



EAST WEST
MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

A FIELD GUIDE TO MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

FOR THE EARTH WILL BE FILLED WITH
THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY
OF THE LORD AS THE WATERS COVER
THE SEA. **-HABAKKUK 2:14**



A FIELD GUIDE TO **MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS**

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FOREWORD

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.” –Romans 1:16

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are not ashamed of the gospel and its power. Yet we sometimes still find ourselves unsure of how to share our faith as we go about daily life, especially with people of different religions and worldviews.

That's why we've put together this field guide.

In this guide, we've packaged beliefs, conversation bridges, insights from our missionaries, and prayers focused on a few of the world's major religions to help you engage missionally with people of varied faith backgrounds.

It is my hope that the information enclosed in these pages will embolden you and equip you to confidently share the saving power of the gospel message with those you encounter. In doing so, I pray that God will use you as an instrument to bring salvation to those living in spiritual darkness ... in your neighborhood, workplace, and overseas.

To God be the Glory,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kurt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kurt Nelson
Chief Executive Officer



ISLAM

FAST FACTS

Population: 1.6 billion, making up 23% of all people worldwide

Growth Rate: Expected to increase from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.8 billion in 2050

Year Founded: 622 A.D.

Founder: Muhammad

Holy Books: Qur'an and Hadith

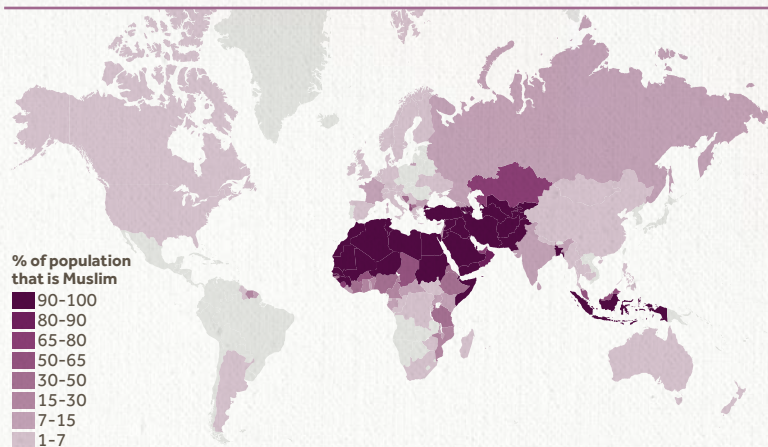
Significant Figures:

Muhammed Ali – Professional boxer

Malala Yousafzai – Pakistani schoolgirl who opposed the Taliban's stance on female education

Janet Jackson – Singer, songwriter, and actress

View of Jesus: Prophet



WHERE THEY LIVE

Although the population of the Middle East and North Africa are 93% Muslim, these regions only represent 20% of the worldwide Muslim population. The Asia-Pacific region—due to its dense population—is home to 9.9 million Muslims. Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world. There are 3.48 million Muslims living in North America. In 2015 there were 50 Muslim-majority nations.

MAJOR BELIEFS

“There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger.” –Shahada

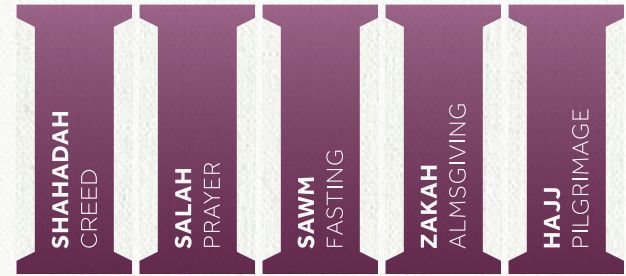
Islam is a monotheistic religion founded by their Prophet—Muhammad—in the seventh century. Muslims believe the angel Gabriel visited Muhammad to reveal the words of Allah. These revelations are documented in the Qur’an.

The framework of the Islamic faith includes five tenets that must be upheld to enter paradise—Heaven. The Five Pillars of Islam include ...

1. **Shahada:** the testimony of faith
2. **Salat:** prayer rituals occurring five times a day
3. **Sawm:** A month long fast known as Ramadan takes place during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. They are not allowed to eat or drink from dawn to sunset.
4. **Zakat:** 2.5% of income is required to be given to the poor once a year
5. **Hajj:** If possible, Muslims are to take a pilgrimage to Mecca—located in Saudi Arabia—at least once in their lives.

There are two primary sects of Islam—Sunni and Shia. The division between these groups formed due to differing views of leadership succession after Muhammad’s death. Sunni Muslims (90% of all Muslims) believe that those in the lineage of the first four caliphs—Muhammad’s successors—are rightful religious leaders. In contrast, Shia Muslims believe that only those in lineage of the fourth caliph—Ali—are worthy successors of Muhammad.

The Five Pillars Of Islam





MAJOR HOLIDAYS

Al-Hijira: the Islamic New Year that marks the migration of Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina.

Ashura: an Islamic holy day observed on the 10th of the Islamic month of Muharram. Shi'ite Muslims use this day to commemorate the martyrdom of Muhammad's grandson, Hussein.

Eid-UI-Fitr: a feast celebrating the end of the Ramadan fast where Muslims thank Allah for helping them act in self-control for a month.

Lailat al Qadr (the Night of Power): celebrates the first night Allah revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad.

Ramadan: a month long fast to commemorate the first revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad. It is observed during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar.

CONVERSATION BRIDGES

God is at work in the hearts of Muslims around the world. The top four ways Muslims come to faith in Christ are ...

- The love of Christians
- Dreams, visions, miracles, and answered prayer
- Encounters with the Word of God
- Disillusionment with Islam

With that knowledge, it's crucial to build intentional relationships with Muslims and show them the love of Christ. Pray for your Muslim friends and encourage them to explore the Bible. You can trust that the God-breathed Scriptures are living, active, and sharp enough to pierce the hardest hearts.

