

## BUDDHISM

### Introduction

Buddhism is one of the major religions of the world. Buddhism is named for a man (Buddha) who, supposedly, achieved a state of enlightenment that his followers desire.

### Origin

Around 2,500 years ago, a prince by the name of Siddhartha Gautama, when he began to question whether he deserved the lifestyle he was enjoying, left the posh comforts of his palace to seek answers to suffering and life. Outside the palace, he saw a dead man, a sick man, an old man, and a monk. Believing that even a prince could not escape the suffering or death he saw and possibly influenced by the monk he observed, Siddhartha became a wandering holy man in search of answers as to the cause of suffering. He prayed, fasted, and meditated until he, supposedly, understood the basic truths of life. Siddhartha deemed his understanding as being nirvana or *enlightenment*. He was given the title of Buddha, which means *enlightened one*.

### Main Beliefs

For 45 years, Buddha taught people the following:

#### Three Universal Truths

Everything in life is impermanent and always changing.

Nothing is permanent; possessing things or persons doesn't make you happy.

There is no eternal, unchanging soul; self is just a collection of changing attributes.

#### Four Noble Truths

Human life has a lot of suffering.

The cause of suffering is greed.

There is an end to suffering.

The way to end suffering is to follow the Middle Path.

Buddha taught people not to worship him as a god, saying they should take responsibility for their own lives and actions. To find nirvana, he said they should follow the Middle Way or Middle Path:

### The Eightfold Path

Right understanding and viewpoint, based in the Four Noble Truths.

Right values and attitude, compassion versus selfishness.

Right speech – not lying, avoiding harsh, abusive speech, and avoiding gossip.

Right action – help others, live honestly, not harming living things or the environment.

Right work – do useful things, avoid jobs that harm others.

Right effort – encourage good, helpful thoughts, discourage destructive thoughts.

Right mindfulness – be aware of what you feel, think, and do.

Right meditation – calm mind and meditation that leads to nirvana.

Buddha did not record his teachings. After he died, people who remembered what he taught wrote them down on palm leaves and collected them in baskets. Accordingly, the sayings of Buddha are called The Tripitaka, the Three Baskets. After his death, Buddhists held different interpretations and beliefs that led to two main types of Buddhism – Theravada (which spread to Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos) and Mahayana (which spread to Nepal, Vietnam, China, Korea, and Japan). With cultural differences, Mahayana eventually became three different forms of Buddhism – Vajrayana, Pure Land, and Zen. Despite cultural and other differences, most if not all Buddhists follow daily guidelines for life called the

### The Five Precepts

Do not harm or kill living things.

Do not take things unless they are freely given.

Lead a decent life.

Do not speak unkindly or tell lies.

Do not abuse drugs or drink alcohol.

## Demographics

There are approximately 500 million Buddhists in the world today. Though the overall number of Buddhists is expected to continue rising through 2030, a decline in number is expected after that. 99% of Buddhists are heavily concentrated in the Asia-Pacific region. The smaller numbers of Buddhists in North America and Europe are expected to increase over the next couple of decades. More significant increases are anticipated in North Africa and the Middle East. Buddhists exceed 10% of the population in the following countries:\*

Country	% of the population
Cambodia	97
Thailand	93
Myanmar	88
Bhutan	75
Sri Lanka	69
Laos	66
Mongolia	55
Japan	36
Singapore	34
South Korea	23
Taiwan	21
Malaysia	20
China	18
Macau	17
Vietnam	16
Hong Kong	13
Northern Mariana Islands	11
Nepal	10

## Closing Thoughts

Many of the teachings of Buddhism are noble but the central understandings of true life and the Source of it are totally absent. Buddhism is a works/self-based path of spirituality, very different to Christianity in many ways. To understand central Buddhist thought compared to other religions, including the teachings of Jesus in Christianity, we invite you to explore [www.sourceoftruelife.com/Resources/ComparisonofReligions](http://www.sourceoftruelife.com/Resources/ComparisonofReligions)

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This is an introduction on the subject of **Buddhism**. Here are a few other resources you may wish to explore:

[Buddhism: Basic Beliefs | URI](#)

[Buddhism - Definition, Founder & Origins - HISTORY](#)

[What do Buddhists believe? What is Buddhism? \(compellingtruth.org\)](#)

[What is Buddhism and what do Buddhists believe? | GotQuestions.org](#)

\* [Buddhist Countries 2021 \(worldpopulationreview.com\)](#)