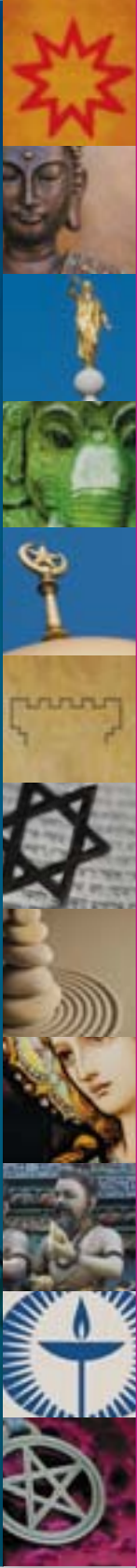


Barriers & Bridges

People Group /
Interfaith Evangelism Team





Barriers & Bridges:

Spanning the Spiritual Gulfs that Separate People from the Good News of Jesus Christ

United States and Canada have experienced unprecedented growth of diverse people groups and religious movements in their populations over the last several decades. For one reason, this growth was due to the influx of immigrants to North America from every inhabited continent of the world. These new residents often brought with them their ancient faith traditions.

Another factor was the weakened influence of Christianity in the secular culture of North American society. This created a spiritual vacuum into which these new religious ideas rushed. Thus, many Americans and Canadians have embraced non-Christian religious perspectives.

So, in this highly diverse culture, we must educate Christians about the beliefs and practices of various people groups and their faiths, for three important reasons:

1. It is mandatory for believers to have some understanding of people groups to minimize preconceived misconceptions or fears we may have about them and to encourage personal relationships with them.

by **Tal Davis**

2. Many religions aggressively seek to proselytize Christians to their beliefs. Thus, we must prepare our people adequately to understand their own faith (1 Pet. 3:15) and not be misled by those promoting other belief systems (2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6f; 2 Pet. 2:1; 2 John 7-8).
3. We are commanded in the Bible to carry the unique message of salvation through Jesus Christ to all peoples (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). Our conviction is that salvation is found in no other name but Jesus (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5-6). Thus, we seek to equip our people for evangelizing those in all people groups and faiths in ways that are loving and sensitive, yet uncompromising (Eph. 4:15).

This booklet spotlights major religious movements and related people groups in North America. It examines the possible cultural, social, or religious barriers that hinder Christians' efforts to reach them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It also provides suggested principles and strategies Christians and churches can use to bridge those barriers.





Baha'i

Estimated North American Adherents:

325,000 people

People Groups Impacted:

Some Iranian Immigrants
American and Canadian Anglos
Some African Americans

Action Points for Churches, Associations, and State Conventions:

1. Partner with NAMB where Baha'is are numerous to host training events for Interfaith Evangelism Specialists (IES).
2. Recruit interested individuals to attend the IES training events and follow through for IES certification in Baha'i.
3. Utilize IE Specialists trained in Baha'i to hold local events training Baptists as effective witnesses.
4. Utilize 4truth.net materials on Baha'i.
5. Partner with SBC ethnic fellowships of people groups that may include Baha'i populations.
6. Partner with collegiate evangelism and campus ministries at colleges and universities with Baha'i students.



Barriers:

1. Most adherents to Baha'i in North America are Anglos who have either embraced the faith as adults or have been raised in Baha'i families, thus they have often rejected traditional Christian teachings.
2. Baha'is are monotheistic; nonetheless, they will have a difficult time understanding and accepting the Trinity.
3. Baha'is generally regard their faith and its founder, Baha'u'llah, as the final "manifestation" of God, and thus consider it superior to other religions.
4. Baha'is have historically endured harsh treatment from Muslims in the faith's land of origin, Iran. Thus, they may regard disagreement with a certain level of suspicion or fear.
5. Baha'is believe that all world religions teach essentially the same things and deny the uniqueness of Jesus. Thus, they see no reason to become followers of Jesus since Baha'u'llah is more current.
6. Baha'is emphasize morality and justice as the hallmarks of true religion and see no need for personal salvation through Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection.
7. Baha'is regard heaven and hell as current qualities of life based on the quest of an individual for spirituality. Life after death is dependent on one's focus on spirituality in this life.
8. Most Baha'is have little understanding of the Bible or have consciously rejected its authority.

