

**Addressing Culture with Scripture:
Seeing and Answering the Many Faces of False Teaching**

False teaching has been in our world since Genesis three and has metastasized so many times that it fills every culture so that it manifests itself in seemingly enumerable degrees and forms. The Bible repeatedly warns the people of God to be on guard against all false teaching, to defend the true faith, and to be prepared to give answer for the hope we have in Christ. Paul’s warning from Colossians 2:8 needs to be heard loud and clear in the church today, “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy or empty deceit...”! Therefore, starting October 5th we will begin a 9-week study of specific false teachings that inundate our culture, constantly seek to infect our homes, and even strive to distract our ministry. The plan for this class is to not only see some of the primary false teachings listed here but also to equip you with a sound biblical defense of the truth that has been twisted by these deceptions of the devil. We are living in a world filled with lies but we are called to be people of the truth who graciously but boldly live out and declare the truth in love. May the Lord use this study to further help us to remain on guard as we grow in our understanding of and submission to the Scriptures.

Date	Scheduled Lesson Topic
10/5	Prosperity Gospel / Word of Faith Movement
10/12	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormonism)
10/19	The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah Witnesses)
10/26	Roman Catholicism & Eastern Orthodoxy
11/2	Islam
11/9	Mind Science Groups & New Age Spirituality
11/16	Middle Eastern Religions (Hinduism; Buddhism...)
11/30	Secularism & Atheism & Naturalism
12/7	Legalism & Antinomianism & Universalism / Inclusivism



Middle Eastern Religions: Hinduism the Root of Buddhism¹

Intro: See Col 2:20-23 and 1 Thess 1:9-10...Manmade religion does not and will not work!

“Presently, 85 % of the world’s population claim devotion to one of the 4,200 religions worldwide. Among those who profess religious allegiance, most adhere to one of the twelve major world religions — Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Taoism, the Baha’I faith, Shinto, Jainism, and Zoroastrianism.”²

If you think we are wasting our time in learning some general facts regarding this false system of belief just know that Hinduism is the 3rd largest religion in the World!

1. General Facts Regarding Hinduism

- Hinduism is a religious tradition of Indian origin, comprising the beliefs and practices of the Hindus.
- “Hindu” was a geographical term that referred to a region near India around the 6th century B.C.
- The word *Hindu* itself is derived from the river Sindu, or Indus.
- Hindus prefer the term *sanatana dharma* which means “eternal religion” or “eternal tradition.”
- Hinduism exists primarily in India although it has spread to many parts of the world. Hindu communities also exist in:
 - Sri Lanka
 - Bangladesh
 - Fiji
 - East Africa
 - South Africa
- Hinduism is the 3rd largest religion in the World! There are approximately 900 million Hindus today.
- The total number of Hindus in India is hard to compute since there are about 300 million “untouchables” (*dalits*). These untouchables are counted as part of the Hindu social structure, but they are not allowed to participate fully in the Hindu religion.
- 20 million Hindus live outside of India.
- About 1.5 million Hindus live in the United States. This accounts for 0.5% of the U.S. population.
- Hinduism is a universal worldview that accepts and celebrates diverse philosophies, deities, symbols and practices.

¹ These notes are built upon and adapted from my seminary notes from *Apologetics* taught by Dr. Michael Vlach.

² See a, *A Field Guide to False Teaching* by Ligonier Ministry in 2020, pg. 131.

- Hinduism has no central doctrinal system. It is very vast with many holy books that sometimes appear to teach contradicting things. It is also a very eclectic religion in that it easily incorporates elements of other religions and philosophies. Within Hinduism there are various schools of thought.

