, but the **Son of God who conquered death** and offers **eternal life**.
- ✓ **Contrast nirvana with eternal life** – Nirvana is the extinction of desire; in Christ, life is **restored**, not extinguished.

Jesus' Unique Invitation

“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live.” —
John 11:25

Buddha said, “I teach suffering and the end of suffering.”

Jesus said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)