EAST-WEST'S MINISTRY TO MUSLIMS

Church Planting

East-West has deployed a team to the Middle East to live among Muslims in prayerful hope and anticipation that relationships between these people groups would be reconciled as individuals come to faith in Christ ... igniting a church planting movement in their spiritually dark region of the world.

Go Here

Our Go Here team exists to help mobilize churches in the United States to participate in local missions leveraging their unique spiritual gifts. Using a mapping tool, our team is able to strategically deploy congregations to engage their unreached neighbors—including Muslims—with the gospel.

Short-Term Mission Trips

God is leveraging unrest in the Middle East and Africa to give believers unrestricted access to Muslims in Europe. As doors continue to open in this region, East-West is mobilizing the Church in America to witness to Muslims



in places like France, Greece, and Spain. When Muslims come to faith during these trips, they are discipled and sent into their communities to share the gospel.

A CHANGED LIFE STORY

Curiosity lured Ahmad to a group gathered at the end of the dirt-paved road. As he approached, he heard foreign men—East-West missionaries—claiming the Muslim prophet Jesus was actually the Son of God and Savior of the world.

The men shared that God sent Jesus to live a perfect life, die on a cross, and rise from the dead after three days. They declared that belief in His life, death, and resurrection was the only way to eternal life—a claim worthy of death in his country.

Out of rage Ahmad argued with the missionaries ... but they would not relent in calling Jesus their Savior.

When the tension eased, the men gave him a copy of the New Testament. Determined to prove their message wrong, Ahmad searched the Scriptures for proof that Jesus was just another prophet.

As Ahmad immersed himself in the God-breathed words, they came alive and pierced his heart. The more he learned about the loving, just, and merciful God of

the Bible, the more he questioned everything he knew about Allah. Did God really love him enough to send Jesus to die for his sins?

DID GOD REALLY LOVE HIM ENOUGH TO SEND JESUS TO DIE FOR HIS SINS?

But suddenly one day, Ahmad's entire outlook changed; he came to trust the gospel as unchanging and true. Despite every attempt to deny Jesus as Messiah, Ahmad knew He was the only Way to eternal life.

Months later the East-West missionaries returned to Ahmad's village. United in the Spirit of Christ, they rejoiced in Ahmad's salvation and prayed for his Muslim friends who still resisted the gospel message.

Ahmad now faithfully serves as an ambassador of Christ in his Muslim community ... trusting that God's word is living, active, and sharp enough to pierce the hardest hearts.



HINDUISM

FAST FACTS

Population: 1 billion, comprising 15% of the world's population

Growth Rate: Expected to increase from 1 billion in 2010 to 1.4 billion in 2050

Year Founded: Unknown, but Hindu writings date back to 1500 B.C.

Founder: Unknown

Holy Books: The Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranas

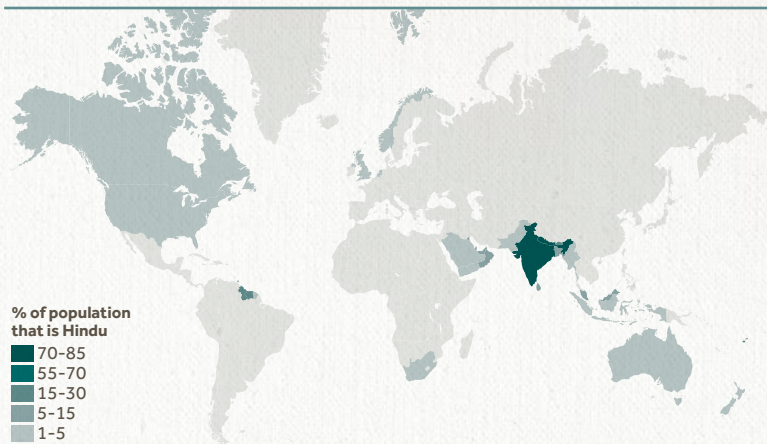
Significant Figures:

Mahatma Ghandi – non-violent leader of the Indian independence movement

Julia Roberts – American actress

Amartya Sen – Indian economist who won the Nobel Prize in 1988

View of Jesus: An incarnation of their supreme god, Brahmin

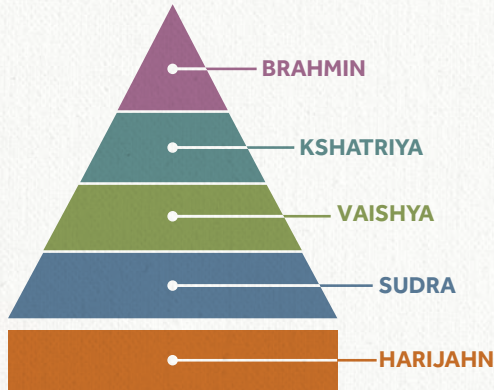


WHERE THEY LIVE

Although Hinduism is the third largest world religion, its breadth is confined to one primary region of the world—South Asia. This region includes countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. India is home to the largest percentage of all Hindus (94%), followed by Nepal (2%) and Bhutan (1%). More than 2.25 million Hindus reside in North America.

MAJOR BELIEFS

Hinduism is a polytheistic religion with over 330 million gods and goddesses and one supreme and impersonal god known as Brahmin. Originating in modern-day Pakistan, this faith system is based on reincarnation and a caste system.



Brahmins: priests, academics

Kshatriyas: soldiers, king-warrior class

Vaishyas: merchants, farmers, laborers, craftspeople

Sudras: commoners, peasants, servants

Harijahns: the “untouchables”

Karma—a system of cause and effect—weighs into where a person ranks in the caste system ... determining the blessings and comfort they experience throughout life. An individual’s good and bad actions influence where they rank and what form they reincarnate into—spanning from insects to people. Although this system of karmic consequences was abolished in 1948, great social implications remain since people are considered responsible for their lots in life.

