



ENGAGING THE NATIONS

An Introduction to Sharing Christ with
Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Sikhs





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"And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us."
Acts 17:26-27

There are many resources available to assist you in your outreach to the nations. For a list of books, websites, and articles please visit www.globalgates.ca or contact us.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8

INTRODUCTION



Dear Brother or Sister in Christ:

Thank you for taking a step in obedience to Jesus by proclaiming Him to the nations! The church in the West has an unprecedented opportunity before us as the Lord continues to bring unreached people groups to our shores. However, many Christians in Canada do not know how to begin conversations with these peoples and remain paralyzed in ministering to them because of fear, a lack of knowledge about their beliefs, or simply because they do not realize the strategic opportunities that exist.

To that end, we have provided this booklet to help orient you in beginning spiritual conversations with people of Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh backgrounds. Use this booklet to learn the basic beliefs of these people as well as how to (and how not to!) begin conversations. Whether you are working with a ministry of Global Gates Canada or using this booklet in another context, we pray that the Lord gives you boldness, love, and compassion as you share the love of Christ with others.

May God enable a multitude of Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and Sikhs to come to Christ, and may He work in and through you in the process,

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PROFILE: BUDDHISM

Reaching the state of nirvana and ending suffering (dukkha) experienced during the perpetual cycle of rebirth (samsara) is the ultimate goal of Buddhists. Nirvana is achieved by ridding oneself of desires for everything from material wealth to pleasure to prestige. Ending dukkha and reaching nirvana comes by following the *Noble Eight-fold path*: (1) right understanding, (2) right aspiration, (3) right effort, (4) right speech, (5) right conduct, (6) right livelihood (7) right mindfulness, (8) right concentration.

Buddhism sees belief in the existence of god(s) as irrelevant and impractical. Individual Buddhists, however, tend to allow local convictions to inform this. For example, Tibetan Buddhism acknowledges gods and spirits while more western forms would deny such.

Take genuine interest in their lives and get to know them.
As opportunity arises, turn the conversation to spiritual matters.

1. Ask, "If you could have a miracle, what would it be?"
Pray in faith for them right there.
2. Find where your lives intersect and share a testimony of how God met you.
(Example: "I too have struggled with X, but God met me by...")
3. Ask, "Where are you from? What is the most popular religion there? Is that your religion?"



“Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.”
Psalm 73:25



Humbly steer the conversation to the following topics:

1. Ask if they are familiar with the Buddha's teaching on how to reach nirvana. (See *Eight-fold Path*, previous.) Ask if they or anyone they know has perfectly followed the Eight-fold path and has no sense remaining of spiritual ignorance, sinfulness, guilt, shame, fear, or dishonor, having found complete deliverance & freedom from these things.
2. Ask them if there was a way to be completely & fully rid of spiritual ignorance, sinfulness, guilt, shame, fear, & dishonor, would you want to know about it? Tell them that Jesus was the ultimate wise teacher within real time-space human history who not only had power over evil spirits but also lived a perfect life with no spiritual ignorance, sin, or mistakes of any kind. He is so powerful and perfect that He has the ability to remove our ignorance, sin, guilt, shame, dishonor, and fear if we allow Him to do so by believing & confessing Him for who He claimed and proved Himself to be: Lord God over everything who gave His life to free us through His physical death and resurrection.
3. Buddhists are often interested in hearing about people's spiritual experiences. Share ways that Jesus has worked in your life.

1. Do not partake in heated debate, criticizing their religious practices.
2. Do not wear beads, necklaces, or anything that could be an amulet or be construed as one.
3. Do not stress Old Testament animal sacrifice stories. Killing animals is typically prohibited in Buddhism.
4. Do not enter into political conversations.
5. Ask the questions: Why is there something instead of nothing? Why is there anything at all? Why is there a world, in which, among other things, the processes (causation, etc) detected by the Buddha are the case? Why is it that *this* way of things is the way things are? These questions about 'contingency' can stimulate reconsideration of basic Buddhist worldview assumption, especially cosmology; this could prompt Buddhists to recognize the plausibility of biblical Christian theism.