Bridges:

1. Baha'is put a great emphasis on the personal search for truth. Christians can agree with them that this is an important issue in life.
2. Christians can find common ground with Baha'is in their monotheistic belief and use it as an opening to discuss the nature of God and the Trinity.
3. Tell the Baha'i that Christians share with them the desire to further justice and eliminate human suffering. Explain how those are outcomes of changed hearts in Christ.
4. Commend them on their search for truth but point them to the uniqueness of Jesus as the one and only Son of God.
5. Offer Baha'is a Bible and ask them to read the New Testament Gospels.



Buddhism

Estimated North American Adherents:

1 million people

People Groups Impacted:

Some Korean Americans

Some Korean Immigrants

Chinese Americans

Chinese Immigrants

Vietnamese Immigrants

Some Anglo Americans and Canadians

Japanese Americans

Thais

Laotians

Cambodians

Action Points for Churches, Associations, and State Conventions:

1. Partner with NAMB where the above people groups are prevalent to host training events for Interfaith Evangelism Specialists (IES).
2. Recruit interested individuals to attend the IES training events and follow through for IES certification in Buddhism.
3. Utilize IE Specialists trained in Buddhism to hold local events training Baptists as effective witnesses.
4. Utilize 4truth.net materials on Buddhism.
5. Partner with SBC ethnic fellowships of people groups that include significant Buddhist populations.
6. Partner with collegiate evangelism and campus ministries at colleges and universities with significant Buddhist populations.



Barriers:

1. Understand that Buddhists are not all the same. Some believe in a god or gods. Some do not. Some view Buddha as an enlightened teacher and others see him as a god.
2. Most Buddhists know little about Jesus. Some may regard Him as a sort of enlightened Buddha figure for the West.
3. They do not believe Jesus died as a substitutionary atonement for sin or that He rose from the dead.
4. Most Buddhists are not familiar with the Bible or regard it as authoritative. They have their own holy books including the *Pali Canon*, also called the *Tripitaka* (“three baskets”) and other texts.
5. Buddhists will not usually understand Christian or biblical terms.
6. Buddhists do not understand the Christian concept of moral sin against God.
7. Buddhists believe in reincarnation in which the self is passed to new bodies.
8. The ultimate goal for the Buddhist is to find enlightenment that leads to *Nirvana* or perfect peace and extinction of the self and suffering. Heaven and hell are unknown concepts in Buddhism.
9. These are accomplished through following the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path to enlightenment.

Bridges:

1. Establish friendly relationships with Buddhists. They are often found in many communities where Asian immigrants are common. They are often involved in local businesses (e.g., Chinese restaurants and Vietnamese nail shops).
2. Talk to your Buddhist friend about the Christian concept of God (monotheism) and that He is the creator of all that exists.
3. Tell your friend that Buddhist moral teachings such as the Noble Eightfold Path are commendable, but explain that no one can avoid doing wrong. Explain the biblical concept of sin.
4. Tell your friend that Buddha taught many commendable things. Show, however, that Jesus is the unique incarnation of God. Talk about His sinless life, death on the cross as the atonement for sin, and bodily resurrection.
5. Give your friend a New Testament in his own language and ask him to read about Jesus. Ask his opinion of what it says.



Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS/ Mormons)

Estimated North American Adherents:
6 million people

People Groups Impacted:

Anglo Americans

(concentrated in Western United States)

Some Hispanic Americans

American Samoans

Some Native Americans

**Action Points for Churches,
Associations, and State Conventions:**

1. Partner with NAMB where Mormons are numerous or growing, or where LDS missionaries are active, to host training events for Interfaith Evangelism Specialists (IES).
2. Recruit interested individuals to attend the IES training events and follow through for IES certification in Mormonism.
3. Utilize IE Specialists trained in Mormonism to hold local events training Baptists as effective witnesses.
4. Promote and encourage use of *The Mormon Puzzle* DVD (also available in Spanish).
5. Promote and encourage use of *The Mormon Puzzle* revised training manual.
6. Utilize 4truth.net materials on Mormonism.
7. Partner with SBC ethnic fellowships of people groups that include significant LDS populations or that are targeted by LDS missionaries.
8. Partner with collegiate evangelism and campus ministries at colleges and universities with significant LDS populations.



Barriers:

1. Most Mormons already consider themselves Christians because of their baptism and church membership. Therefore, they don't see a need to receive Jesus as Savior in the evangelical sense.
2. The Latter Day Saints (LDS) use common Christian and biblical words to describe aspects of their beliefs as they understand them. The truth is, and many Mormons are unaware of this, nearly every LDS doctrinal term is radically redefined and contrary to historic Christian teaching.
3. The LDS considers itself the only true church on earth and regards all others as totally invalid or, at best, inadequate. Thus they do not regard any leaders but their own as authoritative. They regard their president as a "living prophet, seer, and revelator."
4. Mormons believe that all members of Christian churches and adherents of other faiths must be baptized in their church to receive "eternal life" as they understand it. Therefore, their missionaries aggressively seek to make converts out of other churches.
5. The LDS believes the Bible has been corrupted and so does not regard it as fully authoritative. They use the KJV but augment it with additional scriptures from Joseph Smith and other LDS prophets. *The Book of Mormon*, *The Doctrine and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price* are regarded by Mormons as inspired scripture.
6. Mormons believe marriage and their families are necessary aspects of their system of salvation. Therefore, it is difficult for them to leave the church, as it may have serious repercussions such as family and community ostracism or divorce.
7. Many Mormons believe high moral and ethical standards of behavior are necessary for salvation, so they may not acknowledge their status as lost sinners. They may deny the importance of salvation by grace through faith alone.
8. Most Mormons rely heavily on their "testimony" of the veracity of the *Book of Mormon* and Joseph Smith. This "testimony" is described as a subjective inner experience that confirms its truth.

Bridges:

1. Mormons and evangelicals share many common moral and family values. These can make a natural bridge to a discussion of faith issues.
2. Mormons are often active in local business and civic groups. They tend to be patriotic and politically conservative. These tendencies may provide opportunities to establish relationships with them.
3. Mormons often do not understand the differences between what their church teaches and what Christians believe. So Christians can ask Mormons to explain in their own words what they believe and what their words mean.
4. Mormon missionaries may come to a Christian's door, or their church will offer a free KJV Bible or *Book of Mormon* on TV, which the missionaries will deliver. This can open the way to interesting discussions with them.
5. Some Mormons intellectually question the veracity of their faith's history and beliefs. Christians should be sensitive to those who may be in that situation.



Hinduism

Estimated North American Adherents:

