

WITNESS TO PEOPLE OF OTHER RELIGIONS

You are now much more likely to meet Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and people of other religions than ever before. How can you effectively share your faith in a way that shows respect and kindness while also communicating the unique and essential truths of the Bible? Study and try these four simple steps. Bathe the whole process with prayer as only the Holy Spirit can give you adequate love and wisdom. Only the Holy Spirit can make it possible for people of other religions to understand and receive truth (1 Corinthians 2:11; 12:3).

1. Listen and Care

In witnessing, we usually talk too soon and too much. Instead, be friendly, ask good questions, and listen with true interest. As appropriate, ask about their families, hobbies, education, career, future plans, health, or anything you can find that matters to them. Listening communicates that you value and respect them. It gives you the information you need to really care and help.

You don't need to be an expert on Buddhism to witness to a Buddhist. Just ask her about her beliefs. What does she think about God, life, death and what comes next? Each person is different. Some are highly philosophical with no belief in what is unseen. Some Buddhists think more about spirits, magic, and protection than about the Buddha's teachings. Others are very secular, thinking primarily about their families, businesses or personal interests.

Once we know their beliefs, interests, and needs we will know better which specific pieces of God's good news we should focus on to best help them. A person fascinated by spiritual powers is likely to be intrigued by the story of God's great battle with evil. A person with marriage problems may be more interested in the power of prayer and God's ability to help people love the unlovable. Listen, learn, and care. People of any religion will be touched.

2. Affirm Our Similarities

Even though we usually think of our differences, Bible-believing Christians have much in common with people of other religions. When we affirm those similarities we draw our hearts together. This also makes it easier to then discuss differences. Here are some similarities:

The Jewish scriptures are the same as what Christians call the Old Testament. They believe in the Creator God, uphold the Ten Commandments, including the Seventh-day Sabbath, and avoid unclean meats. Muslims focus on the necessity of being totally surrendered to the One True Creator. They believe that Jesus was born of a virgin and will come again to judge the world. Their scriptures tell them to study the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospels. They are not supposed to eat pork or drink alcohol. Hindus and Buddhists believe in a judgment for every good and bad deed, word, and motive. Many are vegetarians, valuing life and health. Many strongly believe in spiritual realities that cannot be seen by the eyes. Compassion, self-sacrifice, honesty, and family fidelity are important morals that all world religions share.

In our eagerness to speak about our unique differences, we may fail to recognize the prejudices that many people of other world religions have towards Christianity. They may feel Christianity is less spiritual and less moral than their own religion because they associate it with the aggressive politics, materialistic lifestyles, and immoral Hollywood movies from the "Christian" West. If they can see their own values in us and hear us affirm the good we have in common, they will be more ready to hear the new special truths we share.

Speak about Solomon's proverbs and Jesus' teachings that highlight the morality we hold in common. Live a life of healthfulness and peaceful relationships. Be completely devoted to God and care for the poor. Affirm, value, and draw together.

3. Share Differences through Stories

Most people want to avoid conflict and so they don't want to talk about religious differences. However, we must not stay silent about the essential differences we have with other world religions especially regarding salvation and God's true nature and character. Jesus showed us His compelling plan for witnessing when He said to the demoniac, "Go tell them what great things God has done for you." Share what is unique to your faith through stories.

Scatter the seeds of truth briefly and frequently. Tell your stories, your friends' stories, and stories from the Bible. If you want them to understand about a living God, tell a story of when you asked for His help. If you want them to believe Jesus can forgive sins, talk about your struggles and the peace you found in the story of the cross. When you want to deal with lies about reincarnation, ghosts, and gods, tell the amazing story of the Great Controversy.

Be enthusiastic. Be sincere. Pray much and the truths will never be forgotten. Story-telling is much better than the typical debate in which no one is changed and hearts are closed. Build your evidences for truth right into the beautiful stories.

4. Invite to a New Experience

Too often we stop witnessing after one of the steps above. This fails to give our friends opportunities to actually experience God. We must invite them to try something related to what we have been talking about, however small. Little steps will lead to a big encounter with Jesus. Pray always, expecting great miracles from God. Then ask something like:

- "May I pray for your troubled teenager?"
- "Try praying to God every night before you go to sleep and see if that brings peace."
- "You said your wife is ready to divorce you. Each time before you see her, would you read this scripture that helped my marriage?"
- "We're going to the park this Saturday afternoon to spend time as a family. Would you like to join us and experience a special stress-reliever we call "Sabbath Rest?"

By Scott Griswold. For more ideas visit ReachtheWorldNextDoor.com
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