2. Key Aspects of Hinduism

- Brahman is the one infinite-impersonal, ultimate reality.
- Brahman is the cosmos and is all that exists.
- Nothing exists that is not Brahman.
- If anything that is not Brahman appears to exist it is *maya*—illusion—and does not truly exist.
- Anything that appears to exist as a separate and distinct object such as a tree or a rock is an illusion.
- Ultimate reality is beyond distinction—it just is.
- We cannot express ultimate reality in language. Language requires duality (speaker and listener; subject and predicate). Thus, language cannot convey truth about reality.
- Some things within the illusion are closer to the One than others.
- At the furthest level of illusion is matter.
- Time is cyclical. But even time does not really exist. History is illusory. Our goal should be to transcend history.
- The goal is to reach oneness with the One.
- Reaching oneness with the One is not about finding the one true path. Many paths exist from *maya* (illusion) to reality. (all rivers lead to the Ocean)
- Ideas are not ultimately important. Do not get bogged down in doctrines and religions.
- There is a unity between Brahman and the soul which is Atman. In fact, Atman is Brahman. Since Brahman is one and impersonal Atman is impersonal. *Thus, human beings in their true essence are impersonal.*
- To reach oneness with the cosmos one has to pass beyond knowledge. Laws of logic and the law of noncontradiction do not apply. Human beings in their essence are beyond knowledge.
- At its essence, Hinduism and its worldview of pantheistic monism is IMPERSONAL. God is beyond personality.
- Hindu and Buddhist extremism are becoming one of the greatest forces behind the persecution of Christians especially over those who convert to Christianity!³

³ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/january/christian-persecution-2021-countries-open-doors-watch-list.html>

I. The Origins and History of This False Religion

- The origin of Hinduism is unclear. It is an ancient religion that was formed in the mists of antiquity. Hinduism does not have a specific founder. Though *Adi Shankara* an 8th cen. philosopher unified Hinduism through a careful study of some of their major sacred writings. A 19th cen. monk named *Swami Vivekananda* represented Hinduism in the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. In Modern times, Mohandas Gandhi is likely the most popular Hindu being known for his teachings and nonviolent disobedience to achieve political and social reform in India.
- Certain Hindu beliefs go back to 3000 B.C.
- Hinduism started as the religion of a group of people called Aryans who migrated into India around 1500 B.C. These Indo-Europeans worshiped several gods through the use of animal sacrifices. Hinduism as we know it developed as these Aryans interacted with the Dravidians, who were dark-skinned inhabitants of India.
- The right to do rituals belonged to the priests who were called Brahmins. They recorded their sacrificial rituals and prayers in books called Vedas.
- Around 1500 B.C. the earliest sacred texts were written.
- Developments included the caste system and belief in reincarnation.
- The early form of Hinduism is sometimes referred to as “the way of works” because it emphasized the rules and rituals of the Brahmins (see Winfried Corduan, *Pocket Guide to World Religions*, 69).
- Around the sixth century B.C. Hinduism entered an era that can be referred to as “the way of knowledge.” The emphasis of this era was to find knowledge of the Absolute deep within oneself and not so much on accumulating good works. Yet it is correct to say that both the “way of works” and “way of knowledge” continued side by side within Hinduism.
- In the fourth century B.C. Hinduism became separated from Buddhism and Jainism which are also religions that began in India.
- In the eighth century A.D. Hinduism entered an era called “the way of devotion.” Characteristic of this period is that Hindus now focus on one particular god or goddess who provides the needs for a person.
- Today’s Hinduism is a combination of “the way of works,” “the way of knowledge,” and “the way of devotion.”

II. Some Core Precepts and Tenants of this False Teaching

1. Worldview summary of Hinduism

- The Absolute of Hinduism
 - The absolute of Hinduism is Brahman, the ultimate reality, the highest deity.
 - Brahman is the unchanging reality, composed of pure being and consciousness.
 - Brahman is the ground of all gods.
 - Hindus debate whether Brahman has distinguishable personal attributes, yet it is clear that Brahman is mainly a non-personal entity.
 - When understood as a God among gods, Brahman can be said to be personal. In this mode Brahman is saguna Brahman.
 - In the role of ultimate reality Brahman is nirguna Brahman, impersonal without attributes (see Warren Matthews, *World Religions*, 90).
 - Brahman is supposed to transcend all limiting attributes. Shankara, an 8th century Hindu scholar wrote:

“Ishvara [Brahman], forgive these three sins of mine: that although you are everywhere I have gone on a pilgrimage; although you are beyond the mind I have tried to think of you; and although you are indescribable, I offer this hymn in praise of you.”



- Brahman takes the form of three main Hindu deities who correspond to the three stages in the cycle of the universe.
 - Brahma—the creative spirit from which the universe arises.
 - Vishnu—the force of order that sustains the universe. Through his incarnations (*avatara*), Vishnu preserves righteousness when the forces of evil threaten to prevail. (Krishna was the eighth incarnation of Vishnu.)
 - Shiva—the destructive principle of the universe, the force that brings cycle to an end.
 - NOTE: Each of these gods has a female counterpart, a *shakti* who brings out their power.