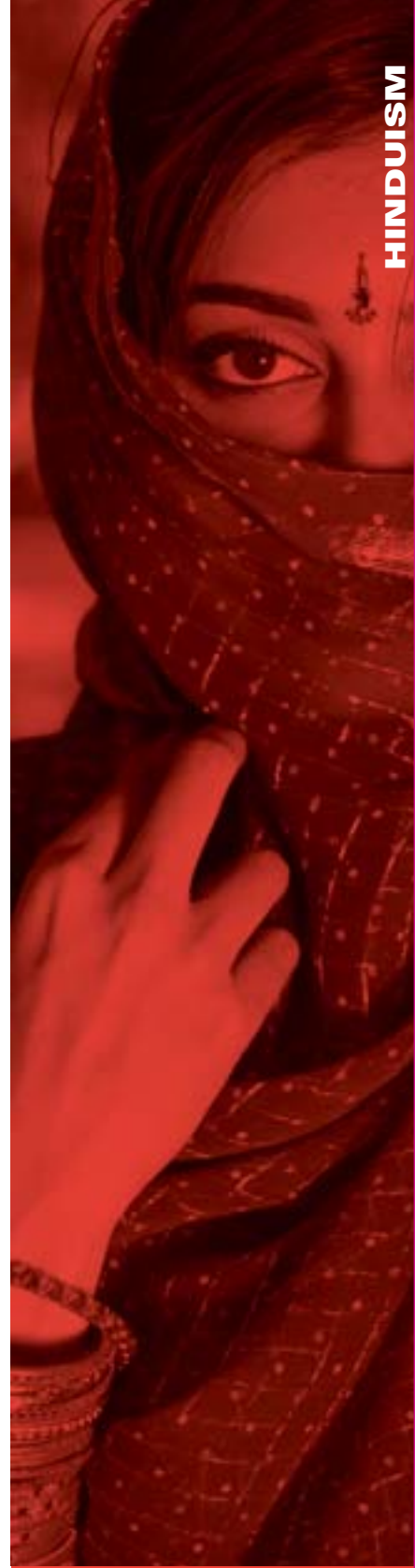
1 million people

People Groups Impacted:

American Asian Indians
Asian Indian Immigrants
Some Anglo Americans
Asian Indian Canadians

Action Points for Churches, Associations, and State Conventions:

1. Partner with NAMB where the above people groups are prevalent to host training events for Interfaith Evangelism Specialists (IES).
2. Recruit interested individuals to attend the IES training events and follow through for IES certification in Hinduism.
3. Utilize IE Specialists trained in Hinduism to hold local events training Baptists as effective witnesses.
4. Utilize 4truth.net materials on Hinduism.
5. Partner with SBC ethnic fellowships of people groups that include significant Hindu populations.
6. Partner with collegiate evangelism and campus ministries at colleges and universities with significant Hindu populations.



Barriers:

1. Understand that most Hindus are believers in many gods. They are pantheistic in that they see everything as part of their god. Their primary gods are *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, and *Shiva*.
2. Most Hindus know little about Jesus. Some may regard Him as one of many spiritual masters (*yogis*) or teachers (*gurus*). Some may see Him as one of many manifestations of a god (*avatar*).
3. They do not believe Jesus died as a substitutionary atonement for sin or that He rose from the dead.
4. Most Hindus are not familiar with the Bible or regard it as authoritative. They have their own holy books including the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and *Bhagavad Gita*.
5. Hindus will, therefore, not usually understand Christian or biblical terms.
6. Hindus believe that humans are spirits or souls trapped in physical bodies. At death the soul transfers to another living body in endless cycles of deaths and reincarnations. Heaven and hell are unknown concepts in Hinduism.
7. Hindus do not understand the Christian concept of moral sin against God. For them the issue is *karma*, determined by one's conduct in life. If one accumulates good *karma*, he will progress to a higher life or caste. If bad, he will fall to a lower caste.
8. The ultimate goal for the Hindu is to get off the cycle of reincarnations and become one with the *Brahman*. This is accomplished by following the teaching of a guru who will lead them in a path or discipline.
9. Hinduism is often identified with people groups primarily from India. It is often a crucial ingredient in Indian culture, tradition and family life. Thus there may be conflict with the family and community upon conversion.

Bridges:

1. Establish friendly relationships with Hindus. They are often found in many communities where Indian immigrants are common. They are often involved in local businesses.
2. Talk to your Hindu friend about the Christian concept of God (monotheism) and that He is the creator of all that exists.
3. Explain the biblical concept of sin as opposed to *karma*.
4. Tell your friend about Jesus and how He is the unique incarnation of God. Talk about His life, His death as atonement for sin, and about His bodily resurrection.
5. Give your friend a New Testament in his own language and ask him to read about Jesus. Ask his opinion of what it says.



