

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

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ADVENTIST FRONTIER MISSIONS shares the gospel with people from a variety of religious backgrounds. In an effort to help you understand the people our missionaries are trying to reach, and to give you some information should one of your neighbors come from one of these backgrounds, we have prepared an overview of seven of the major world religions with a brief description of how these different belief systems answer the big questions in life. For each of the religions we address: (Next page)

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DEFINITION OF TERMS



BUDDHISM

ORIGIN: What they teach about where we come from.

SOURCE OF TRUTH: The writings, sayings or teachings utilized in their belief system.

FORGIVENESS: Whether their religion acknowledges sin, and how, if possible, someone is forgiven.

SAVIOR: Their beliefs about the need for salvation and how it is achieved.

BEST EXAMPLE: The person whose life serves as the highest ideal in that religion.

ETERNAL DESTINY: Their teachings about what happens beyond the grave.

SHARING THE GOSPEL: Suggestions of how you can approach someone from this background with the good news of Jesus Christ.

ORIGIN: Explaining the origin of the universe was not the concern of Buddha, although Buddhists have their own creation myths. The supposed reason for Buddha's silence on the topic is that the origin of the universe has no religious value for gaining spiritual wisdom.

SOURCE OF TRUTH: Various branches of Buddhism accept different writings, which include what are supposed to be Buddha's sermons, rules for monks, and philosophical teachings, as well as other scriptures written long after Siddhartha Gautama died. However, most practitioners of Buddhism are animistic and do not read these writings.

FORGIVENESS: Karma regulates life. Karma is the sum of a person's activities in this existence and in previous existences, which affects what happens to them in this life and future lives. Forgiveness is unnecessary because ultimately you will reap what you have sown in this and future lives.

SAVIOR: Salvation in Buddhism is to cease all desire and to realize the nonexistence of the self. Therefore, the individual person does not experience salvation, hence there is no need for a personal Savior.

BEST EXAMPLE: Someone who is considered a *bodhisattva*, a reincarnated saint who gave up the opportunity to enter Nirvana and instead came back to earth to teach the way of the Buddha.

ETERNAL DESTINY: The goal is to enter Nirvana where all traces of ego and the self are extinguished, and the individual no longer exists.

SHARING THE GOSPEL: Acknowledge what is true and honorable in Buddhist teachings. Express the peace, joy and love you have in knowing your Savior Jesus Christ. Explain that you have hope through your relationship with a personal, eternal God.



HINDUISM

ORIGIN: Like Buddhists, Hindus believe in the ever-revolving cycle of birth, death and rebirth. This current world is an illusion that will pass away and be reformed again in another incarnation.

SOURCE OF TRUTH: Although Hindus have several different scriptures—the Vedas, Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and others—most Hindus do not read the texts. Instead, they rely on priests, videos and folk celebrations for religious information.

FORGIVENESS: Karma is the moral equivalent of the law of cause and effect; i.e., we reap what we sow. However, this applies not only in the present lifetime but from lifetime to lifetime, which explains why there is reincarnation. Hence, there is no reason or possibility for forgiveness.

SAVIOR: The idea of salvation—*moksha*—is liberation through the realization that the concept of the individual self is an illusion; only oneness with Brahman is real. This ideal is achieved through human effort to reach out to deity, instead of God reaching to save man through the Savior.

BEST EXAMPLE: A *sadhu* is one who has renounced the world and no longer lives for anything in this life except becoming "self-realized."

ETERNAL DESTINY: The goal of enlightenment is for the individual person to lose their identity in the universal self. Paradoxically, the objective of losing one's self is achieved by focusing on one's self.

SHARING THE GOSPEL: Karma is a hard taskmaster, and Hindus long to know the way of forgiveness. Similarly, although the cross can appear cruel and violent to a Hindu, the truth that God would love us so extremely in giving His Son, Jesus, as our sacrifice for wrongdoing, appeals to the Hindu heart.

ORIGIN: Atheists do not believe in a creator being. They subscribe to the theory of naturalistic evolution.

SOURCE OF BELIEF: Atheists claim there is no absolute truth. Their belief that there is no god is based on the assertion that no one can prove to them that God exists.

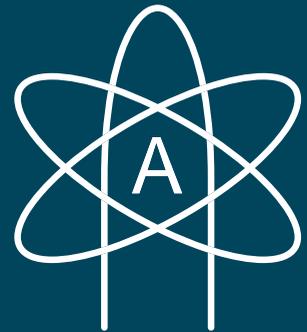
FORGIVENESS: Forgiveness is not necessary as there is no moral basis for sin. “Survival of the fittest” is the way of life. Offenses against individuals, however painful, are merely obstacles to surmount in pursuit of survival.

SAVIOR: Lacking an external moral ethic, atheists do not have a concept of sin, so they see no need for a Savior. Atheists believe that each individual must struggle for themselves and get what they can in life.

BEST EXAMPLE: Atheist heroes are those who have achieved apparent contentment and peace.

ETERNAL DESTINY: The only future they believe they have to look forward to is eventual non-existence.

SHARING THE GOSPEL: Love the atheist until they realize they don’t want to live without love. Then introduce them to the Source of true love, Jesus Christ, highlighting how He has been revealing Himself to them.



ATHEISM

ORIGIN: Materialists believe that matter is the only thing that exists. They contend that things evolve and devolve, and that to some extent humans are able to manipulate the evolving process.

SOURCE OF BELIEF: Secular humanists and/or materialists consider all religions as inventions of men. Their highest source of truth and goodness is found within the highest power—one’s own mind.

FORGIVENESS: The concept of forgiveness is only exercised for the benefit of one’s self.

SAVIOR: People look out for themselves and are responsible for their own success.

