

KNOWING & DOING

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How To Speak To Your Buddhist Neighbor

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You might say that Buddhism is packaged in numerous forms. Even in casual conversations, one can identify a plethora of New Age beliefs and self-help rooted in Buddhism, as well as the classic representations. So how do we share Jesus with people steeped in Buddhist beliefs?

1. Build bridges.

There are many things to affirm in your neighbors' Buddhist religion: the recognition of suffering, the honorable lifestyle of the eightfold path, the desire for something more than this finite world, and the appreciation they hold for spirituality in the little, everyday things. Praise the praiseworthy! Build friendship.

2. Ask and listen.

"What was the thought process that led you to this belief?" "What is attractive to you about Buddhism?" These questions, if asked kindly and sincerely, can help you get to know the person individually, friend to friend. They can also give you insight for a more personalized presentation of Jesus.

3. Highlight the differences.

Buddha claims there is no self. We are all one. The Trinity shows a beautiful way of having unity while treasuring individual diversity.

Buddhism claims the solution to suffering is abandoning desire. Christ says suffering is objectively wrong and offers both mercy for our complicity and righting of the wrong.

How does one stop the desire to be rid of desire? Is it wrong to desire our loved ones' safety? Or do our desires point to our need for the Satisfier of our souls?

The Noble Eightfold Path and other tools in Buddhism are inadequate to free people. God's grace offers rescue and empowerment from the Holy Spirit. Real freedom!

4. Keep calm and pray on.

I can become very frustrated when a friend hears the gospel and says, "That's nice," or simply blends it into their own contradicting worldview. "It's all one, right?" Do not lose hope or patience! The gospel is beautiful; the gospel is powerful; and the gospel is true. Do not stop praying for them. I've seen God break into the lives of Buddhist friends in very unexpected ways.





Callom Harkrader is an OCCA Fellow with Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM). He earned a degree in Psychology from Lynchburg College, double minoring in History and Theater, before graduating from the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics. Prior to joining RZIM, Callom worked as the Development Worker for *The Mark Drama*, a drama of Mark's gospel produced around the world, and also has spent significant time doing mission work in Romania and Uganda as well as serving as president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at Lynchburg College. He loves engaging with audiences of all ages and beliefs on the big questions of life and topics relating to Christianity and culture. In his free time, Callom is passionate about reading fiction, acting, sports and walking in the woods.

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