Islam

Estimated North American Adherents:

4-8 million people

People Groups Impacted:

Arab Immigrants

Iraqi and Iranian Immigrants

African Americans

Pakistani Immigrants

Some African Immigrants

Some Asian Indian Immigrants

Some East Asian Immigrants

Action Points for Churches, Associations, and State Conventions:

1. Partner with NAMB in states where the above people groups are prevalent to host training events for Interfaith Evangelism Specialists (IES).
2. Recruit interested individuals to attend the IES training events and follow through for IES certification in Islam.
3. Utilize IE Specialists trained in Islam to hold local events training Baptists as effective witnesses.
4. Utilize 4truth.net materials on Islam.
5. Promote distribution and use of *The Cross and the Crescent* DVD (only available in English).
6. Promote distribution and use of *The Cross and the Crescent* training manual, particularly in areas where the Muslim populations are high.
7. Partner with SBC ethnic fellowships of people groups that include significant Muslim populations to start new congregations.
8. Partner with collegiate evangelism and campus ministries at colleges and universities with significant Muslim populations.
9. Work with Baptist prison and military chaplaincy to conduct training in Islam for relating to and evangelizing Muslim prisoners and military personnel.



Barriers:

1. Muslims regard Jesus as a prophet and in no way the Son of God or divine. In their view, such a claim is blasphemous.
2. Muslims also believe that the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity is a form of polytheism.
3. Muslims do not see a need to become Christians, since they believe that Muhammad was the final “seal” of the prophets.
4. Muslims regard their holy book, the *Qur'an*, as superior to the Bible in accuracy and authority. They are taught that the Bible, though originally divinely inspired, was corrupted by Christians and is unreliable.
5. Muslims do not believe Jesus was crucified on the cross or rose from the dead. They do not believe that substitutionary atonement is necessary for salvation.
6. Muslims believe that salvation is attained by being a faithful Muslim, practicing the “Five Pillars” of the faith, living a morally upright life, and obeying Allah’s (God’s) commands as taught in the *Qur'an*.
7. Many Muslims believe that Christians are immoral since they see “Christians” (all Westerners, as they see it) drinking and engaging in immoral activities on TV and in movies.
8. Many Muslims from Middle Eastern lands identify Christianity with the Crusades and the atrocities done by some in the name of Christ.
9. Some Muslims regard Christian worship as irreverent with loud singing, men and women sitting together, people writing in their Bibles, etc.
10. Many Christians have misconceptions about Muslims such as thinking they are all Arabs (most are not) or that they are all terrorists.

Bridges:

1. Take time to build relationships with Muslims.
2. Help to correct any misconceptions Muslims may have about Christianity (such as their view of the Trinity).
3. Focus on Jesus Christ and who He is according to the New Testament. Give them a New Testament (the *Injil*) in their language. Ask him to read the Gospels and ask his opinion of what it says about Jesus.



Jehovah's Witnesses

Estimated North American Adherents:
1.2 million people

People Groups Impacted:
Anglo Americans
African Americans
Mexican Americans

Action Points for Churches, Associations, and State Conventions:

1. Partner with NAMB where Jehovah's Witnesses are numerous or growing to host training events for Interfaith Evangelism Specialists (IES).
2. Recruit interested individuals to attend the IES training events and follow through for IES certification in Jehovah's Witnesses.
3. Utilize IE Specialists trained in Jehovah's Witnesses to hold local events training Baptists as effective witnesses.
4. Promote and encourage use of the *In the Name of Jehovah* DVD (choose English, Spanish, or closed caption through menu selection).
5. Utilize 4truth.net materials on Jehovah's Witnesses.
6. Partner with SBC ethnic fellowships of people groups that include significant Jehovah's Witness populations or that Jehovah's Witnesses are actively proselytizing.



