

# World Religions and False Cults

## Part 3 - Buddhism

### The History of Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) was born about 560 BC in India. As a young man, he struggled with issues such as suffering, old age, and death. Although he grew up in the Hindu religion, he felt that Hinduism did not give good answers to why these things were part of life. He left his home, spent time in a forest, and had an experience called “the enlightenment.” He came to believe the cause of suffering was wrong (misplaced) desire. The solution, he believed, was the path of right thoughts, right actions, and right deeds. He gained followers and Buddhism was born. There are approximately 376 million Buddhist worldwide today (mostly in SE Asia and parts of East Asia), with about 2.5 million in the US.

### Core Beliefs of Buddhism

Buddha’s teachings, called the dharma, have a variety of interpretations. Two main groups within Buddhism are the Theravada and the Mahayana. Buddha accepted some teachings from Hinduism (karma; reincarnation) but rejected others (Brahmin; the caste system). Beliefs are based on the Four Noble Truths: 1) life is full of suffering, 2) suffering is caused by our own desires, because of ignorance about reality, 3) overcoming desire is the key to overcoming suffering and 4) following the Noble Eightfold Path is the key to end desire. This path involves self-change in the areas of right views, intentions, speech, conduct, occupation, effort, mindfulness, and concentration. Key views:

- God: There is no focus or belief in a god, though some have elevated Buddha to a god status. Buddha images are worshiped, but it is viewed mostly as a show of respect.
- Mankind: Sin is not our problem, ignorance is. Life is a journey to reach enlightenment through meditation. Life itself is meaningless and our true “self” does not exist.
- Salvation: Reaching enlightenment stops the process of reincarnation as desire and suffering is eliminated. Nirvana is then reached (often viewed as a state of nonexistence).

### Keys for Evangelism

- Understand Buddhists have a different view of the world than we do. Explain biblical concepts carefully and clearly.
- Share your “journey” of faith, pointing out that the answer was in the person and work of Jesus Christ, not yourself.