Hindus do not seek salvation, but desire to be released from their karmic debt to end the cycle of rebirth. This is called moksha and is accomplished through works, devotion, and knowledge.

MAJOR HOLIDAYS

Diwali (Row of Lights): a festival of lights that lasts five days and is held on the final day on the Vikram calendar. It is essentially New Year's Eve.

Holi: an annual festival celebrating spring. It is held on the day after the full moon in the Hindu month of Phalgun and is a time for indulging in merrymaking.

Krishna Jayanti: an eight-day festival celebrating the birthday of the Hindu god, Krishna.

Mahashivaratri: a festival celebrating the Hindu goddess, Shiva.

Rama Navami: a nine-day festival celebrating the birth of the Hindu god, Rama.



CONVERSATION BRIDGES

Of all world religions, Hindus worship the most gods ... making them very open to conversations about faith.

A few approaches to engage Hindus include ...

- Asking them if you can pray for them in the Name of Jesus. They believe in the importance and power of prayer.
- Asking them about their religion. Hindu beliefs vary and they are often willing to share their brand of the faith.
- Asking them about their source of hope for life and the afterlife. In a faith founded on karmic consequences, they work restlessly to move up the caste system.

When your conversation transitions to the gospel, it's important to establish the common ground of Jesus as an historical figure who deeply loves people and desires relationship. Because they believe in a works-based religion, you want to focus on God's free gift of grace through faith, not works. The idea of not laboring for a better reincarnated life weighs heavy on the Hindu heart.

EAST-WEST'S MINISTRY TO HINDUS

JESUS Film

The *JESUS Film* projectors are an innovative way to bring the good news to remote villages in South Asia. Backpacks filled with all the tools needed to project the life of Jesus on screen enable national partners to travel great distances to proclaim Christ crucified.

Water Wells

In certain regions of South Asia, Christians are denied access to one of life's necessities ... water. By digging water wells in these predominately Hindu regions, East-West national partners are able to share the gospel with entire villages at well dedication ceremonies.

Short-Term Mission Trips

South Asia is the most densely populated region of the world and is home to 2,851 unreached people groups. East-West is burdened for these lost souls and sends short-term teams into this area to travel door-to-door and village-to-village to bring Christ's light into these spiritually dark lands.



Orality Partnership with Spoken Worldwide

In some parts of the Hindu world, written language is non-existent. There's a need for orality ministry and we've partnered with Spoken Worldwide to give people in these regions audible and visual access to the gospel. Through travel-size mp3 devices and Bible story performances, God's Word comes to life ... one life-changing story at a time.

A CHANGED LIFE STORY

Annishaney worshipped and made sacrifices to a different god daily ... hoping to please one enough to move up a level in the Hindu caste system. In the depths of her soul, she knew her devotion was futile, but she had no knowledge of a better, truer way.

One day that reality changed as Annishaney stood still ... enthralled by the message pouring from a strange man's mouth.

This man—an East-West missionary—approached her family and neighbors and began explaining that sin separated people from the one true God. Out of His great love for everyone, this God sent His only Son—Jesus—into the world to live and die on behalf of sinful people.

The story he told didn't end with Jesus' death ... the East-West missionary claimed that Jesus was resurrected from the grave after three days to complete the work of restoring the relationship between God and people. He confidently declared that all who trust in Jesus spend eternity in Heaven with God.

As she wrestled with this story, her heart leaped. Annishaney suddenly knew Jesus truly was the only way to eternal life with God.

SHE KNEW JESUS TRULY WAS THE ONLY WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE WITH GOD.

The missionary asked if anyone wanted to trust in Jesus. Annishaney eagerly thrust her hand in the air and exclaimed, "Yes!" Her enthusiasm surprised the man and he asked for her name.

When she responded that her name was Annishaney, his translator grinned and told him that her name means "seeking" in their language. That day Annishaney found the true God she'd sought her entire life.

Annishaney's father also met Jesus for the first time that day. They now host church at their home and share the gospel in their village in hopes that others will seek and find their loving God.



BUDDHISM

FAST FACTS

Population: 488 million, reflecting 7.1% of the global population

Growth Rate: Expected to decrease from 488 million in 2010 to 486 million in 2050.

Year Founded: 5th century B.C.

Founder: Gautama Buddha, also known as Siddhartha Gautama

Holy Books: The Sutras (Sayings of Buddha) and the Tripitaka (Teachings of Buddha)

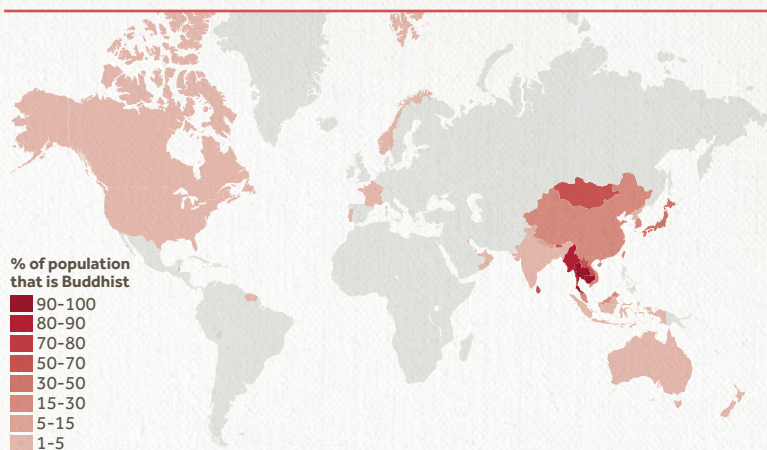
Significant Figures:

Dalai Lama – Tibetan monk

Tiger Woods – Professional golfer

Hank Johnson – U.S. Congressman from Georgia

View of Jesus: Enlightened Master



WHERE THEY LIVE

Buddhism was founded in India and is the fourth largest world religion. Due to its Asian roots, close to 99% of all Buddhists live in the regions of East, South, and Southeast Asia. China has the largest percentage of Buddhists (50%), followed by Thailand (13%), Japan (9%), and Myanmar (8%). There are 2.8 million Buddhists who call North America home.

