

HOLY COWS, NIRVANA, & CHRISTIANITY

COMPARING HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, AND CHRISTIANITY

HINDUISM

BUDDHISM

CHRISTIANITY

“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God”
(2 Corinthians 4:4)

If you have a friend who's Hindu or Buddhist, how could you start a conversation about his or her faith? Here are some resources that may help.
On the Web: www.christiananswers.net, keyword: buddhism or hinduism.
At the bookstore: *Why So Many Gods?* by Tim Baker and Kate Etue (Transit).

	HINDUISM	BUDDHISM	CHRISTIANITY
BASIC BELIEFS	All of life is connected as part of one great god. Humans are trapped in a series of rebirths and reincarnations depending on how they live their lives.	Life is painful due to people's attachments to earthly things (i.e., possessions and other people). The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path lead to nirvana—freedom from the pain of life.	Freedom and life are found in a personal relationship with the one true God, available to everyone through His Son, Jesus Christ.
SUPREME BEING	God is in everything—including man and nature. There are many gods to worship (up to 330 million), but all come from the same basic god, Brahman. Since he is in everything he is both personal and impersonal.	Buddhists do not believe in a supreme God. Buddha was the founder of the religion and the first person to achieve nirvana. He was not a god, although offerings are made to him.	There is one God in three persons—God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is distinct from His creation, but is intimately involved with it as its Sustainer and Redeemer.
SACRED BOOK(S)	Many. The Vedas (the earliest writings), the Upanishads, the Darshanas, the Puranas which includes the Bhagavad Gita (an epic poem).	Many. The Tripitaka contains Buddha's teachings. Writings are often communicated through telepathy (mind to mind).	The Bible
KEY IDEAS	Karma—the accumulation of a person's good and bad deeds that determines how a person is reincarnated. Bad karma can lead to reincarnation as an animal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four Noble Truths—principles which attempt to explain why people suffer • The Eightfold Path—a set of moral guidelines for living (much like the Ten Commandments) 	Love God and love one another.
SALVATION AND AFTERLIFE	After death a Hindu has two options: (1) to be reincarnated on the basis of karma or (2) to be freed from the cycle of rebirth and reincarnation by living multiple good lives (moksha). Hindus don't believe in sin, heaven, or hell.	Buddhists don't believe in sin, heaven, or hell, but some believe in reincarnation. The goal is to become enlightened and reach nirvana—a mental state of “non-existence” with no attachments to earthly belongings or desires.	People die once. People who have been forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ spend eternity with God. People who haven't accepted Christ's payment for their sins spend eternity separated from God in hell.
WORSHIP AND OFFERINGS	Home shrines and temple gods are sites of worship. Individual gods, family gods, or personal gods are worshiped by burning incense and making offerings three times a day.	Incense offerings are given to Buddha. Buddhists also meditate, but the meditation techniques depend on the type of Buddhism practiced.	A Christian's life is to be a fragrant offering to God (Romans 12:2). Because of that, worship is not limited to a time, a place, or a particular action.
THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST	Opinions vary. Most believe that Jesus was one of many appearances that the god Vishnu made on earth—not the Savior of mankind.	Opinions vary. Many believe He was a teacher and philosopher. But since Buddhists don't believe in God, Jesus couldn't have been His Son.	He's the Son of God who came to earth to forgive us of our sins and reconcile us to God through His life, death, and resurrection.
MISCELLANEOUS	Since Hindus believe that all religions and philosophies lead to god, there are many variations of Hinduism with a smorgasbord of beliefs.	Many people don't adhere wholeheartedly to Buddhism as a religion but adopt some of its philosophy and practices (like meditation).	Every principle of Christianity is presented in one divinely inspired book, the Bible.
THE ATTRACTION	Since there are many gods, a person can pick the one he or she is most concerned about and make offerings to it.	Buddhism claims to be tolerant of all religions and anyone can follow its principles. But the lack of belief in God contradicts many beliefs.	Through Jesus' blood, anyone can be rescued from the guilt, power, and eternal consequences of their sins, and be reconciled to God.