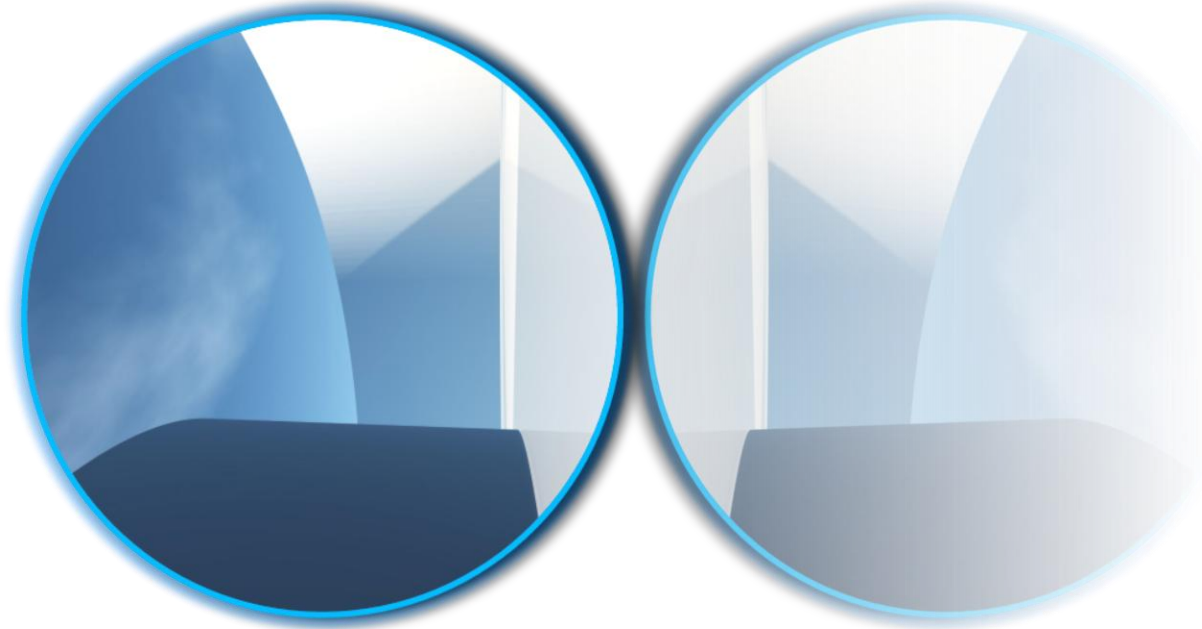


Worldview & Worshippers

Section 1: World Religions

SECTION 1: WORLD RELIGIONS



Lesson 3: The Eastern Faiths - Buddhism

- Discerning the Heart behind other Faiths

The Bible Church of Little Rock
EH FALL 2025

Introduction: Course Definitions of Key Terms

Worldview:

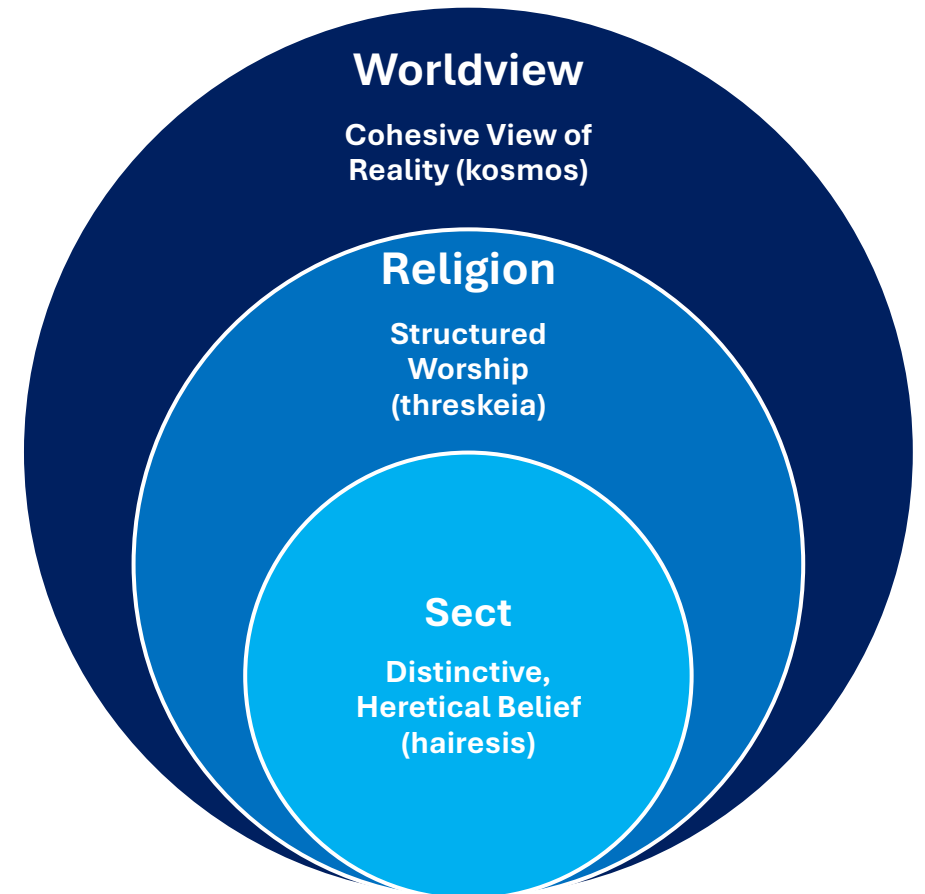
- A Cohesive and Complete Framework of Beliefs that Explains Existence (Creation).