MAJOR BELIEFS

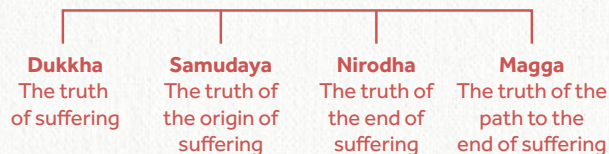
*“To avoid all evil. To do good. To purify one’s mind.
This is the teaching of all the Buddhas.” –Dhammapāda*

Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) left his life of luxury as Indian royalty in search of truth and meaning. After six years of yoga, asceticism, deprivation, and days spent meditating under a tree, Buddha claimed to find enlightenment. The results of his experiment formed Buddhism.

Although founded without belief in a higher power, a majority of Buddhists now worship Buddha as a god and believe in his Four Noble Truths.

1. **Dukkha:** to live is to suffer
2. **Samudaya:** suffering is caused by desire
3. **Nirodha:** one can eliminate suffering by eliminating all attachments
4. **Magga:** This is achieved by following the **Noble Eightfold Path**—having a right understanding, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration.

The Four Noble Truths



In addition to these Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, Buddhists adhere to the moral code of The Five Precepts.

1. Abstain from harming living beings
2. Abstain from stealing
3. Abstain from sexual misconduct
4. Abstain from false speech
5. Abstain from intoxicating drinks and drugs

Similar to Hinduism, Buddhists believe in karma and reincarnation to the point of ceasing to exist. This is the chief aim of Buddhists and is called Nirvana—an enlightened state that is free from desire. Nirvana is achieved by continually seeking and eventually accomplishing self-perfection.

MAJOR HOLIDAYS

Asalha Puja Day: a celebration of Buddha's very first teaching

Makha Bucha: commemorates the day 1,250 Arahants—Enlightened Ones—met with Buddha to receive the principles of Buddhism. This event is celebrated on the full moon of the third lunar month.

Sanghamitta Day: a celebration honoring Arahant the Venerable Sanghamitta for taking the teachings of Buddhism to Sri Lanka. This holiday takes place on full moon day in December.

Uposatha: an observance day focused intensely on practicing the teachings and meditations of Buddha.

Vesakha: the celebration of Buddha's birthday. It is the most important Buddhist festival and typically falls in the month of May.

CONVERSATION BRIDGES

Buddhism is based on reincarnation and good works. Because of these beliefs, avoid using the phrases "rebirth," "new birth," and "born again" in conversation.

When witnessing to Buddhists, it's important to ...

- Explain that God is personal and gives true peace.
- Share your personal experience with Jesus.
- Explain that although suffering is a problem, sin is the greatest problem of life.
- Commend them for their social justice work.

Buddhists revere personal experience as supreme, which is why sharing your testimony is effective. In doing so, you have the opportunity to share God's solution for sin—Jesus—and that by trusting in His suffering they can have assurance of eternal life that is free from suffering.

Since Buddhists are passionate about social justice, you can also discuss God's call to love people. It's key to clarify that Christians do not love others to earn salvation, but as a result of salvation.



EAST-WEST'S MINISTRY TO BUDDHISTS

Teaching in East Asia

Each year, we supply multiple teachers to several universities to teach conversational English and American culture. This unprecedented access for East-West has also allowed our instructors to teach other courses such as: business, art, music, and Bible ... pouring God's message into future East Asian leaders.

Leadership Training

Buddhist roots run deep in Southeast Asia, but local believers are rising up and desire to be trained to impact their communities for Christ. Since 2003, East-West's Southeast Asia training center has equipped men and women in evangelism, church planting, leadership, and theology to bring the gospel to the unreached in this predominately Buddhist region.

A CHANGED LIFE STORY

After trusting in Jesus, Sami knew he needed to rid his home of its Buddhist idols.

But he knew this could be highly offensive to his neighbors. So Sami and an East-West national partner made arrangements to deliver them to a Buddhist family in their village.

On delivery day, the two arrived at the family's home and used Sami's testimony to share the gospel.

They explained that the idols he once worshipped were made by human hands and did not have the power to speak, hear, or act on his behalf.

Sami shared that unlike the manmade figurines, the God of Christianity speaks, hears, and displays His love to His followers ... He went to great lengths to prove His love by sending Jesus—His only Son—to a broken world to live a perfect life and die for sinful people.

The idols required sacrifice to earn merit, but God sent Jesus to become the sacrifice needed for true, lasting redemption.

The family was moved by the Message and conviction of these men who believed it wholeheartedly.

As they wrestled with this news, they each had a revelation. Despite worshipping their idols for years—even leaving food and drink out for them each night—they never saw the idols work in their lives like the God these men claimed to know.

IN AN INSTANT THE ENTIRE FAMILY'S BELIEF SYSTEM TURNED UPSIDE DOWN.

In an instant the entire family's belief system turned upside down. They believed God loved them, and they trusted in the One who died for them on the Cross.

That day, the idols that once held the affections of Sami were used as a bridge to share the gospel with a family desperately in need of Jesus.

Sami and these new believers now boldly proclaim the gospel in a South Asian tribe that was once unreached and unengaged with this Good News.