(1) Brahma's shakti is Sarasviti, the goddess of learning.

(2) Vishnu's shakti is Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune.

(3) Shiva has three shaktis—Parvati the devoted wife, Durga the goddess of death, and Kali the destroyer of evil (Corduan, 73).

- Most Hindus choose a personal deity, a form of Brahman, with whom they can feel a personal connection. Devotion to this deity may include:
 - Prayer
 - Ceremonial worship
 - Chanting of deity's name
 - Pilgrimages

NOTE: The deity worshiped often depends upon one's social status within India. Thus, the caste system is a major factor in the determination of which deity to worship.

- Hindus are often seen showing devotion to statues of gods. Hindus believe that the god or goddess actually lives within the statue as long as the statue is properly cared for. This includes washing, clothing, and giving proper worship to the statue. This worship is called *puja*.

- The World/Universe of Hinduism

- The universe is eternal but constantly changing.
- Brahman and the universe are closely related but there are some differences.
 - The universe arises from Brahman.
 - Brahman sustains the universe.
 - Brahman does not change.
- The universe moves in endlessly recurring cycles, like the motion of a wheel.
- Humans, including their minds and bodies, are part of the changing universe.
- The universe is made of several different realms but basically the universe consists of *tri-loka* or “triple world system.”
 - There is an upper heavenly realm that is the abode of gods, goddesses, demons and semi-divine beings.
 - There is a lower realm that is the abode of lesser demons, ghosts and other beings.
 - There is a middle, earthly realm where human beings live.

NOTE: The beings in the upper and lower realms can interact with beings in other realms.

- The human person in Hinduism
 - Our self consists of more than mind and body.
 - At our core lies atman—our unchanging, universal self.
 - There is a very close connection between a person’s atman and Brahman. In fact, some Hindus equate a person’s atman with Brahman.
 - The current life that a person is living is not his first. In fact, our current life is one link in a chain of lives that extends into the past and future.
- The human problem in Hinduism
 - Our atman, our eternal unchanging self, is supposed to be united with Brahman.

- But through cravings and lusts and things such as greed, hatred, and ignorance, we lose sight of our atman and get off track to unification with Brahman.
- Humans must struggle with *Samsara* which is the wheel of birth and rebirth that keeps turning.
- Samsara is caused by lack of knowledge and unfulfilled desires.
- The law that governs samsara is called karma.
 - According to Hindu karma, our present life is the consequences of the actions of our previous lives. Understanding this can lead to right choices, desires, and deeds.
 - Karma is the framework for Hindu ethics.
 - Karma is the moral law under which we function (just like our bodies are under the law of gravity). When we cause pain or injury we add to the karmic debt we carry into our future lives.
 - When selfless, we lighten our karmic debt load.
- Solution to the human problem in Hinduism
 - The first step is to gain awareness of our atman and atman's relationship with Brahman. This relationship needs to be pursued diligently.
 - Discovery of the atman's relationship with Brahman can lead to the pursuit of moksha which is the liberation of the soul from the cycle of rebirths.
 - In the pursuit of moksha which is a Hindu's **salvation as liberation from the cycle of reincarnation and death and ultimate union with Brahman**, the person diligently undertakes a process that will lead to the unification of his atman with Brahman. This involves the complete discarding of all cravings and desires. This process can take many lives to accomplish as the person is reincarnated.
 - Various yogas can be done in the pursuit of moksha.
 - Yoga—a method of training, discipline and technique where a methodic exertion of the mind and body that achieves or seeks to achieve union with Brahman. “In Hinduism, yoga is a form of puja, a means of meditating to

connect with the Divine, and a way to develop the multi-faceted self (mind, body and spirit).”⁴