Religion:

- A Structured System of Beliefs that Includes Organized Worship.

Sect:

- A Subset of a Religion with Similar but Distinctive Beliefs which are in error.



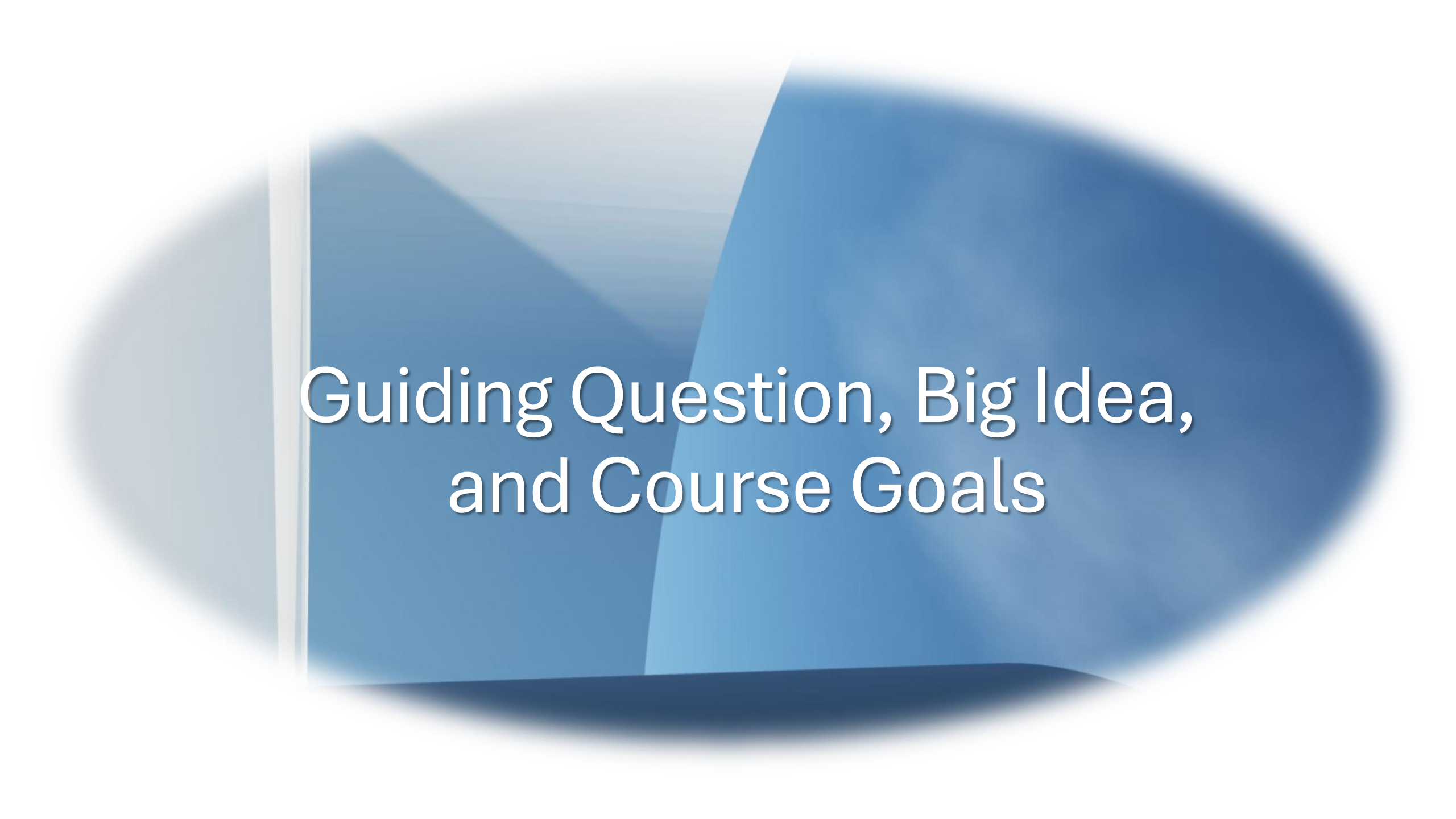
Introduction: Course Syllabus – Part 1

Section 1 – World Religions

- These “other faiths” are cohesive, coherent frameworks of belief that explain existence.
- They are also “structured system of belief that include organized worship.

Week	Date	Teacher	Course Section	Course Topic
2	9/14/25	Dinesh Panjwani	World Religions 1	The Eastern Faiths - Hinduism
3	9/21/25	Stephen Fulmer	World Religions 2	The Eastern Faiths – Buddhism