JUDAISM

FAST FACTS

Population: 14 million, making up 0.2% of the global population

Growth Rate: Expected to increase from 14 million in 2010 to 16 million in 2050.

Year Founded: 2000 B.C.

Founder: The Prophet Abraham

Holy Books: Torah, Tanakh and Talmud

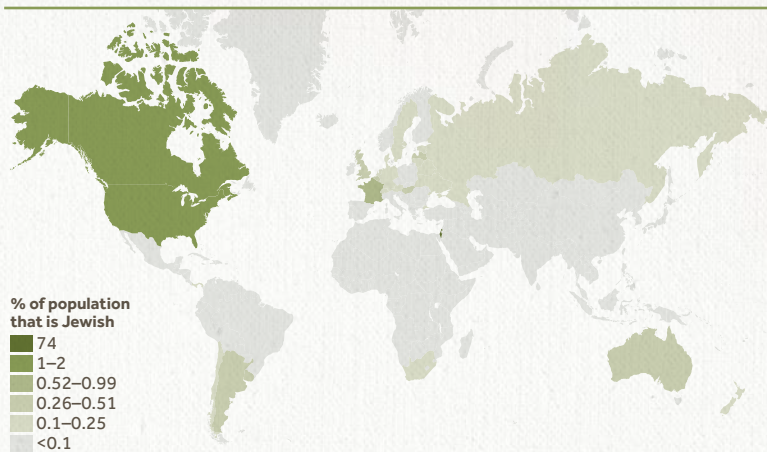
Significant Figures:

Anne Frank—Holocaust Victim

Barbra Streisand—American Singer,
Songwriter and Actress

Mark Zuckerberg—Facebook Founder

View of Jesus: Teacher



WHERE THEY LIVE

A majority of the world's 14 million Jews live across the Middle East, North Africa, and North America. The largest concentration of Jews—over 80% of the total Jewish population worldwide—live in the United States and Israel. These two countries each have over 5.6 million Jews residing within each of their borders.

MAJOR BELIEFS

Today many cultural Jews have forsaken the teachings of Judaism for the secular world and even deny the existence of God.

For those who still practice the faith, behavior modification is the core focus, rather than a true, abiding relationship with God. There are three major branches of Judaism in the world today, including Orthodox, Reformed, and Conservative.

Orthodox: Orthodox Judaism is the most devoted branch of the faith which still observes and keeps the Mosaic Law.

Reformed: Reformed Jews are the most liberal branch and keep Jewish values, but do not strictly follow the Mosaic Law. This is the largest sect of Judaism in the world today.

Conservative: Conservative Judaism is a moderate branch of the faith that adheres to tradition, but allows rabbis to change Jewish law based on culture.



No branch of Judaism believes in original sin, as man is considered morally pure as God's image bearer. Orthodox Jews do believe in life after death based on good merit while Reformed and Conservative Jews focus on the present life rather than the afterlife.

MAJOR HOLIDAYS

Passover: The most popular Jewish holiday that celebrates and remembers the Jew's deliverance from Egyptian slavery

Sabbath: A weekly day of rest that begins just before sundown Friday night, and ends at nightfall Saturday night

Bar/Bat Mitzvah: A Jewish coming-of-age ceremony that occurs at age 13

Rosh Hashana: The Jewish New Year festival hosted in September that commemorates the creation of Adam and Eve

Yom Kippur: The Jewish Day of Atonement observed through prayer and fasting for the forgiveness of sins

Hanukkah: The eight-day, wintertime Festival of Lights celebrating the rededication of the Holy Temple with a nightly menorah lighting, prayers, and meals

CONVERSATION BRIDGES

Despite a rich faith lineage and God's chosen favor, many Jews are in deep spiritual darkness. Here are a couple tips for engaging them with the hope of Jesus Christ.

- **Prophecies:** Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus fulfilled over 350 Old Testament prophecies. You can study and utilize these Scriptures in conversations with Orthodox Jews who are familiar with the Old Testament.
- **Questions:** Jesus often used questions in His ministry and you can follow his model with Jewish people. Ask questions to understand their objections to Christianity and patiently respond with the truth of God's Word starting with the Law of Moses.

Ultimately, heart change to believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah is a work of the Holy Spirit, and we must trust Him to work among the Jewish people as we faithfully sow gospel seeds.



EAST-WEST'S MINISTRY TO JEWS

Recovery Ministry

In the Middle East, East-West missionaries work with Jewish people recovering from various drug addictions at a recovery center. Through their Bible-based recovery ministry, the lost are finding freedom from addiction as they encounter Christ in a real, transformative way.

Church Planting

East-West has deployed a team to the Middle East to live among Jews and Muslims in prayerful hope and anticipation that relationships between these people groups would be reconciled as individuals come to faith in Christ ... igniting a church planting movement in their spiritually dark region of the world.

Cycling Ministry

In an effort to reach high class Jews, East-West missionaries have started a cycling club in the Middle East. Weekly group rides create a space for our workers to build relationships, earn trust, and share the hope they've found in Jesus—the promised Messiah.

A CHANGED LIFE STORY

Serge immigrated to the Middle East from Russia with his Jewish mother and brother when he was a teenager.

In order to find peace and acceptance in his new country, his mother tried to observe the Law of Moses. She was also a single mom and a doctor who had little spare time for her sons.

Serge didn't feel much at home in his new country and soon fell into a bad crowd. He experimented with drugs and alcohol, and, by the time he graduated from high school, he was a regular heroin user.

He kept his addiction hidden while he served in the army. After completing three years of service, his drug use and life spiraled out of control and he ended up on the streets. Serge went in and out of detox centers ... but nothing helped.