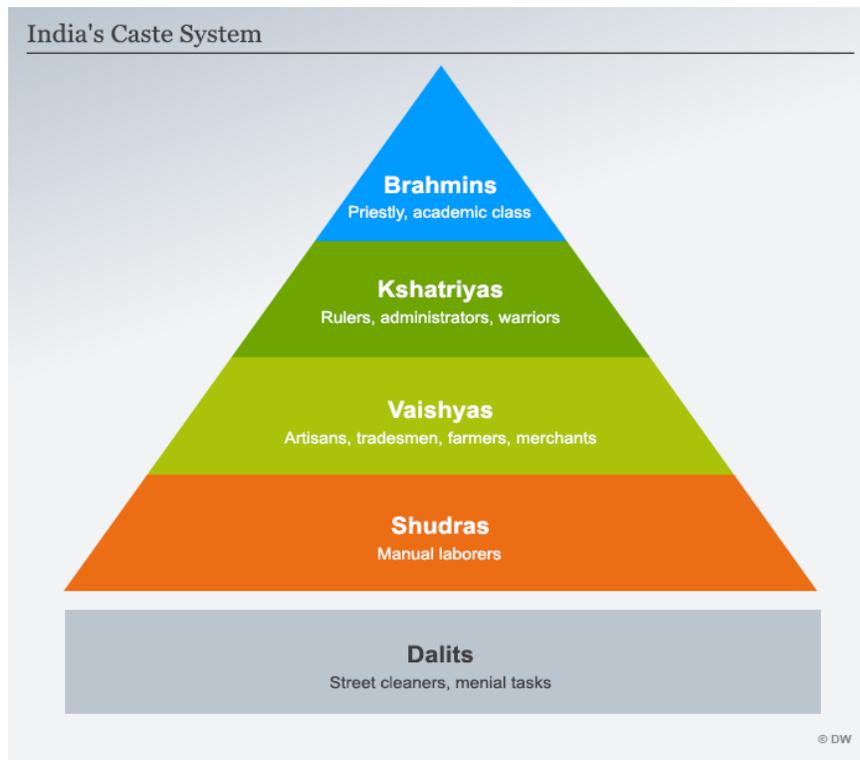
- Our personalities predispose us to a certain type of yoga.
 - (1) Kriya Yoga—for physically active people. (Energy)
 - (2) Karma Yoga—for active people. (Action)
 - (3) Bhakti Yoga—for emotionally inclined people. (Devotion)
 - (4) Jnana Yoga—for reflective or intellectual person. (Knowledge)
- The pursuit of moksha involves the lightening of karmic debt. There are things a person can do to lighten and be free of karmic debt:
 - Selfless action (most important)
 - Yogas (disciplines)
 - Purification
 - Devotions
- It should be understood that although moksha should be the ultimate aim of every Hindu, Hinduism does allow for the pursuit of other aims in the present life. There are four goals/pursuits of life that a Hindu can seek:
 - Kama—pursuit of pleasure
 - Artha—pursuit of wealth and power
 - Dharma—pursuit of righteousness
 - Moksha—pursuit of liberation from chain of lives

NOTE: All four of the above are considered valid pursuits although the ultimate aim should ultimately be moksha.

- Community and ethics of Hinduism

⁴ <https://www.yogapedia.com/definition/5442/hinduism>

- Most Hindus are born into the Hindu community.
- Some Hindus welcome outsiders who want to study their religion.
- Yet many believe that only those born into Hindu families are true Hindus.
- The caste system has been an important element in Hinduism and for the people of India.
 - Caste – the permanent social group into which a person is born.
 - The major groupings for the caste system are:
 - (1) Brahmans—priests, teachers, scholars
 - (2) Kshatriyas—kings, warriors, government officials
 - (3) Vaishyas—farmers, traders, merchants
 - (4) Shudras—unskilled workers
 - (5) The Untouchables



From the traditional Hindu point of view, this social system is the necessary complement of the principles of [dharma](#), [karma](#), and [samsara](#). Corresponding to hells and heavenly regions in the hereafter, the castes are the [mundane](#) social frame within which karma is [manifested](#) and worked out.⁵

- Important to Hindu community is the Stages of Life. An individual's life is divided into four successive stages (*ashrama* system):
 - Stage 1: Student—religious education for a proper life
 - Stage 2: Householder—Marriage and family
 - Stage 3: Retirement—spiritual contemplation
 - Stage 4: Sannyasin—pure focus on inner self and union with the divine
- The ethical standards of Hinduism are generally high.
 - Family is considered sacred.
 - Husbands and wives are to be loyal to each other. (Hinduism is heavily patriarchal with women very much under the rule of their husbands.)
 - Children should be cared for.
 - Older people should be cared for.
 - Hindus should not harm people or their property (Hindu Extremism disagrees with this).
 - Compassion should be shown to all humans and animals, especially the cows.
 - (1) Why Save the Cows? The cow is the symbol of the value of all living things.
 - (2) In Hinduism the cow is held sacred because it is dear to Lord Krishna.
 - Hindus do not eat beef. Many are vegetarians. Eggs are considered part of the meat group and, thus, are avoided by practicing Hindus.
- Interpretation of history in Hinduism

⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hinduism/Castes>

- The Hindu view of history is cyclical or circular. The universe operates according to cycles.
- “Hindus believe that the universe undergoes cyclical processes of creation, preservation, and destruction. Thus, the current manifestation of the cosmos is just one of innumerable universes that have preceded it, and that will succeed it. Since antiquity, the Hindus have had a sense of the vastness of cosmic time, and thus each manifestation of the universe is measured in periods of immense duration” (Thomas A. Robinson and Hillary Rodriguez, eds., *World Religions*, 162).
- “It is believed that we currently live in the Kali Yuga, the most degenerate period within a group of four *yugas* known as Mahayuga. The quality of life and human virtue progressively decline throughout a Mahayuga, which lasts 4,320,000 years. The Kali Yuga lasts for 432,000 years, and only recently began, its onset marked by the great war of the Mahabharata in about 3000 B.C.E.” (Ibid.)
- Life after death
 - Hinduism believes in reincarnation. All living things experience the cycle of rebirths until ultimate union with Brahman (moksha...salvation) occurs. Since moksha is very difficult with only a few attaining it, most people experience reincarnation thousands of times before even being close to experiencing moksha.
 - The way one acts in this life determines what his/her lot will be in the next. One’s status in the next life is determined by karma.
 - One can be born a lowly worm, a horse, a lion, etc. One can also be born as a human. Moksha is seen by some as not available for women but by others as harder for woman and by others as available to woman. Some have even said it is considered better to be born a man. The best position to be born into is that of a man of a high caste or a guru. These are the ones most likely to achieve union with Brahman and end the cycle of lives (reincarnation).
 - There is no way to describe ultimate union with Brahman. It is a merging of one’s self in the cosmic divine. One illustration is that union with Brahman is like the merging of a drop of water (your atman) with the ocean (Brahman). One loses all identity as he becomes part of Brahman.
- Hinduism and other religions
 - It is probably best to identify Hinduism with inclusivism. It does not claim that it is the only way although it certainly holds that it is the best way.

- Hindus are usually glad when others learn and incorporate principles of Hinduism.
- Hinduism is very eclectic in that it is open to incorporating elements of other religions and philosophies. In regard to Christianity, Hindus often have no problem with adding Jesus to their list of Avatars (human manifestations of the divine). They are very resistant, though, to the concept of totally rejecting Hinduism for Christianity.
- Hinduism generally lives in harmony with the other religions of India such as Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. These three religions spun off of Hinduism.
- Hindus have often had conflicts with Muslims. Overall, though, Hinduism is not regarded as a militaristic or evangelistic religion. This is changing as religious extremism within Hinduism is spreading and conversion to Christianity is often marked by severe persecution and death. India is now one of the top 10 countries where it is hardest, most dangerous, and sadly even deadly to be a follower of Christ.⁶
- Hindu rituals and symbols
 - Rituals are very important to Hindus.
 - Examples:
 - Pressing palms together symbolizes the meeting of two people.
 - Bowing to a person means “I bow to the divine in you.”
 - Bindi—the red dot Hindu women wear on the forehead. *Bindi* means “little drop.”

(1) Its location over a chakra (energy point), is intended to help focus during meditation.

(2) Also a symbol of good fortune.

(3) *Bindi* was once only for married women but today is worn by girls and women of all ages. For the unmarried women, the dot is sometimes black.

⁶ ⁶ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/january/christian-persecution-2021-countries-open-doors-watch-list.html>

(4) The use of the *bindi* is a way to tell the world, “I am a Hindu woman.”

