

Sharing the Gospel with those of other faiths & cultures

The basic approach

1. Know where you stand
2. Know the other person
3. Know how to respond with the gospel

Occasionally all this will all happen in a single conversation. More often the process will last days, weeks or months. Be patient and keep praying.

Avoid two equal and opposite errors, common in personal evangelism: a) trying to share the gospel without ever building bridges of friendship b) building wonderful bridges of friendship, but never going across them with the gospel. If someone is becoming your friend, it should be the most natural thing to share with them what is most important in your life.

Some questions to ask yourself

1. Does my friend *want* to learn about Christian faith?

If yes, why? Could it just be out of interest in British culture or...

If no, why not? Can I do anything to provoke their interest?

2. Are there any misunderstandings to clear up?

(Many people will either be ignorant of Christianity, or misinformed.

The latter can be worse, and the impact of correcting misconceptions can be great.)

3. Are there particular emphases that are likely to be more helpful with those of certain backgrounds because they relate to a commonly held sense of need?

e.g. friendship in loneliness, meaning in a senseless world, assurance of salvation, fear of death, dealing with a sense of shame...

Would these be more/less important than other issues with my friend? Why?

4. The bible uses a few different images to convey the salvation Christ accomplished on the cross for us. In what terms will the gospel be best understood by our friend? (Think of *The Peace Child* by Don Richardson.)

e.g. Christ taking the punishment we rightly deserve, Christ the intermediary who restores our broken relationship with our heavenly father, Christ's blood which purifies us from our uncleanness...

5. What would the cost be if my friend becomes a Christian?

- to my friend

- to me

Get good literature to help you

Check out the "Other cultures, religions and worldviews" folder on the Friends International resources webpage – friendsinternational.org.uk/resources. There are titles such as "Buddhism – An Overview", "Islam – An Overview", "The African Worldview", "Toolkit for Working with Europeans", etc.

OMF Diaspora also has very helpful booklets such as *A Christian's Pocket Guide to Buddhism*, *A Christian's Pocket Guide to the Chinese*, and *A Christian's Pocket Guide to the Japanese*, etc., available from ukshopomf.org.

Worldview case studies

Here are some case studies for discussion.

Atheism

Mao has just arrived from Mainland China to study at your university. You meet him in the Student Union and have coffee together. During your conversation you inquire about Mao's interest in religion. Mao replies that he has been taught all his life that there is no God and that men and women came from apes - therefore it is very difficult for him to believe in God.

Where do you go from here?

Islam

Mohammed comes from Morocco. He is the office mate of a Christian friend of yours and has several times expressed to your friend a desire to learn more about Christianity. Your friend arranges a meeting between you and Mohammed. Mohammed affirms to you his interest in Christianity and then states that the Koran contains the whole revelation from God to man and that the Bible has been corrupted and is therefore unreliable.

What will be your approach to Mohammed?

Hinduism

Deepak is a Hindu. He left his family in India when he came to study at the London School of Economics. A close friend from years ago is teaching there. This friend became a Christian soon after coming to Britain to study. Since his friend invited him to come to the International Christian Fellowship, Deepak attended regularly for about two years, studying Romans and other parts of the Bible. He seemed to enjoy the fellowship. It helped to fill an otherwise lonely Sunday afternoon. At the end of that time he was asked: "What do you think of Jesus?"

"Oh, I believe in Jesus," he said. "Christianity is very much like Hinduism."

"Do you believe Jesus is the only way to God?"

He replied: "Oh no, he's only one way to God."

How would you pursue the topic?

Buddhism/Ancestral Worship

You are the leader of a small Bible study group at a student conference. Somjai from Thailand is in your group. She listens intently and participates during your study of John 3. Afterwards while talking privately with her, she expresses her appreciation of the Bible studies. Then she continues: "I believe in God, but if He thinks that I have to believe through Christ, I think He will reveal Himself inside my heart. Also, my late mother was a very strong Buddhist and she passed away four years ago. It is a little bit selfish if I joined Christ to save my life, but I do not have any chance to save my mother's soul. I must also think about the feelings of my grandmother and father who are still alive."

How would you respond to her concerns?