

Engaging Hindus with the Gospel

By William Judson

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read John 1 and Colossians 3:15–23. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: How does the idea of God in these passages compare with the Hindu view of God as presented in the section **It's in the Book**? How would you compare the way Christians approach God with the way Hindus approach God?

Assignment Two

Read the section **It's in the Book**. Craft a brief Bible storying gospel presentation (no more than three to five minutes) including creation, the fall of man and the coming of Christ. Prepare to share the story with the group.

Assignment Three

Read Acts 17:22–34. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: In what ways did Paul contrast his beliefs with the beliefs of those listening to him?

Scripture to Memorize

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand how to engage Hindus with the gospel in a loving, Christlike manner.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

John was looking forward to trying Indian food for the first time. His neighbor, Raj, had invited John to eat with his family. As Raj showed John around the house, he made sure John saw the family's temple room, which contained several idols. John had talked about Jesus with Raj before that night, but Raj never seemed to understand the need to trust Christ as Savior. Raj's mom then asked John what he thought of the family's temple room. What did John need to know about Hinduism to present the gospel clearly?

Christianity and Hinduism

While many people in America have some familiarity with other world religions, Hinduism remains a great unknown to many Americans. Some Hindu ideas and practices like *yoga* and *karma* have crept into American life, but most Americans are unaware of the origins of these ideas and practices. To add to this dilemma, meeting one Hindu and understanding what he or she believes does not mean you then know what any other Hindu believes.

While the task of sharing the gospel with a Hindu may seem out of your reach, once you understand a few key ideas, you will be better able to understand what a Hindu friend believes and how you can share the gospel in a way he or she can understand.

First, to engage a Hindu person with the gospel, knowing something about Hinduism helps. The term *Hinduism* was first used to refer to the religious practices and beliefs of the whole of the Indian subcontinent under British colonial rule.

Before this time no one referred to this myriad of beliefs as one religion even though many of these beliefs shared the same holy books and pantheistic (the universe is god) or polytheistic (many gods) foundations. When we understand that Hinduism contains many different strands of belief, including polytheistic belief and atheistic belief, we will not be so confused when two of our Hindu friends seem to believe radically different things.

Second, we need to realize that while individual beliefs may be different, most Hindu beliefs are built on the same pantheistic foundation. In other words, rather than being built on an objective standard of truth founded in the character of God, Hinduism finds its foundation not in the character of a god or gods but from a highly subjective sense of duty based in part on the teachings of *The Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and *The Bhagavad Gita*, among others.

The majority of Hindus worship multiple gods, and many select one of their many gods to be their chief object of worship. However, the main goal of Hinduism is not the appeasement of any specific god or gods. Instead, the goal of Hinduism is freedom from the cycle of reincarnation, known as *moksha*. This freedom is sometimes associated with being absorbed back into the "Supreme Being" (the god that is all and in all, *Brahman*).

This freedom can be found by accruing good *karma* by fulfilling one's *dharma*. *Dharma* is the term used to describe that which the individual must do based on his position in life and the caste system. When we understand these basics of Hinduism, we see that much in the Hindu worldview needs to be confronted with the truth of Scripture. Bringing attention to differences in belief is important.

When we use the word *God* in a conversation with a Hindu friend, we cannot assume he has the same understanding of who God is. Many views of the divine exist within Hinduism. Many Hindus reduce human interaction with the divine to bringing offerings or making *poojah* (worship) at a temple filled with idols.

These gods and goddesses are not omniscient, sovereign or infinite. Worship of these deities is not to pay a debt or earn good standing before any specific god but is meant to accrue positive *karma* and force the gods to bring good fortune.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week may now share answers to the following questions: How does the idea of God in John 1 and Colossians 3:15–23 compare with the Hindu view of God as presented in this lesson? How would you compare the way Christians approach God with the way Hindus approach God?

Discussion Questions

Why do we worship God? How would explain to a Hindu friend why you go to church? read your Bible? pray?

Assignment Two Feedback

The disciple who completed **Assignment Two** during the week may now share a brief Bible storying gospel presentation including creation, the fall of man and the coming of Christ.

One of the best ways to communicate who God is to a Hindu while engaging him or her with the gospel is sharing Bible stories beginning with creation and continuing through Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Many involved in missions call this *chronological Bible storying*.

By starting with creation, we are able to explain who God is and what we believe about Him. We can then move to the story of the fall of man and talk about the promised Messiah who came to be the solution to man's problem of sin.

Discussion Questions

Why is presenting clearly the biblical view of God important? How does sharing the whole story of Scripture from creation to Christ help explain who God is?

Salvation

Next we need to address what being saved means. Rather than viewing salvation as being earned through positive *karma*, we must point out that salvation comes only through Christ. This portion of a conversation can cause frustration. The Hindu worldview allows Hindus to say they agree with the need to believe in Jesus without rejecting other beliefs or seeing mutual exclusivity.

After presenting the gospel from creation to Christ, do not be surprised if your Hindu friend agrees with you yet sees no need to change. If you call for a decision and your friend would like to follow Christ, make sure your friend understands the need to reject all other gods and beliefs. Acts 4:12 stands out as a key verse to share when engaging a Hindu with the gospel.

Discussion Question

Why is the exclusivity of Christ a foreign concept to Hindus? Consider how the pantheistic

worldview of Hinduism and the role of gods and goddesses in Hinduism could contribute to a worldview that everything is relative.

As with Paul in Acts 17:22–24, we must be sure to point out the differences in what we believe. Hindu friends are prone to see the similarity in beliefs or think all roads lead to God. We need to point out in a loving manner the truth that Christ is the only way.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week may now share an answer to the following question: In what ways did Paul contrast his beliefs with the beliefs of those listening to him?

On Your Own

In the space below, write a brief prayer. Ask Jesus to supernaturally arrange an opportunity for you to share the good news with a Hindu.

Remember that, as a believer, you are not proclaiming the gospel in your own power. In the Great Commission, Jesus promised to be with us always, and that includes when we share the gospel with a Hindu friend.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart (the real you) for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something in your life for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

After learning about Hinduism, you might be thinking, *I do not know anyone who is Hindu. How can I share the gospel with a Hindu friend?* First, pray that the Lord would bring a Hindu friend into your life. Second, try to find an Indian restaurant or grocery store in your area. These places are great locations to meet someone who is Hindu.

Most Hindu people are friendly and would love to share with you about what they believe. After listening to their beliefs, do not hesitate to share yours! As you seek out friendships with Hindus, remember to be continually before the Lord, asking for the opportunity to share the gospel with those you meet.

Thinking about sharing the gospel with someone from such a different religion might have your head spinning. When we think about sharing the gospel with a Hindu friend, we must keep in mind that in our own power we can do nothing. When Christ gave His followers the command to make disciples in Matthew 28, He also promised to be with them. In other words, we are not alone as we seek to engage Hindus with the gospel. Remember that the Lord “has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness,” including what we need to share the gospel with anyone who comes across our path (2 Peter 1:3).

When we rely on our own abilities as we share the gospel with our Hindu friends, our tendency is often to either shrink back from sharing the gospel or to argue in a way that does not show the love of Christ. As we continually rely on the Lord, we will find that our gospel presentations become less about proving ourselves right or being well liked and more about being faithful to Scripture and persuading in love for our friends to trust Christ.

Follow up Question

What are some of the most important things to keep in mind as you engage a Hindu with the gospel?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.