- 3 Categories of Ritual
 - Nitya—actions performed daily
 - Naimittika—performed on specific occasions
 - Kanya—performed voluntarily
- 3 Kinds of Ritual
 - Yajna—involves sacrificial fire
 - Puja—devotional offerings, usually flowers
 - Dhyana—meditation
- Sacred Sites of Hinduism
 - The whole earth
 - Mother India
 - Seven cities
 - (1) Mathura (where Krishna grew up)
 - (2) Kasi (sacred to Shiva)
 - Rivers
 - Events in Hindu epics
- Sacred Times
 - Many religious festivals
 - (1) Dassera—marks victory of Prince Rama over demon king Ravana
 - (2) Diwali Festival—festival of lights

(3) Holi—celebrates arrival of spring.

- Om
 - Om is a sacred syllable
 - Hindus chant Om as a means of connecting with the innermost self (atman) and Brahman.
 - If said correctly, om resonates through the body and penetrates the atman.
- Guru
 - Means “teacher”
 - Spiritual authority who is a guide for others.
 - Represents the divine in human form.
 - The guru’s role is crucial. He leads people to appropriate deity, practice, or yoga.
- Swastika—this represents prosperity and good fortune.
- Sacred Hindu Literature
 - Hinduism says that ultimate reality goes beyond all scriptures but scriptures help orient the mind toward Brahman.
 - Hindu literature is vast.
 - The four Vedas constitute the most important body of sacred Hindu literature.

(1) Rig-Veda

(2) Yajur-Veda

(3) Sama-Veda

(4) Atharva-Veda

- *Rig Veda* is the oldest, composed about 1500 B.C. and written down about 600 B.C. It contains hymns, incantations, and rituals from ancient India.

- Upanishads. Written between 800 and 400 B.C., they elaborate on how the soul (atman) can be united with Brahman.
- The Mahabharata, were written 540 to 300 BCE, and have been attributed to the sage Vyasa. They record "the legends of the Bharatas, one of the Aryan tribal groups."
- The *Bhagavad Gita* is a poem describing a conversation between a warrior Arjuna and the God Krishna.
- Another important text is the *Ramayana*. It is "a moving love story with moral and spiritual themes." It is dated to the first century A.D.
- Shruti—Sacred writings based on what Hindu writers “what is heard” in revelation.
- Smriti—“what is remembered.”
- Temples
 - Temples are important for Hindus. A temple is a decorated building dedicated to one deity whose statue resides within.
 - Larger temples have statues of other deities.
 - Many larger temples have a statue of the elephant-headed Ganesha, who is the “remover of obstacles” to the main deity of the temple.
- Homes
 - Most Hindu houses contain deities that must receive puja (offerings) every day (Corduan, 77).
 - Women frequently decorate the area in front of the house’s door with designs of colored rice. These are to be eaten by ants as an offering to the gods.
- Hindu calendar Hindus abide by a lunar calendar. Festivals often fall on the full moon, usually in the middle of an appointed month.
- Hinduism Today
 - Since 1947, India is officially a secular state but 82% of the population remains Hindu.

- India has ongoing political conflict with Pakistan, a mostly Muslim nation.
- Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau drew upon Hinduism and its literature.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. studied the teachings of Hindu leader Mohandas Gandhi on nonviolent protest.
- George Harrison embraced Hinduism in the 1960s as did Comedian Russell Brand and Actress Julia Roberts.
- Millions of Westerners today practice meditation or yoga for relief from stress or physical fitness.

III. Confronting Some Core Tenants of this False Teaching with Truth

- History
 - Christian outreach to Hindus goes back to early times of the church. According to an ancient tradition, the apostle Thomas was the first to carry the gospel to India. There were also some sporadic efforts to establish a church in India prior to the classical missions era around the colonial period.
 - Christianity and Hinduism confronted each other during the British Rule in India. The activities of the Christian missionaries and the politics of East India Company led to the Mutiny of 1857. After this the British Government implemented secularism and stayed away from the politics of religion and conversions.
 - According to Paul Reid and Dr. Winfried Corduan, ““Hindu Indians have responded to the gospel more readily than their Muslim counterparts. It is estimated that about three percent of the population of India is Christian today (“about Hinduism” www.christiananswers.net).
- Reaching Hindus
 - The basics
 - Because of our Lord’s command to take the gospel to all people and because of our love for all people who are spiritually lost, Christians must have a desire to share the Gospel with Hindus.

