

Buddhism

1. Buddhism is a major world religion
325 million Buddhists in the world
2. The founder of Buddhism is a man known as Siddhartha Gautama who lived in northern India about 563 B.C.E.
3. He was a prince of the Sakya clan
Renounced his title after he saw an old man, a sick man, a dead man, and an ascetic.
Became a wandering ascetic—seeking the answers to life
4. Became a “Buddha” or enlightened being
Known as Sakyamuni Buddha – the “Awakened One.”
Sakyamuni Buddha is not a god. Buddhists do not acknowledge a creator god.
5. Taught 4 Noble Truths
 - a. Suffering exists
 - b. Suffering has a cause: the three delusions of ignorance, hatred, and greed
 - c. We can eliminate these three delusions or poisons
 - d. We do this by living a good life (ethics), by learning to control our mind (stabilization), and by becoming wise (obtaining the wisdom of the realization of “emptiness.”)
6. Enlightenment
We can seek an end to our suffering by living a good life, training our mind to eliminate the three poisons, and by practicing wisdom. This is the goal of Hinayana Buddhists.

Mahayana Buddhists understand that in order to become free of suffering, it is necessary to help others become free from suffering. All beings are respected as though they are our mothers. We pray for the happiness of all sentient beings.
7. The prayer of a Bodhisattva (a person who has compassion for others)
 - As long as space endures
 - As long as sentient beings remain
 - May I, too, prevail
 - To dispel the misery of the world
8. The power of prayer
Buddhists pray to Avalokitesvara (Tib. Chenrezig), the Bodhisattva of Compassion, by reciting the mantra Om Mani Padme Hung. Avalokitesvara serves as a giant reflector, upon which thousands of people direct their thoughts. If these people were to direct their thoughts to different objects, they would be shining thousands of weak flashlights, scattered beams of limited power. But when people concentrate their thoughts on a single entity, they shine all of the flashlights’ beams onto a single mirror, which creates a tremendous illumination. Avalokitesvara is such a mirror. Externally, this may seem similar to the practices of many other religions, but the perspective is different. Other religions say that power comes from the deity one prays to. Buddhism maintains that power comes from the individuals who pray.” (from *Dharma Drum*, by Chan Master Sheng-yen)

