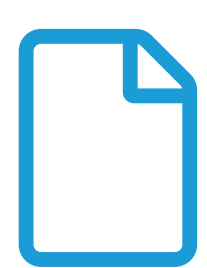
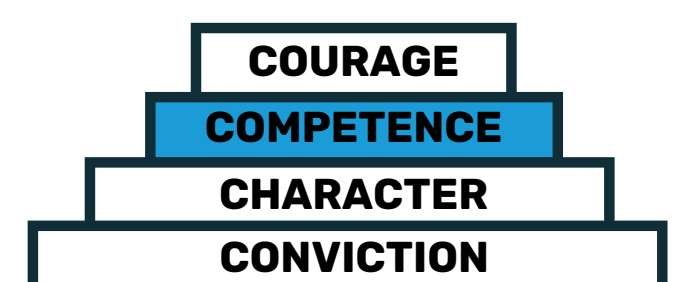




WORLDVIEWS: WORLD RELIGIONS

Lesson 2: Buddhism



Lesson Introduction

Buddhism is the world's fourth largest religion, one of the fastest growing religions in Australia, and has been one of the religions of choice for Western people seeking an alternative to the religion in which they were raised.



Big Picture

Buddhism is the answer to the problem of suffering by denying the 'self', and its attachment to the physical world and the cravings this produces. Buddhism seeks true bliss through self-detachment and release into Nirvana.



Key Truths

- Buddhism arose in India when Siddhartha Gautama (a secluded prince) was suddenly exposed to suffering and discovered Hinduism had no viable answers. Gautama meditated towards a solution and, in a moment of enlightenment, developed the "middle path" we call Buddhism. (and he is now better known as Buddha)
- Buddhism teaches 4 Noble Truths:
 1. Life is suffering
 2. Suffering is due to our belief in the "self". This belief leads to cravings in life which are never truly satisfied. As we live in ignorance of how the world truly is, we fall victim to its trappings.
 3. Suffering is ended if we can give up on the concept of self, and the craving that ensues. Once we do that, we achieve enlightenment, are free from suffering and the eternal cycle of birth and rebirth



Key Truths (cont)

4. You end suffering and gain enlightenment by following the Noble Eightfold Path:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| A. Right Understanding | E. Right Livelihood (vocation) |
| B. Right Attitude | F. Right Effort (thought life) |
| C. Right Speech | G. Right Mindfulness (aware of place in the universe) |
| D. Right Action | H. Right Concentration (meditation) |

Understanding Buddhism requires coming to terms with its fundamental understanding of the universe, that is, there is no universal spirit or god, or soul behind our physical form; there is no self. The "self" is nothing more than the accumulation of thoughts and sensory experience impacted by earlier causes. The "self" is an eddy in the wind of the universe.

As we travel through life we accumulate *karma* based on the things we do and think. *Karma* determines our destination in the next life, but the goal in Buddhism is not a better rebirth, instead it's to achieve enlightenment and escape the cycle of rebirth and enter *Nirvana* - the complete release from suffering into nothingness (or everythingness)



Explore Worldview

Enter

What is their mission?	Buddhism is an answer to the suffering we experience in life.
Who are the bad guys?	Suffering is caused by the attachment to the concept of self and ignorance to the illusion of the self.
Who are the good guys?	The Four Noble Truths, and anyone who follows them, living the Noble Eightfold Path. and anyone who teaches them.
Why attractive?	Buddhism promises an end to suffering and a way to follow that will get us there.

Note: there are 2 main streams of Buddhism– traditional (atheistic) Buddhism (*Theravada*) and *Mahayana* which developed later and holds that Buddha became divine (and we can too) and believes in many gods.

 **Explore Worldview (cont)**

Challenge	What's missing?	If the self is an illusion, what is the inherent worth of a person? why is it such a persistent illusion? Are there any genuine joys to be experienced?
	What's clashing?	The Noble Eightfold Path is burdensome and difficult to follow. How can we know if it will deliver us from suffering? When do we know if we have achieved enlightenment?
Fulfill	How is Jesus the answer?	"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30

 **Application**

The point of growing our understanding of Buddhism, is to enter their worldview, help them find a point of challenge, and to suggest how Jesus is the answer to their deepest yearning. And to seek an opportunity to invite them to meet Jesus in the pages of the Bible.

So, what questions could you ask a Buddhist to explore their worldview?

 **Prayer**

Pray for a deeper understanding of Buddhism so we can go deeper with our Buddhist friends and colleagues.

Pray for an opportunity to share Jesus with a Buddhist friend or colleague.

 **Further Reading**

A Spectators Guide to World Religions by John Dickson

Buddha Dharma Education Association website - buddhanet.net

Remember

COFFEE



DINNER



GOSPEL