Eventually, he met believers who invited him to a rehab center ran by East-West missionaries. There he had an encounter with Yeshua (Jesus), the Messiah.

Today, Serge and one of the missionaries study the Scriptures and pray together, and Serge is attending university to become a paramedic in hopes of modeling Christ to others as he is used to "bind up the broken hearted" (Isaiah 61:1).

SERGE HAD AN ENCOUNTER WITH YESHUA (JESUS), THE MESSIAH.

Just like Zaccheus, another Jewish outcast noted in the Bible, Jesus sought and saved Serge ... making him a true son of Abraham through His belief in Christ as the promised Messiah (Luke 19:1-10).



**RELIGIOUSLY
UNAFFILIATED**

FAST FACTS

Population: 1.1 billion, accounting for 16% of the world's population

Growth Rate: Expected to increase from 1.1 billion in 2010 to 1.2 billion in 2050. Although the number of religiously unaffiliated people is projected to grow, their total share of the world's population will decrease.

Year Founded: The oldest known documentation of doubt in a divine power is from the 9th century B.C.

Founder: Unknown. Thomas Huxley coined the term "agnostic" in 1869 and Sir Isaac Newton established the term "atheist" between 1600 and 1700.

Holy Books: None

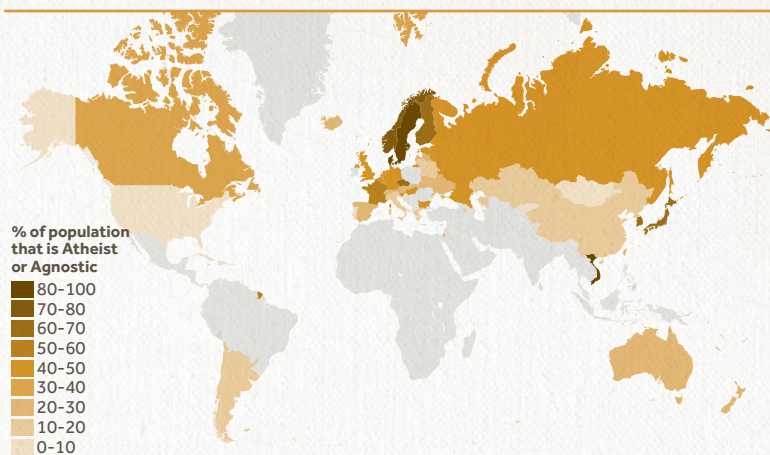
Significant Figures:

Pablo Picasso – Spanish artist

Stephen Hawking – British physicist

Lance Armstrong – American cyclist

View of Jesus: Good person or did not exist



WHERE THEY LIVE

It is typical for areas with low fertility rates and aging populations to have a high concentration of religiously unaffiliated people. Sixty-two percent of all people who do not identify with a specific religion reside in China. Japan (6%), the United States (5%), Vietnam (2%), and Russia (2%) follow China in the number of religiously unaffiliated people living within their borders.



MAJOR BELIEFS

Agnosticism and Atheism fall under the title of religiously unaffiliated.

Atheism

“An atheist is someone who does not believe in God.”
—Pew Research Center

Atheists—although claiming to be non-religious—have complete faith that there is no God and no afterlife, and, therefore no need for a Savior. There are several different thoughts among atheists on the person of Jesus—ranging from Him being a historical figure to never existing.

Agnosticism

“An agnostic is someone who is unsure whether God exists.” —Pew Research Center

By claiming agnosticism, a person admits that the existence of God is impossible to prove or disprove. Their perspective on life is based on intellect, knowledge, and certifiable proof. Often they acknowledge the potential for a higher power at work in the world, but since God’s existence cannot be proven through experimentation, they do not hold to the teachings of a specific religion.

MAJOR HOLIDAYS

Many Agnostics and Atheists celebrate the traditional holidays of their nation and culture to spend time with their families and friends. If the holiday is tied to a specific religion, they often remove the faith aspects from their celebrations.



CONVERSATION BRIDGES

Agnostics are on the fence about whether or not God exists, so they may express interest in engaging in spiritual conversations. On the other hand, Atheists may completely reject your stance on God's existence. No matter which person you find yourself engaging with, asking questions is a good way to start a discussion about Jesus.

Our missionaries use these leading questions to spark gospel conversations:

- If there is a God, would you want to know more about Him?
- What is the purpose of life?
- Can I pray for you?
- Are you a spiritual person?
- What do you think happens when we die?

These questions can be leveraged to share what Jesus has done in your life and may even lead to interest in discovering God through His living and active Word.

EAST-WEST'S MINISTRY TO THE RELIGIOUSLY UNAFFILIATED

East Asia Digital Evangelism

Even those who reject God seek answers, and sometimes they turn to technology to find them. This project leads those searching for specific keywords related to religion, spirituality, or Christianity to a website hosting a gospel presentation video. Viewers are offered a choice: follow Jesus or receive more information, giving our partners a chance to follow up with individuals and mentor those who indicate their belief in Jesus Christ.

Short-Term Mission Trips

No matter the destination of our short-term mission trips, participants meet people who are far from God ... even rejecting His existence. Through sharing their personal testimonies and the gospel, we are witnessing the power of God's message of salvation as it transforms some of the hardest hearts.



Go Here

Our Go Here team exists to help mobilize churches in the United States to participate in local missions leveraging their unique spiritual gifts. Using a mapping tool, our team is able to strategically deploy congregations to engage their unreached neighbors with the gospel.

A CHANGED LIFE STORY

Her entire life, Jun's family told her that her actions would determine her destiny. Belief in a higher power waned in her East Asian country, and it was ingrained in Jun that good deeds paved her life's path.

But something inside told Jun there was another way, a better way. Because of the government and culture, she was unable to turn to anyone she knew for answers.