STARTING THE CONVERSATION

BELIEFS BRIEF

With no single founder, no single scripture and no common creed, Hinduism claims to be the oldest organized religion. It has spawned other religions (Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism) and various forms of new age spirituality. Typically, Hindus believe in a supreme god who manifests himself as a multitude of deities. Hindus believe man's deeds (karma) follow him in the present life as well as through a cycle of many rebirths (samsara), the number and quality of which are dictated by our karmic debt. Liberation from this cycle is called moksha and is pursued by following one (or a combination of) the three paths: The Way of Good Deeds (Karma Yoga), The Way of Knowledge (Jnana Yoga) and/or The Way of Devotion (Bhakti Yoga).

Take genuine interest in their lives and get to know about them. Many Hindus are immigrants experiencing fears, loneliness, and homesickness. A good conversation could begin as follows:

1. “Hello, where are you from? How long have you been here? Is it challenging to live in Canada?”
2. “Tell me about your family? Do they live here in Canada?”
3. “Do you believe in God? What do you believe about him?”
4. “Do you believe in heaven? Do you think you will go to heaven? If so, why, and if not, why not?”



“... I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me...”
Isaiah 46:9



Humbly steer the conversation to the following topics:

1. Humbly ask if they have perfectly fulfilled Hindu expectations of doing good and being good. Ask if they know personally any single human being who has fulfilled such expectations. Ask them who (which law-giver) imposed those expectations. Ask if they've heard of any provision as a means by which they can be free completely from their perceptions of cycles of fear, pain, suffering, shame, and dishonor.
2. Share your own sinfulness and utter spiritual/moral failure, as well as your inability to live up perfectly to God's expectations via your own failed efforts, until Jesus forgave and changed you. Tell them of God the Father who loved the world and sent His Son Jesus Christ in real human flesh to this world to pay for our spiritual and moral debt and failures, known as “sin”. Use the story of the prodigal son to show how every human being is a sinner and rebel against God, needing forgiveness and restoration to right relationship with God.
3. Share the forgiveness and assurance of salvation you have received through Jesus Christ.
4. Keep your testimony and gospel presentation Christ-centered.

1. Be sensitive to cultural norms, mannerisms, and avoid engaging with the opposite gender.
2. Do not assume that you know the beliefs and practices of the Hindu to whom you are witnessing. Ask them to share with you their story; listen intently to discover points where God may already be in conversation with them and join the conversation.
3. Avoid critism, sarcasm, and rabbit trails.



PROFILE: ISLAM

Muslim beliefs, practices, and norms can be as varied as the communities in which Muslims live. Cultural values of power, shame and upholding traditions tend to carry precedence in governing the lives of many Muslims, at times over and against Islamic orthodoxy. While the Five Pillars of Islam (confession of one God and Muhammad his prophet, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca) may be regarded as the purest form of the religion, animism and other influences may form a syncretism that reflects the value of upholding cultural traditions more than the Qur'an.

Take genuine interest in their lives and get to know about them. As opportunity arises, turn the conversation to spiritual matters using any of the following prompts:

1. Ask, "If you asked God for a miracle in your life, what would that be?" Pray in faith for them right there.
2. Find where your lives intersect and share a testimony of how God met you. (Example: "I too have struggled with X, but God met me by...")
3. Ask, "Where are you from? What is the most popular religion there? Is that your religion?"



STEERING THE CONVERSATION

TIPS

“This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” John 6:29

Humbly steer the conversation to the following topics:



1. In all religions man is trying to rid himself of sin. Has Islam removed your sins from you? Does anyone you know follow Islam perfectly? How many sins can you do and still attain paradise? Remember that it took only one sin for Adam and Eve (Hawwa, “Ha-WAA”) to be sent out of the garden.
2. Share stories of sacrifice including the Passover story (Exodus 12), the sin offering (Leviticus 4), and the suffering servant (Isaiah 53). Make the connection between these stories and Jesus' sacrifice of his own life on the cross.
3. Tell them the only reason you are going to paradise is because you are following God's way, which is to trust in Isa al-Masih and His atoning self-sacrifice that removes the sins of the world.

1. Generally, engage only with someone of your own gender.
2. Do not assume that all Muslims have the same beliefs and practices. Ask them to share their beliefs and practices with you; listen to them to see where God may be already in conversation with them, and join that conversation with the good news as time allows. Invite them to your house for hospitality (asking them about any dietary restrictions they have, in order to be respectful) as often as possible. Invite them to be a part of an Al Massira (المسيرة) group, an Alpha group, or a Friendship Day event in your area.
3. Don't eat pork or drink alcohol in front of them.
4. Don't enter into political conversations.