BEST EXAMPLE: The highest evidence of success is being able to manage or control the most matter (material goods). The rich and those with the greatest potential for wealth are their idols.

ETERNAL DESTINY: Materialists live without need of eternity. Only the here and now matters. Their slogan: “He who dies with the most stuff wins.”

SHARING THE GOSPEL: Talk of the Bible’s veracity (such as prophecies fulfilled, the great controversy, and the depiction of life as described in Ecclesiastes). Share the “why” of the sacrifice of Jesus and the cross of Calvary.



**MATERIALISM/
SECULAR HUMANISM**

ORIGIN: Muslims believe in a creator god, Allah.

SOURCE OF TRUTH: The source of their beliefs is the Qur’an in Arabic, a book they believe is the word of Allah as dictated to Mohammed by an angel. However, the countries where the largest population of Muslims live—Indonesia, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh—do not read or speak Arabic.

FORGIVENESS: The Christian concept of forgiveness through a substitute is nonexistent. Rather, each person is judged in the end by whether their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds. The hopelessness of this goal leads some to seek to sacrifice their lives as martyrs for the cause of Allah, a deed they believe will surely outweigh all bad deeds.

SAVIOR: Each one must be “good enough” and is responsible for his or her own salvation. There is no savior figure in the Qur’an. The Qur’an explicitly denies that Jesus is the Son of God and that He was crucified and resurrected.

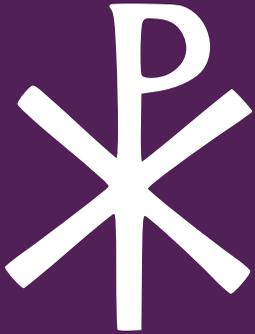
BEST EXAMPLE: Mohammed, the prophet to whom Allah entrusted his holy book, Imams who have been given wisdom, and martyrs for Allah’s cause are the examples most admired by Muslims.

ETERNAL DESTINY: Muslims eagerly desire Heaven, but the possibility of obtaining it is only the trembling hope of one who rigidly adheres to the dictates of the Qur’an and whose good deeds outnumber the bad.

SHARING THE GOSPEL: Form a real friendship. Refer often to the Bible, telling stories and parables rather than trying to win logical arguments. Share the concept of righteousness by faith, what it means to you, and how your friend could benefit from faith and freedom.



ISLAM



CATHOLICISM

ORIGIN: The Catholic Church holds no official position on the theory of creation or evolution. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, any believer may accept either literal or special creation within six 24-hour days, or they may accept the belief that the earth evolved over time under the guidance of God (theistic evolution).

SOURCE OF TRUTH: When the Pope, in his apostolic authority, defines a doctrine concerning faith or morality, he is considered infallible. Moreover, the Roman magisterium controls the traditions and teachings of the church, which includes the interpretation of the Bible.

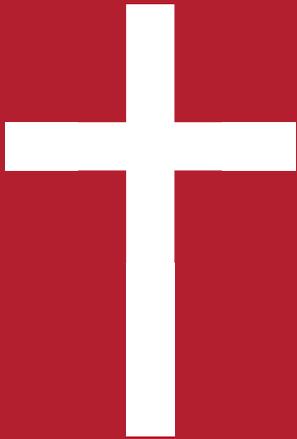
FORGIVENESS: The sacrament of penance is what allows for forgiveness in the Catholic Church. A person should be genuinely sorry and confess their sins to a priest, and he will assign them an act of penance to make amends for the sin.

SAVIOR: A person receives salvation by the church through participation in the sacraments. Anyone who does not accept the teaching of the necessity of the sacraments, or believes that we are saved by grace alone (*sola fide*), is considered anathema.

BEST EXAMPLE: The Pope, or a member of the clerical hierarchy who may be considered a saint after death.

ETERNAL DESTINY: Salvation through the teachings of the church, including the sacraments of baptism, penance and the Eucharist.

SHARING THE GOSPEL: There are many beloved Christians in the Catholic faith. Reveal to them the love of Jesus whenever possible. Show them, through prophecies and principles, the validity and power of the Word of God. Lead them to see that God is calling His children to personal communion with Him, and that His grace and sacrifice is sufficient for them.



BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

ORIGIN: In six literal days, the Creator God formed the heavens, the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and He rested on the Sabbath day.

SOURCE OF TRUTH: The Holy Spirit inspired men to write the Holy Bible. The same Spirit is available to all who read the Bible and want to follow its teachings.

FORGIVENESS: If we confess our sins, God will forgive us and cleanse us through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His intercession in the heavenly sanctuary.

SAVIOR: The only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, was born a human, lived a perfect life, was crucified on Calvary, rose from the grave and ascended to heaven. He now serves as our great High Priest, and will return soon to save His people who trust in His salvation.

BEST EXAMPLE: Jesus Christ, and any disciple who humbly follows Him.

ETERNAL DESTINY: The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

SHARING THE GOSPEL: Anyone who realizes just how good the Good News about Jesus really is should be actively sharing the gospel with their neighbors, those in the surrounding community, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

After reviewing the information on this chart, we hope you have a fresh understanding of why the everlasting gospel is such good news. Notice that there is only one faith that offers the hope of a Savior and eternal life. Our friends scattered around the globe—and in your own neighborhood—need an opportunity to learn how merciful and gracious God truly is, that He provided a Savior, Jesus Christ, and that through faith in Him we can have eternal life.

Please take a few minutes to go back through these different religious groups and pray for those who have not yet had an opportunity to know Jesus. Pray that God will raise up laborers to go and share among every nation, kindred, tongue and people. Join us in praying that earth's great spiritual battle will come to an end very soon, and that we will see Jesus. 