So Jun turned to the Internet instead and typed the question on her heart into the search bar—unsure of what she would find.

As she looked through the results, she saw a video created by East-West national partners. She clicked and sat enraptured as the video told her the gospel in a way that she understood completely.

This was the Truth she had been longing to hear ... that there was a better way—the only way, Jesus.

When the video ended, she was asked if she wanted to follow Jesus. Jun didn't hesitate.

She wanted to know the God who promised to free her from the burden of good deeds, and she wanted desperately to connect with others who knew about Jesus like she now did. She prayed the prayer on the screen and completed the form to be mentored.

**SHE WANTED TO KNOW THE GOD
WHO PROMISED TO FREE HER FROM
THE BURDEN OF GOOD DEEDS.**

Jun loved getting to know the Bible and the One True God more deeply through the mentoring, and when the day came for her to get connected to a house church, she was very eager to meet her spiritual brothers and sisters.

Today, Jun experiences great joy through worship, fellowship, and prayer with her house church, and she grows each day as she connects spiritually with the Savior she once sought online.



CHRISTIANITY

FAST FACTS

Population: 2.2 billion, comprising 32% of the global population

Growth Rate: Expected to increase from 2.2 billion in 2010 to 2.9 billion in 2050

Year Founded: 33 A.D.

Founder: Jesus

Holy Books: The Bible

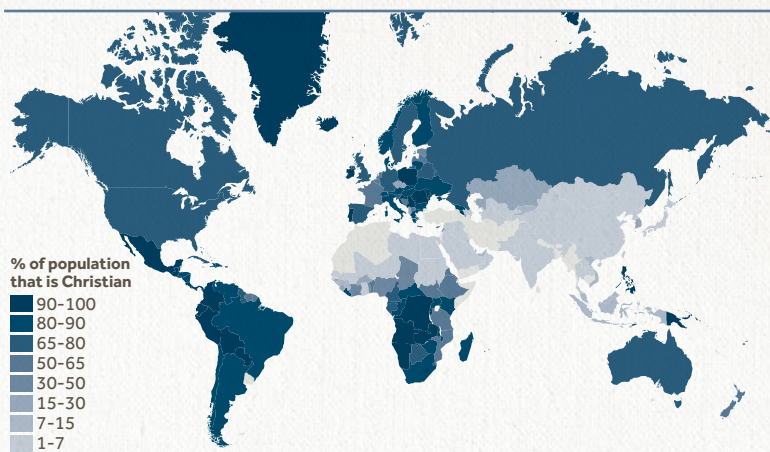
Significant Figures:

John Piper – American pastor, author, and teacher

C.S. Lewis – British author, theologian, and lecturer

Bethany Hamilton – Professional surfer

View of Jesus: God and Savior



WHERE THEY LIVE

There are 2.2 billion Christians worldwide. Although founded in the Middle East and North Africa, less than 1% of all Christians live in this region. The greatest populations of Christians live in Europe (26%), Latin America and the Caribbean (24%), and sub-Saharan Africa (24%). Only 12% of all Christians—over 266,000,000 people—reside in North America.



MAJOR BELIEFS

Christianity is founded on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Unlike other world religions, followers of Jesus do not labor to please God and earn salvation through good deeds.

Christians believe ...

- There is one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- Jesus is fully God and man
- People can only be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection
- All believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit
- The Bible is the inspired Word of God
- Followers of Jesus have the responsibility to share their faith in Christ with others

There are many types of churches—Roman Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, Charismatic, Evangelical, etc.—that are commonly categorized by many research entities as being part of the Christian faith, although some do not align with the tenets of Christianity listed above. This includes differences in their stances on certain beliefs (sin, heaven, hell, the way of salvation, etc.) and on various religious practices (communion, baptism, church leadership structure, etc.).

East-West does not classify churches that require more than or add anything to the teaching that “salvation is a free gift of God’s grace through faith alone” as part of the true Christian faith. To read East-West’s Statement of Faith, visit www.eastwest.org/beliefs.

MAJOR HOLIDAYS

Advent: a 40-day time of preparation for Christmas and Christ's coming return

Christmas: a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ that takes place on December 25 each year.

Lent: a 40-day period of self-examination and fasting before Easter

Palm Sunday: the Sunday before Easter marking Jesus' entry into Jerusalem

Easter: a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ that falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon following March 21

Pentecost: occurs 50 days following Easter and celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit

CONVERSATION BRIDGES

As a missional believer, you should seek to connect with other Christians and encourage them to live a life on mission.

It's important to cite Scriptures that reveal God's deep passion for all people and our call to be His gospel messengers in these conversations. A few passages you may want to use include ...

- Psalm 2
- Matthew 28:18-20
- 2 Corinthians 5:11-21
- 1 Peter 2:9-10
- 2 Peter 3:9
- 1 John 2:2

By pointing them to the Bible, you're allowing them to discover God's desire to use them to build His Kingdom and making way for the Holy Spirit work on their hearts.



EAST-WEST'S MINISTRY TO CHRISTIANS

Prayer Partners

By becoming Prayer Partners with East-West, believers have a unique and powerful opportunity to spread the good news of Jesus Christ where His work on the cross is unknown or unwanted through constant communication with God.

Church Partners

Bodies of believers can be part of igniting a movement for Jesus Christ in the world's spiritually darkest nations through Church Partnership with East-West. Our Church Partners pray, give, go, and send so that the Name of Jesus reaches every corner of the globe.

Short-Term, Mid-Term, and Long-Term Mission Opportunities

We live in a world searching for Truth. With an unprecedented sense of urgency to take the gospel to the nations, East-West mobilizes believers to take the Truth of Jesus to the lost through short-term mission trips and mid-term and long-term missionary assignments.