4	9/28/25	Garrett Plunkett	World Religions 3	The Western Faiths – Judaism
5	10/5/25	Josh Kwekel	World Religions 4	The Western Faiths – Islam





Guiding Question, Big Idea, and Course Goals

Overview: Big Idea & Guiding Question

Guiding Question:

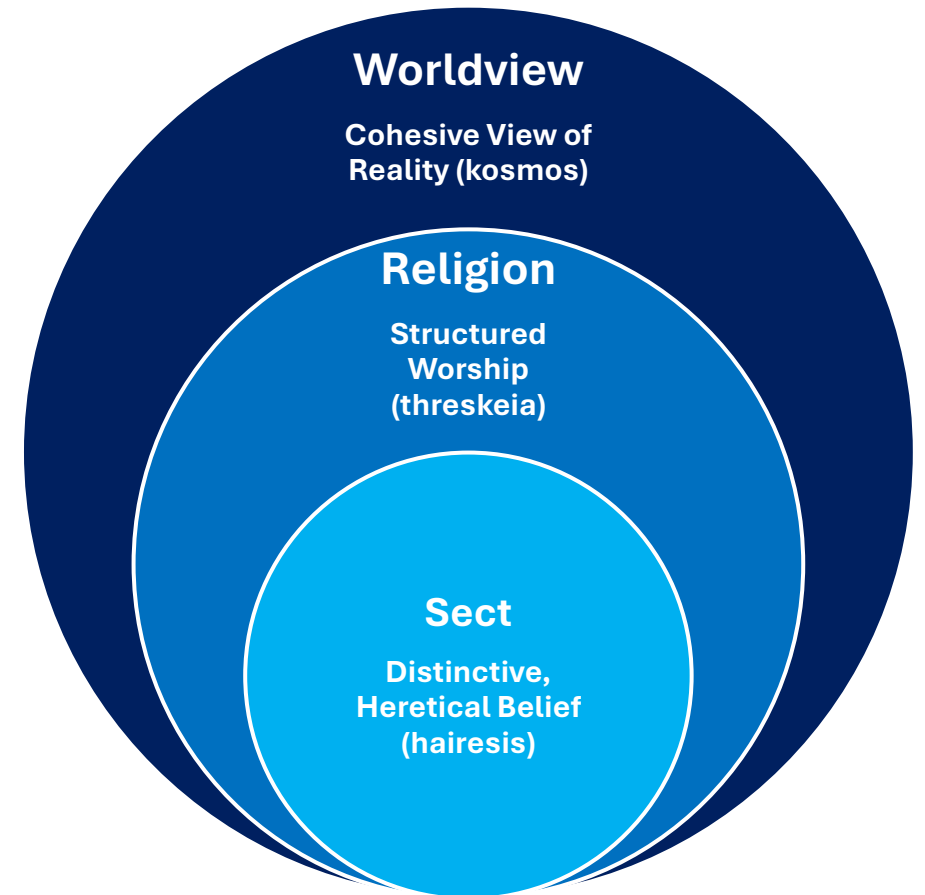
- What do the various worldviews in existence today believe? How does the Christian discern what these worldviews worship?

Big Idea:

- Christians should seek to understand the heart state of other worshippers so they may show the truth of Christ to them and love them rightly.