- While generally promoting high ethical standards, Hinduism is a false religion and its people are in spiritual darkness.
- While the worldview of Hindus is usually quite different from that of Christians they are still made in the image of God. This means the following:
 - (1) The image of God within Hindus is a point of contact for the Christian trying to reach Hindus.
 - (2) Based on Romans 1 all people, including Hindus, have an innate knowledge of God because of the testimony of God's general revelation in nature. This understanding of God has been suppressed but it is real nonetheless.
 - (3) There is a real sense in which Hindus know in their hearts that they are creatures who are accountable to the Creator.
 - (4) The only way a Hindu will respond to the Gospel is if God opens his/her heart.
- The God-ordained means for reaching all people, including Hindus, is faithful gospel proclamation. A presentation that:
 - (1) Is reliant on God's Spirit.
 - (2) Is supported by prayer.
 - (3) Is based on Scripture.
 - (4) Is done with humility and concern.
- Strategies
 - Show genuine love and concern for the Hindu you have contact with. A genuine testimony in both word and deed can be powerful.
 - Engage the person, not just the religion of Hinduism. Show respect by asking questions and listening.
 - (1) Ask questions about his/her beliefs on various worldview issues (God, humans, human problem, human solution, view of time, etc.)

(2) Ask for clarification on their terminology. Words such as “God,” “salvation,” etc. may mean differing things to a Hindu.

(3) Remember that Hinduism is a vast and eclectic religion, so the individual Hindu you are speaking to may have his/her own views that differ at times from other Hindus.

- Once you have listened, offer the biblical perspective on the worldview issues that have been brought up. Help them be aware of what the Bible says on these issues.
- Look for opportunities to talk to the Hindu about God’s grace, peace and forgiveness of sins. Hinduism is a very works-oriented religion in which you get exactly what you deserve. Many Hindus have said that these topics appealed to them since there is no mercy and forgiveness within Hinduism.

Emphasize Matthew 11:28, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

- Stress the relational aspect of Christianity. The image of God within us makes us relational creatures. Hinduism, though, goes against human nature by stressing the loss of personhood in the pursuit of the impersonal Brahman. State that a personal God wants a relationship with him/her and that being a Christian means fellowship with the people of God. Also stress that God’s personal nature means that sin is an offense to God and that those who die apart from God will be separated from Him for eternity.
- Expect that the deity of Jesus and the exclusive nature of Christianity may be obstacles for the Hindu. Do not run from these truths but back them up with Scripture and Jesus’ claims about himself.
- According to Reid and Corduan: “The key to a Christian witness to Hindus (as is true in various ways for all groups), is to engage the person, not the religion of the person. Because Hinduism in general does not stress humanitarian efforts, outreach projects centered on works of mercy, such as educational facilities, hospitals, or leprosaria, have had great success. In the face of the perplexity engendered by the diversity of Hindu beliefs, the assurance of truth and salvation evidenced by Christians has spoken to many Hindus. Loving relationships that do not recognize the boundaries of caste or social station have led a number of Hindus to find Christ. And finally, sensitive Christian outreach to Hindus has demonstrated that Jesus Christ can free people from the domination of demons and bondage that often is an integral part of Hinduism outside of textbooks.” (“about Hinduism” www.christiananswers.net).

- Confronting the worldview of Hinduism.
 - **Absolute:** The Absolute in the universe is not the impersonal Brahman. The Absolute is the God of the Bible, a personal God who created the universe for His purposes and glory. The God of the Bible is also a revealing God who has made himself known in His creation and also His written word—the Bible.
 - **World:** The world/universe is not an illusion as Hinduism asserts. It is a real entity created directly by the supernatural activity of God. The world was created good but now has been tainted with a curse because of man's sin. The universe will one day be restored after the second coming of Jesus Christ.
 - **Humans:** Humans are not the product of the near endless cycle of reincarnation. They are beings created in the image of God. They have one life to live that prepares them either for eternal happiness in the presence of God or eternal punishment away from the presence of God (Heb. 9:27). Humans were created for relationship and thus find the greatest fulfillment in life when they are in a proper relationship with their Creator and with other people who know God.
 - **Problem for humans:** The problem for humans is not the cycle of rebirth or ignorance, it is alienation from the God who created them. The problem for humans is moral. Humans have sinned and in doing so have separated themselves from their Creator who demands and expects their worship and allegiance.
 - **Solution for humans:** The solution for humans is not *moksha* or escape from the cycle of rebirths. The solution is the incarnation. Jesus, God's Son, came to earth to pay the penalty for sins. Those who believe in Jesus Christ can find forgiveness for their sins and can be restored to fellowship with God. All of our hope hinges on Jesus Christ.
 - **Community and ethics:** While Hinduism certainly allows for family and community, its pursuit of Brahman downplays the community aspect that God has made so important. The more one pursues Brahman the more one separates himself from the Hindu community. Christianity, though, stresses intimate communion with the people of God. The more one knows God, the more one should love others. Christianity calls its members to love others and minister to them. Plus, the Christian community is the church which is made of people who have experienced the saving and forgiving love of God. As a human being, you do not have to face the problems of life alone. The Christian community comes alongside of you to help, exhort, and encourage you.