Go Here

Our Go Here team exists to help mobilize churches in the United States to participate in local missions leveraging their unique spiritual gifts. Using a mapping tool, our team is able to strategically deploy congregations to engage their unreached neighbors with the gospel.

A CHANGED LIFE STORY

Nervous excitement overwhelmed Rachel as she surveyed a city bright with color, but lackluster in faith.

It was her first short-term trip with East-West and she was accustomed to leveraging acts of service to spark spiritual conversations. But this trip was different—today she would walk up to strangers in the streets to tell them about Jesus.

With the help of a local translator and church worker, Rachel shared the gospel with two passersby who listened but didn't respond.

Feeling inadequate to articulate the hope found only in Christ, she approached a woman in the street and asked her if she had a faith and that sparked a conversation that would impact them both.

As Rachel explained that a man named Jesus lived a perfect life, died on a cross for the sins of the world, and rose again from the dead, she witnessed a miracle ... God changed the woman's heart right in front of her eyes.

That instant Rachel experienced the joy of the harvest as the woman placed her faith in Christ. The rest of the trip God continued to use Rachel to reap His harvest as she walked the city streets delivering the good news of Jesus.

GOD CHANGED THE WOMAN'S HEART
RIGHT IN FRONT OF RACHEL'S EYES.

And now at home, Rachel—inspired by the power of the gospel—continues to boldly share her faith ... knowing there's a field ripe for harvest.

HOW TO SHARE GOD'S STORY

You don't need a seminary degree or apologetics training to be God's witness ... you simply need to know Jesus. East-West trains believers just like you to use four familiar Scriptures in tandem with the diagram on this page to share God's story—the gospel—with the lost.

- God's story starts with Him. Explain that He has always existed in perfect holiness and created all things ... including people.
- People were made for relationship with God, but we rebelled against Him. This rebellion is called sin and God says all people have sinned (Roman 3:23).
- The penalty of sin is death and eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23).
- But while we were still sinning, God sent His Son—Jesus—to die for our sins (Romans 5:8). Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God offers us a free gift of grace (Romans 6:23).
- Anyone can accept this free gift and have eternal

life by confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in your heart the God raised Him from the dead (Romans 10:9-10).

- Make the invitation. Ask, "Is there anything keeping you from believing this today?"



If they believe, guide them in this prayer:

God, Thank You for loving me and sending Your Son, Jesus, to die for my sins. Today I confess with my mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in my heart that You raised Him from the dead. Amen.





HOW TO SHARE YOUR STORY

Your testimony is a powerful way to tell others about Jesus. We train believers to share their story in three parts: before Christ, meeting Christ, and after Christ. In doing so, we ask them to pick three words or phrases that describe what they experienced during these seasons of life and elaborate on their chosen words in one to two sentences.

Here's an example:

Before Christ:

Purposeless. Prior to knowing Jesus, my life lacked meaning and I did not know I had a purpose for living.

Meeting Christ:

Loved. When I met Jesus, I learned that God loved me and proved it by sending His Son to die for me.

After Christ:

Purpose. Now that I follow Jesus, I know that God wants to use me to impact others and that I have an incredible purpose.

Now it's your turn. Spend a few minutes practicing God's story and your story with other believers and intentionally go out with these tools to spark spiritual conversations in your daily life.

Before Christ:

Meeting Christ:

After Christ:

SOURCES

East-West used several sources to compile the information shared in this guide. Below are the books, research studies, and articles we used if you're interested in further reading.

World Religions in a Nutshell by Ray Comfort

The Global Religion Landscape by Pew Research Center:
www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec

The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050 by Pew Research Center:
www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050

U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey by Pew Research Center:
www.pewforum.org/2010/09/28/u-s-religious-knowledge-survey

What is Islam and what do Muslims believe? by GotQuestions.org:
www.gotquestions.org/Islam.html

Religion Library:
Islam by Patheos: www.patheos.com/Library/Islam.html
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29 Celebrities Who Are Muslim by Ranker:
www.ranker.com/list/famous-buddhists/david-jones

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Hinduism Fast Facts by CNN Library:
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Agnosticism Overview by Faithology:
www.faithology.com/agnosticism/overview

Atheism Overview by Faithology:
www.faithology.com/atheism/overview

Famous Atheists by Ranker:
www.ranker.com/profile-of/famous-atheists

Christian Holy Days, Holidays, and Seasons by Dummies
www.dummies.com/how-to/content/christian-holy-days-holidays-and-seasons.html



HOW YOU CAN PRAY

MUSLIMS

Pray that Muslims meet Jesus through dreams, visions, and miracles.

HINDUS

Pray that Hindus come to worship the one true God.

BUDDHISTS

Pray that God reveals His free gift of grace to Buddhists working to earn enlightenment.

JEWS

Pray that Jews would believe that Jesus is the Messiah God promised throughout the Old Testament.

AGNOSTICS & ATHEISTS

Pray that Agnostics and Atheists encounter God in a real, undeniable way.

CHRISTIANS

Pray that Christians are convicted to boldly share their faith with people who are far from God.



GO. MULTIPLY.

Together, we can ignite a worldwide movement of gospel-centered multiplication.

PRAY

Partner with us to advance the gospel among the unreached

GIVE

Steward your resources to make disciples

GO

Step into the mission field for a short-term trip, mid-term, or long-term stay

SHARE

Advocate for God's work in spiritually dark places through East-West

Visit www.eastwest.org to get involved with East-West today.

THE LORD IS NOT SLOW IN KEEPING HIS
PROMISE, AS SOME UNDERSTAND SLOWNESS.
INSTEAD HE IS PATIENT WITH YOU, NOT
WANTING ANYONE TO PERISH, BUT EVERYONE
TO COME TO REPENTANCE. **-2 PETER 3:9**



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