Primary Scripture:

- John 4:21-26,
“The Father is Seeking True Worshippers”



Overview: Buddhism Fast Facts

- **Size:** 4th largest world religion with ~500M adherents
- **Origin:** India around 4th or 5th century B.C.
- **Founder:** Siddhartha Gautama (who came to be known as the Buddha)
- **Foundational belief:** The absolute unity of all things and the balancing of opposites in the one reality
- **Most well-known modern-day Buddhist:** the 14th *Dalai Lama* (a title, roughly “ocean of wisdom”), 90-year-old Tenzin Gyatso. He is known as a teacher, peace advocate, and proponent of religious harmony
- **Famous societal Buddhists:** Steve Jobs, Tiger Woods, David Bowie, Rosa Parks, the Beatles, George Lucas, Brad Pitt, Jennifer Aniston, Kate Hudson
- **TV shows/movies influenced by Buddhism:** Kung Fu (going back in the day!), Lost, Avatar: The Last Airbender, Westworld, Seven Years in Tibet, The Matrix



Overview: Who is Buddha?

- Buddhists do not worship “the Buddha”; instead, they honor the Buddha as a revered teacher and enlightened being who discovered the path to enlightenment and shared it with others.
 - **Teacher and Guide:** The Buddha is seen as a guide who provides teachings (*dharma*) that help individuals understand the nature of suffering and the path to liberation (*nirvana*).
 - **Symbol of Enlightenment:** The Buddha represents the potential for all beings to achieve enlightenment through their own efforts.
- The concept of "Buddha" refers to an enlightened being who has attained full awakening and liberation from the cycle of birth and death (*samsara*).



Overview: Buddhism Texts

Major Buddhist Texts

- **Pali Canon (*tipitaka*)**: the oldest and most authoritative collection of Buddhist scriptures in the Theravada tradition. It is divided into three "baskets" (pitaka):
 - ***Vinaya Pitaka***: Rules and regulations for monastic discipline.
 - ***Sutta Pitaka***: Discourses attributed to the Buddha and his close disciples, containing teachings on ethics, meditation, and philosophy.
 - ***Abhidhamma Pitaka***: Scholarly analysis and philosophical interpretations of the teachings found in the Sutta Pitaka.
- There are other Buddhist texts that vary from tradition to tradition, such as Mahayana Sutras, Tibetan Buddhist Texts, Zen Texts, etc.



Overview: Oft-used Buddhist Verses

Popular Buddhist verses

- "All that we are is the result of what we have thought."
- "Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment."
- "Hatred does not cease by hatred, but only by love; this is the eternal rule."
- "The mind is everything. What you think you become."
- "Just as a candle cannot burn without fire, men cannot live without a spiritual life."



Overview: Buddhism “Paths” (denominations)

Different Paths in Buddhism

- **Theravada Buddhism:** the oldest surviving school of Buddhism. It emphasizes the original teachings of the Buddha as found in the Pali Canon. Practitioners focus on individual enlightenment through ethical conduct, meditation, and wisdom. Prevalent in countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Myanmar.
- **Mahayana Buddhism:** broad tradition encompassing various schools/practices. Emphasizes the *bodhisattva* path, where practitioners aspire to attain enlightenment for themselves and the benefit of all beings. Mahayana teachings include concepts like emptiness and compassion. Found in China, Japan, and Korea.
- **Vajrayana (Tibetan) Buddhism:** incorporates esoteric practices/rituals, emphasizing use of mantras, mudras (hand gestures), & visualization techniques. Seeks to achieve enlightenment more rapidly than other paths and often involves the guidance of a qualified teacher (*lama*). Primarily practiced in Tibet, Bhutan, and Mongolia.
- **Zen Buddhism:** a school of Mahayana Buddhism that emphasizes direct experience and meditation (*zazen*) as the primary means to attain enlightenment. It values simplicity, spontaneity, and the practice of mindfulness in everyday life. Zen teachings often focus on the concept of "no-mind" (*mushin*) and the importance of living in the present moment. Prominent in Japan and **has gained popularity in the West**.
- **Pure Land Buddhism:** centers on devotion to Amitabha Buddha and aspiration to be reborn in the Pure Land, a realm where attaining enlightenment is believed to be easier. Practitioners often recite the name of Amitabha Buddha (*nembutsu*) as a form of devotion/practice. Widespread in East Asia, particularly in China and Japan.



Overview: Ways Buddhism Influences the West

Influence	Description
Mindfulness and Meditation	The practice of mindfulness and meditation has gained popularity for stress reduction and mental well-being (e.g., yoga).
Psychology and Therapy	Concepts from Buddhism, such as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), have been incorporated into psychological practices.
Spirituality and New Age Trends	Many individuals have adopted Buddhist principles within broader spiritual frameworks, often blending them with other traditions.
Ethics and Compassion	Buddhist teachings on compassion and non-violence have influenced social justice movements and ethical discussions.
Art and Literature	Buddhist themes and aesthetics have permeated Western art, literature, and film, inspiring creative expression.