Ethics is not based on the impersonal cosmic law of karma. It is based in the character of the God of the Bible who has revealed his standards in the hearts of men and the written Scriptures. Ethics is a personal matter since ultimately all good and bad deeds and thoughts are directed to the Creator.

- **Interpretation of history:** History is not cyclical in the Hindu sense. The universe and humans do not operate in endless cycles. God created the world at a point in time and there is coming a time when the present era will end and new heavens and earth will be established. This makes the actions and decisions of people important since what they do in this life affects their eternal destiny.
- **Life after death:** There is no reincarnation, no second chances in a next life. A person will either enjoy the presence of God in heaven and eventually the new heavens and new earth, or suffer the penalty of eternal separation from God in the lake of fire.
- **Relationship to other religions:** Christianity rightly stresses that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation. Hinduism does not offer saving truth (see John 14:6 and Acts 4:12).
- **Rituals and symbols:** The cross reminds us of the human problem and God's solution. It is a reminder that we must deny ourselves and follow Jesus regardless of cost.

Why Hinduism Fails as a Worldview

1. Hinduism cannot account for our own existence. If everything in the world is “illusion” then ultimately we do not exist.
2. Since the Absolute in Hinduism is impersonal, Hinduism is unable to account for personhood in the universe. Personhood must come from an absolute Person.
3. Hinduism cannot account for morality. Hinduism leads to the view that there is no good and evil. Since all actions are part of the “illusion” there really is no good or evil, right or wrong, within Hinduism. Since ultimate reality is One, there can be no distinctions. Yet most Hindus embrace morality in their practical lives. But if they practically hold to some form of morality what is the ultimate basis for morality? An impersonal absolute cannot be a basis for good and evil.
4. Hinduism cannot account for knowledge. Hinduism leads to epistemological chaos.
 - a. According to Hinduism, the pursuit of the One must transcend knowledge and language. It must transcend ideas, beliefs, and doctrines. Yet this claim is self-refuting. The claim that reality transcends knowledge and language is itself a truth

claim. We also could ask the question, “If Hinduism were true, how could we know it?” Why should we accept the claim of learned Hindus about the proper way to the One or any issue at all?

- b. This perspective is irrational in that it removes knowledge and language any role when it comes to truth.
 - c. A consistent Hindu should make no claims at all since what is real transcends all knowledge, logic, and language.
 - d. This issue also affects the morality issue. If we can have no knowledge then how can there be any morality whatsoever since morality is based on a knowledge of what is right and wrong?
5. Hinduism is wrong that “all rivers lead to the ocean.” The analogy itself is not true nor is it true that all religions lead to the ultimate reality of Hinduism. The various religions make mutually exclusive claims, thus they cannot all lead to the same result or goal.

How Hinduism Goes Against Reality and Experience

1. People instinctively know that their existence as a person is real and they act as if this is so, but Hinduism tells them that their existence is illusion.
2. People instinctively believe their physical environment is real, but Hinduism tells them it is an illusion. Even devout Hindus must act as if the physical realm is real.
3. People instinctively know that there is diversity in the world (I-thou; subject-predicate; good-evil) but Hinduism says everything is One.
4. People instinctively desire relationship and community, but Hinduism tells us our main goal is to deny relationships and seek unity with an impersonal absolute.
5. People naturally desire to continue their existence as persons but Hinduism tells us we must seek absorption into an impersonal reality (like a drop of water (you) into the ocean (Brahman)). With this view persons must seek nonpersonhood.
6. Hinduism tells us there is no real distinction between good and evil; right and wrong; true and false, but we instinctively know otherwise.