

HANDOUT FOR

COMMUNICATING CHRIST TO MUSLIMS, BUDDHISTS, AND HINDUS

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How can we appreciate other faiths, yet speak articulately about Jesus, the center of the cosmos?

People everywhere bear God's image. Using their God-given creativity, people have expressed patterns of beauty, wisdom, and kindness through various faiths. We can appreciate these. Buddhists remind us of the importance of sensitivity to suffering, paradox, and ambiguity. From Confucianists we learn the richness of the extended family and the importance of courtesy and respect. Muslims show us the value of faith in the public square and public prayer. Hindus remind us that we are not just consumers or producers, not just machines or animals, but souls born to rise to union with the great Soul.

Yet if a faith doesn't show us God coming close to us as He did in Jesus, if it doesn't show us God entering into the depths of our pain as when Jesus went to the cross, if it doesn't show us God generating the power for transformed new beginnings as when Jesus rose from the dead, then that faith is missing something crucial right at the core.

So if we are talking with Muslims who thank God for his mercy every day, we will talk about God's mercy being so *radical* that it brought Jesus down to death—and then exploded him out of it. With Buddhists, who see each human as temporary, just a candle flame or a drop of water, we will talk about the immeasurable value of the one lost sheep in Jesus' story. With Hindus we will talk about the God who took our karma, the God who is the ground of all noble self-sacrifice, and we will mention examples of such sacrifice in Indian history. There may be beauty and truth in all religions, but the good news that the Creator of the cosmos has come close to us personally and powerfully in Jesus is something else. Bridges for beginning to speak about this "something else" include...

WITH MUSLIMS

1. God
2. Prayer
3. Jesus the Prophet
4. Scripture: Torah, Psalms, Proverbs, Gospels.
5. Jesus' death—God's generosity and provision of a sacrifice, Jesus' loyalty and concern for God's honor
6. Spiritual blessing=baraka
7. Personal ethics: honor, modesty, trustworthiness, raising godly children
8. Social ethics: justice and righteousness
9. Muslim civilizations' contributions
10. Prophet Muhammad's contributions—monotheism, politics, literature, ethics
11. Repentance for Western sins: Crusades, imperialism, stereotyping of Arabs, media that promotes pornography, disrespect for parents, extreme individualism

WITH BUDDHISTS

1. Respect the quest for transcendence
2. Empathize with suffering
3. Unselfish love is possible, because God starts the chain of loving
4. Individuals matter
5. Committed relationships can be built
6. Moderation
7. God's care for animals and plants
8. Power to reach dharma ideals
9. Shame, not guilt
10. Symbols, not propositions
11. Christ as teacher and Christ as power

WITH HINDUS

1. Transcendence—Awe
2. Illusory satisfactions
3. Bhakti
4. Self-knowledge
5. Unity with the cosmos
6. Self-denial
7. Sacrifice
8. Karma
9. Family
10. Drama, song, dance
11. Spiritual study centers
12. Christ as power

WITH CHINESE (Taoists/Buddhists/Confucianists)

1. Seeking the Ultimate—Tao
2. Appreciating order in physical and social worlds
3. Appreciating family
4. Appreciating the supernatural
5. Sensitivity to suffering
6. Sensitivity to need for renewal and cleansing
7. Sensitivity to need for celebration
8. Appreciating metaphor
9. Appreciating Chinese civilization, long history of literacy, and long term goals

WITH PRIMAL RELIGIONISTS

1. God created the world and has interacted powerfully here throughout time
2. God in Jesus died to conquer the power of all other spirits
3. The Spirit of God can live in us
4. The Church can provide holistic community
5. Metaphors and stories, including motifs from the local repertoire of mythology
6. Discernment of local believers in order to avoid syncretism