Overview: Images in Buddhism



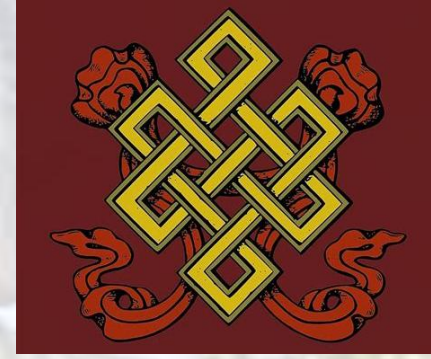
The **Dharma Wheel** is one of the most important symbols in Buddhism, representing the teachings of the Buddha and the Eightfold Path, which guides practitioners toward enlightenment. The wheel's movement signifies the continuous cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth (samsara).



The **Lotus Flower** symbolizes purity and spiritual awakening. It grows in muddy waters, yet rises above to bloom beautifully, representing the potential for individuals to rise above suffering and ignorance to achieve enlightenment.



The **Bodhi Tree** is significant as the place where Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha) attained enlightenment. It symbolizes wisdom and the importance of meditation, serving as a reminder of the transformative power of spiritual practice.



The **Endless Knot** represents the interconnectedness of all things and the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. It signifies the idea that all aspects of existence are intertwined and that understanding this connection is essential for spiritual growth.



A **Stupa** is a sacred structure that contains relics and is often used as a place of meditation. It symbolizes the Buddha's presence and teachings, serving as a reminder of the path to enlightenment and the importance of mindfulness.



Main Beliefs of Buddhism

All is one

- Belief in absolute unity is essential to Buddhism
 - Unity is foundational; diversity is derivative
- One does not learn from the Buddha; one becomes the Buddha
- The balancing of opposites is the highest goal in life – all must be balanced: compassion and cruelty; good and evil; life and death; God and the devil
- There is no virtue in the victory of one opposite over another
 - To insist on the triumph of one over another is to destroy unity
- There is no such thing as individuality; only progress and potential in one reality



Main Beliefs of Buddhism

Four Noble Truths

- **Truth of Suffering:** The first law is that everyone suffers
 - This is called “*dukkha*” (suffering, anguish, pain, unsatisfactoriness)
 - Buddha stated “I have taught one thing and one thing only: *dukkha* and the cessation of *dukkha*”
- **Cause of Suffering:** The cause of all suffering is desire (the debt of *karma* increases through desire)
 - This is called “*tanha*” (grasping, thirst, longing, craving, attachment)
 - It is associated with desiring things that cannot satisfy us fully
 - Not mere desire, but an unhealthy craving for temporary things and an incessant thirst for self-gratification
 - Trying to grasp things we don’t have leads to suffering, especially when we don’t receive what we desire; our minds are filled with pain when things don’t conform to our expectations



Main Beliefs of Buddhism

Four Noble Truths (cont.)

- **End of Suffering:** Suffering (*dukkha*) will cease only when we experience the ceasing of desiring (*tanha*).
 - When a person ceases from desire, then he becomes one with all
 - Deliverance from suffering is attainable not merely by desiring to be free from suffering but by embracing the fact that “suffering is”
- **Freedom from Suffering:** Final freedom from suffering is achieved by following Buddha’s “eight-fold path”.
 - This eight-fold path is a series of moral, mental, and wisdom principles that must be learned to put into practice. They include:
 - Right understanding; Right thought [*Wisdom*; “right understanding of reality”]
 - Right speech; Right action; Right liveliness [*Ethics*; “right behavior”]
 - Right effort; Right mindfulness; Right concentration [*Meditation*; “right meditative consciousness”]



Main Beliefs of Buddhism

Cycle of life

- Buddha (like Hindu teachers prior to him) advanced the idea of *karma* (“for every event that occurs, there will follow another event whose existence was caused by the first, and this second event will be pleasant or unpleasant according as its cause was skillful or unskillful”)
- If everything is cause & effect with regards to our actions, and all is one in the universe, then the result of our actions will be our reincarnation/rebirth (*samsara*) in the one reality in some form
- Freedom from the cycle of *samsara* is called *nirvana* and can be attained by reaching enlightenment (the cessation of *tanha*)
 - *Nirvana* (“blown out”) is often conceived of as the snuffing out of one’s personal existence (salvation by extinction)
 - *Nirvana* is a state of profound peace, tranquility, and freedom from attachment and ignorance
 - *Nirvana* is not a physical place or a final destination, but rather a state of being or realization





Worldview Analysis & Heart Discernment

Worldview Questions: God, Man, & Identity

Question 1:

What does **Buddhism** believe about the nature of God?