PROFILE: JUDAISM



STARTING THE CONVERSATION

BELIEFS BRIEF

Judaism has its origin in God's revelation contained in what Christians call the Old Testament. Central to Judaism is the Torah, the five books of Moses. Tradition (called the oral Torah) also plays an important role. This tradition is perceived as having been given by God during the time of Moses.

Most people wearing recognizably Jewish clothing are orthodox Jews, adhering strictly to the laws of the Torah as understood in their tradition; there are also more liberal forms of Judaism but these Jewish people dress, behave, and believe in a more secular manner.

Many Hasidim live in closed communities, much like the Amish. They are ultra-orthodox Jews with a mystical bent, following special leaders. One subset of Hasidim is the Lubavitchers who believe their deceased leader is the promised Messiah.

Take genuine interest in them.

Possible prompts leading to spiritual conversations might be:

1. "Could you tell me what it means for you to be Jewish?"
2. "I am Christian, so I too believe in the God who revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I don't know much about how Jewish people practice Judaism. Could you tell me more about it?"

“Behold, the days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah...” Jeremiah 31:31

STEERING THE CONVERSATION

TIPS

Humbly steer the conversation to the following topics:

1. How did and does Israel succeed in keeping the law?” (e.g., Mount Sinai and the golden calf).
2. “What is the solution for failure to keep the law?” (see Jeremiah 31:31-34 regarding forgiveness, heart change and the New Covenant).
3. Recount the centrality of the sacrifice in the Torah (see the Exodus 12 Passover story and the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16).
4. Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12, making the connection between the sin bearing servant and the sacrifices in the Torah. Ask “who is this special servant (called “a covenant for the people” in Isaiah 42:6, 49:8), who gives forgiveness and a changed heart (compare Jeremiah 31:31)?”

1. Generally, do not say “the Jews”. Instead, say “the Jewish people.”
2. Instead of referring to the “Old Testament”, say “Hebrew Bible” or “Tanakh”.
3. Do not talk disparagingly about the Torah. Only say that Messiah is the fulfillment of the law.
4. Use the title Messiah instead of Christ.
5. Never defend atrocities committed by “Christians” against Jewish people (e.g., the Inquisition, the Crusades). Be sorry and only tell how this goes against the teaching of Jesus.
6. Never talk about the Holocaust casually.





PROFILE: SIKHISM

Influenced by and frustrated with both Hinduism and Islam, Guru Nanak (born in 1469), shaped Sikhism in India's Punjab region, removing idol worship, polytheism, the caste system, gender inequality, pilgrimages and other tenets of his day's prevailing religions. Sikh beliefs are comprised of Nanak's teachings and the teachings of nine subsequent gurus. The final guru is Sikhism's holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib, treated as a living being, accommodated with sleeping quarters, food, and other comforts. Although individual Sikhs may or may not believe in reincarnation, all agree one may potentially be united with God through meditation on his name, selfless service, living an honest lifestyle, and sharing. There is a heavy emphasis on works.

Although some have adapted a more Western look, many of the men are still identified by a bearded face and a turban covering their uncut hair. They may also wear a silver bracelet (kara), which makes for a good conversation starter. Try to remember the Sikh greeting, "Sat Sri Akaal Ji" which means, "God is the Supreme Truth."

Take interest in their lives and turn the conversation to spiritual matters using any of the following:

1. Ask "If you asked God for a miracle in your life, what would that be?"
Pray in faith for them right there.
2. Find where your lives intersect and share a testimony of how God met you. Example: "I too have struggled with X, but God met me by..."
3. Ask, "Where are you from? What is the most popular religion there? Is that your religion?"



“...He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy...” Titus 3:5



STEERING THE CONVERSATION TIPS

Humbly steer the conversation to the following topics:

1. Gently ask, “Have you ever committed any of the five vices/sins of Sikhism (lust, anger, greed, emotional attachment, or pride)?” Admit that you have as well.
2. Ask, “How will you know if you are good enough to be united to God?”
3. Ask them, “If there was a way to be rid of your bad deeds, would you want to know?” Tell them that Jesus has the ability to give the credit of His good deeds to his followers and remove from them their bad deeds.

1. Do not confuse Sikhism with Islam or Hinduism or a blending of the two.
2. Do not communicate disrespectfully, commandeering the conversation.
3. Do not equate Christianity with Western or Canadian thought.
4. Do not tell them removing their turbans or cutting their hair is required to follow Jesus.



“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:19-20

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