- **Answers:** Who or What is God?

All is one

- Belief in absolute unity (i.e., “oneness”) is essential to Buddhism

Buddhism is *Monistic* and not *Monotheistic*

- *Pantheism* – the view that there is a God, and God is everything (all; the universe); as a result, since we are part of the universe, we are God, or part of God.
Pantheism leads directly to *Monism*
- *Monism* – the view that everything (e.g., “the universe”, “reality”, “the One”) is ultimately one; and as such, it cannot be divided into more fundamental parts – if all is “God” and “God” is one, then all is one
- Contrasted with *Monotheism* – the view that there is one God
- In Buddhism, there is no such thing as the Creator-creature distinction, because “all is one”; therefore, some forms of Buddhism affirm no “God” at all



Worldview Questions: God, Man, & Identity

Question 2:

What does **Buddhism** believe about the nature of Man?

- **Answers:** Who am I?

Aspect	Buddhist Perspective
Impermanence (<i>anicca</i>)	Human beings, like all phenomena, are impermanent and subject to change throughout their lives.
No Permanent Self (<i>anatta</i>)	Buddhism teaches the concept of <i>anatta</i> , or "no-self," which asserts that there is no permanent, unchanging self or soul.
Interconnectedness	Humans are seen as interconnected with all living beings and the environment, emphasizing the importance of compassion and ethical conduct.
Suffering (<i>dukkha</i>)	The nature of human existence is characterized by suffering, which arises from attachment, desire, and ignorance.
Potential for Enlightenment	Buddhism holds that all human beings have the potential to attain enlightenment (<i>nirvana</i>) through spiritual practice and ethical living.



Worldview Questions: God, Man, & Identity

Question 3:

What does **Buddhism** believe about the relationship between Man and God?

- **Answers:** Who am I (“We”) in relation to God?

Aspect	Buddhist Perspective
Non-Theistic Framework	Buddhism is generally considered a non-theistic tradition, meaning it does not center around a creator God.
Focus on Individual Practice	The emphasis is on personal spiritual development and the individual's path to enlightenment rather than reliance on a deity.
Concept of Enlightenment	The ultimate goal is to attain enlightenment (<i>nirvana</i>) through one's own efforts, rather than through divine intervention.
Interconnectedness	Humans are seen as interconnected with all beings and the universe, fostering a sense of responsibility and compassion.
Deities in Buddhism	While Buddhism does recognize various deities and celestial beings, they are not viewed as creators or ultimate authorities.



Worldview Questions: God, Man, & Identity

Question 4:

What does **Buddhism** believe is the collective identity of its adherents?

- **Answers:** Who are “We”? Who “We” in relation to God?

Aspect	Buddhist Perspective
Community (<i>sangha</i>)	The term “ <i>sangha</i> ” refers to the community of practitioners, including monks, nuns, and laypeople.
Shared Teachings	Adherents are united by a common understanding of the Buddha's teachings (<i>dharma</i>) and the path to enlightenment.
Ethical Values	Buddhists share a commitment to ethical conduct, compassion, and mindfulness, which shape their interactions with others.
Cultural Diversity	The collective identity encompasses a wide range of cultural expressions and practices across different countries and traditions.
Spiritual Aspirations	Buddhists are united by the aspiration to attain enlightenment (<i>nirvana</i>) and alleviate suffering for themselves and others.



Worldview Questions: Problem, Solution & Value

Question 5:

What does **Buddhism** believe is wrong with the world?

- **Answers:** What is the problem?

Aspect	Buddhist Perspective
Suffering (<i>dukkha</i>)	The pervasive nature of suffering is a central tenet, encompassing physical, emotional, and existential pain.
Impermanence (<i>anicca</i>)	The transient nature of all things leads to attachment and disappointment, as nothing remains the same.
Ignorance (<i>avijja</i>)	Ignorance of the true nature of reality, including the concepts of impermanence and no-self, contributes to suffering.
Attachment and Desire (<i>tanha</i>)	Cravings and attachments to material possessions, relationships, and experiences create a cycle of suffering.
Ethical Conduct and <i>karma</i>	Unwholesome actions driven by ignorance and desire lead to negative <i>karma</i> , perpetuating suffering in the world.



Worldview Questions: Problem, Solution & Value

Question 6:

What does **Buddhism** believe is the solution to what's wrong?

- **Answers:** What is the solution?

Aspect	Buddhist Perspective
The Four Noble Truths	A foundational teaching that outlines the nature of suffering and the path to its cessation.
The Eightfold Path	A practical guide to ethical and mental development leading to the cessation of suffering.
Mindfulness and Meditation	Practices that cultivate awareness, insight, and inner peace, essential for overcoming suffering.
Ethical Conduct	Emphasis on moral behavior and compassion as a means to reduce suffering for oneself and others.
Wisdom and Understanding	The cultivation of wisdom (<i>prajna</i>) to understand the nature of reality and the causes of suffering.



Worldview Questions: Problem, Solution & Value

Question 7:

What does **Buddhism** teach is the way to live in the world based on ‘the time’?

- **Answers:** How should I (“We”) live today, given ‘the time’? (*kairos**)?

Aspect	Buddhist Perspective
Mindfulness	Practicing mindfulness to cultivate awareness and presence in daily life, reducing stress and enhancing well-being.
Compassion and Loving-Kindness	Emphasizing compassion (<i>karuna</i>) and lovingkindness (<i>metta</i>) towards oneself and others to foster harmony and understanding.
Ethical Living	Adhering to ethical principles, such as the Five Precepts, to promote non-harming and responsible behavior.
Interconnectedness	Recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings and the environment, encouraging responsible actions that benefit the whole.
Adaptability and Resilience	Cultivating adaptability and resilience in the face of change and uncertainty, using Buddhist practices to navigate challenges.



Worldview Questions: Problem, Solution & Value

Question 8:

What does **Buddhism** teach its adherents to value most in life?

- **Answers:** What shall I (“We”) desire, pursue, and love?

Aspect	Buddhist Perspective
Compassion (<i>karuna</i>)	The practice of compassion towards all living beings, fostering empathy and kindness.
Wisdom (<i>prajna</i>)	The pursuit of wisdom and understanding of the nature of reality, leading to insight and enlightenment.
Mindfulness	Valuing mindfulness to cultivate awareness and presence in daily life, enhancing well-being.
Ethical Conduct	Adhering to ethical principles that promote non-harming and responsible behavior towards others.
Inner Peace (<i>nirvana</i>)	The ultimate goal of achieving inner peace and liberation from suffering through spiritual practice.



Worldview Questions: Direction, End & Heart

Question 9:

What does **Buddhism** believe is the end purpose of Man?

- **Answers:** Where am I (“We”) going (telos*)?

Aspect	Buddhist Perspective
Attainment of <i>nirvana</i>	The ultimate goal is to achieve <i>nirvana</i> , a state of liberation from suffering and the cycle of rebirth (<i>samsara</i>).
Overcoming Suffering	The purpose involves understanding and overcoming the nature of suffering (<i>dukkha</i>) through personal insight and practice.
Cultivation of Wisdom	Developing wisdom (<i>prajna</i>) is essential for realizing the true nature of reality and achieving enlightenment.
Compassion for All Beings	Practicing compassion (<i>karuna</i>) and lovingkindness (<i>metta</i>) towards oneself and others is a vital aspect of the path.
Contribution to the Greater Good	Engaging in ethical conduct and actions that benefit others, reflecting the interconnectedness of all beings.

“Buddhism... has claimed that man’s destiny is a spiritual or mystical union with an impersonal force... like a drop of water placed in the ocean, man’s goal is to lose personhood, feelings, and desires in order to achieve impersonal union with the divine, whatever that may be.” – Biblical Doctrine (MacArthur)



Worldview Questions: Direction, End & Heart

Question 10:

What does **Buddhism** believe is the end purpose of the Existence?

- **Answers:** Where is the whole world going?

Aspect	Buddhist Perspective
Cyclical Nature of Existence	Buddhism teaches that the world and the universe undergo cycles of creation, existence, and dissolution.
Impermanence (<i>anicca</i>)	All phenomena, including the world, are impermanent and subject to change, reflecting the transient nature of existence.
Interconnectedness	The world is seen as a web of interconnected beings and phenomena, emphasizing the importance of compassion and ethical conduct.
No Final Judgment	Buddhism does not teach a final judgment day or a singular end of the world; rather, existence continues in cycles.
Focus on Individual Liberation	The emphasis is on individual spiritual development and the pursuit of enlightenment rather than a specific end purpose for the world itself.



Worldview Questions: Direction, End & Heart

Question 11:

What does **Buddhism** reveal about the heart state of its adherents?

- **Answers:** Where is their heart? How do I as a believer discern their heart?

Aspect	Buddhist Perspective
Compassion	Buddhism places a strong emphasis on compassion and loving-kindness, encouraging adherents to cultivate these qualities in their interactions with others. The heart state of a Buddhist may be characterized by a genuine desire to alleviate suffering and promote well-being.
Desire for Inner Peace	Buddhists often seek inner peace and liberation from suffering through practices such as meditation and ethical living.
Ethical Living	Adherents strive to live in a way that minimizes harm to others.
Mindfulness and Presence	Buddhism's practice of mindfulness encourages adherents to be present and aware in their daily lives.
Search for Meaning	Buddhism focuses on enlightenment and liberation from the cycle of rebirth.



Worldview Questions: Christ, Gospel & Witness

Question 12:

What does **Buddhism** believe about the nature, work, and person of Christ?

- **Answers:** What do they *think* about Christ? What do they *do* with Him?

Aspect	Buddhist Perspective
Nature of Jesus	Jesus is often viewed as a wise teacher or enlightened being, similar to the Buddha, who imparted valuable moral and ethical teachings.
Work of Jesus	Many Buddhists appreciate Jesus' emphasis on love, compassion, and forgiveness, which resonate with Buddhist values.
Person of Jesus	Jesus is respected as a historical figure who inspired many, but Buddhists do not view him as a divine savior in the same way Christians do.



Worldview Questions: Christ, Gospel & Witness

Question 13:

What does **Buddhism** reveal about how Christians can/should evangelize them?

- **Answers:** How do I as a believer share the Gospel and teach them Christ?
- This is “Speaking the truth in love”.

Focus on the Redeemer who conquers all evil

- Meditation and enlightenment can never overcome what is evil in this fallen world. Buddhism refuses to acknowledge that evil is a reality that must be conquered. Emphasize what the Bible teaches about Jesus, the Son of God, coming into the world in order to conquer Satan, sin, and death.
 - Gen 3:15; Matt 1:21; 1 Cor 15:26; 1 John 3:8
- Explain how Jesus came into the world to deal with the problem of our personal sin at the cross.
 - Matt 1:21; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 John 1:9
- Help Buddhists ask the ultimate questions about God, the guilt of their own sin, and the judgment to come. Highlight the teaching of Scripture about the forgiveness of sin in the death of Jesus.
 - Acts 2:38, 5:31; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; Heb 9:22



Worldview Questions: Christ, Gospel & Witness

Question 13 (cont.):

What does **Buddhism** reveal about how Christians can/should evangelize them?

- **Answers:** How do I as a believer share the Gospel and teach them Christ?
- This is “Speaking the truth in love”.

Focus on the biblical teaching about the renewal of all things

- Reincarnation is a counterfeit to the biblical plan of salvation. When witnessing to a Buddhist, explain that Jesus doesn't simply redeem individuals. He died and rose to secure “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells”.
 - 2 Pet 3:13
- God's cosmic plan of redemption is the solution to the problem of suffering in this life. The whole of creation, which God has subjected to futility because of our sin, will be restored by Christ on the last day.
 - Acts 3:20-21; Rom 8:18-22; Heb 1:10-12, 2:5-9



Worldview Questions: Christ, Gospel & Witness

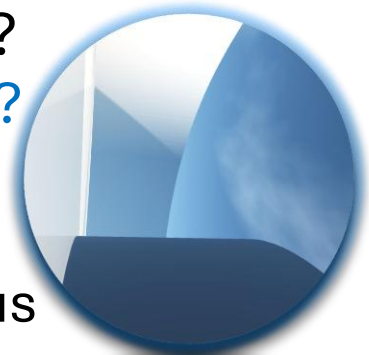
Question 14:

What does **Buddhism** reveal about how Christians can minister to them?

- **Answers:** How do I as a believer show them Christ and reflect Him rightly?
- This is “Loving my neighbor as myself”

There are numerous Scriptural principles that guide how we as Christians can interact with Buddhists just as we should with everyone who doesn't know Jesus as Savior and Lord.

- **1 Peter 3:15** – “But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, *always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you*, yet with gentleness and fear,”
- **Ephesians 4:15** – “But *speaking the truth in love*, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, that is Christ.”
- **Galatians 6:10** – “So then, *while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people*, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”
- **1 Thessalonians 5:15** – “See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but *always seek after that which is good* for one another and *for all men*.”
- **Colossians 3:12** – “So, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, *put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience*.”



Suggested Resources for Further Study

A Field Guide on False Teaching (*Ligonier*)

<https://www.amazon.com/Field-Guide-False-Teaching/dp/1642892688/>

What's Your Worldview? (*Crossway*)

<https://www.amazon.com/Whats-Your-Worldview-Interactive-Questions/dp/143353892X/>

TruthXchange (*website*)

<https://truthxchange.com/>