Barriers:

1. Most Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs), unless converts, have been indoctrinated in the beliefs of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society from childhood and regard them as absolutely correct.
2. JWs regard their translation of the Bible (*New World Translation*) as the most accurate and their organization as its only valid interpreter.
3. JWs will not accept reading or study materials from non-JW sources, especially those critical of their faith. Doing so may lead to disciplinary action by the organization.
4. JWs aggressively seek to make converts of Christians and adherents of other faiths, so they normally do not listen to other explanations of the Bible or doctrines.
5. JWs are very reluctant to question openly the beliefs and practices of their organization. They fear that they may be disciplined or disfellowshipped (excommunicated), whereby they would face severe ostracism from their family and JW friends (including total shunning).
6. JWs tend to avoid social interactions with people outside their faith. Nonetheless, JWs are often involved in business and their children attend public schools.
7. JWs use common Christian and biblical words to describe aspects of their beliefs as they understand them. Most doctrinal terms are radically redefined and contrary to historic Christian teaching.
8. JWs deny the Christian doctrines of the Holy Trinity and the deity of Jesus Christ. They regard them as pagan corruptions of the oneness of God (Jehovah).
9. JWs are forbidden by their organization to celebrate all patriotic or religious holidays and activities. This enhances the separateness and isolation they feel from others in society.

Bridges:

1. Since JWs are Bible believers, they do acknowledge its authority. This is a good starting place for a witness.
2. Building relationships with JWs may be difficult given their isolation, but there may be opportunities in work or school settings.
3. Christians should never ridicule JWs because they do not salute the flag or celebrate holidays. These could provide opportunities to ask them questions that may lead to a witness.
4. JWs often go door-to-door in neighborhoods distributing their literature and seeking to make converts. These are excellent opportunities for Christians, if adequately prepared, to share their testimonies and Jesus with them.



Judaism

Estimated North American Adherents:

6 million people

People Groups Impacted:

Ethnic Jewish Americans and Canadians

Russian and other European

Jewish Immigrants

Some Hispanic Americans

Action Points for Churches, Associations, and State Conventions:

1. Utilize information from the Pasche Institute for Jewish Ministries in Dallas, Texas. www.pascheinstitute.org; 4010 Gaston Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75246; 214-818-1312. The Pasche Institute is a ministry of Criswell College.
2. Work with state and associational leaders in communities of high Jewish populations (e.g., New York, Miami, St. Louis, etc.) to enhance Jewish outreach efforts.
3. Partner with the Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowship to start messianic congregations (www.sbmessianic.net).
4. Partner with collegiate evangelism and campus ministries at colleges and universities with significant Jewish populations.



Barriers:

1. Most Jewish people do not see a need to acknowledge Jesus as their Savior. They believe they are still under the covenant of Abraham and saved under that relationship with God.
2. Most Jews may regard Jesus as a great Jewish reformer or rabbi (teacher) but do not accept him as Messiah (Savior).
3. Many Jews are reluctant to embrace Jesus because of the many persecutions against their people done in the name of Christ. For many Jews, Christian evangelism is considered highly offensive.
4. Many, if not most, Jews today regard themselves only as culturally Jewish and do not practice or, in many cases, even believe their faith's tenets.
5. In many cases, if a Jewish person accepts Jesus, he or she may face severe ostracism from his family and Jewish community. This is a major barrier for many Jews who may consider Christ.
6. Most Jews do not regard the New Testament with any sense of divine authority.
7. Many Jews, particularly in "Reform (liberal) Judaism," do not have a clear concept of life after death or may not believe in it at all.

Bridges:

1. Take time to build relationships with Jewish people before engaging them with the gospel. If you do share your faith too soon, it may lead to a break in the friendship.
2. Focus on Jesus, not Christianity. Share about His life and claims to be the Messiah.
3. Use the Old Testament to demonstrate how Jesus fulfilled prophecy as the Messiah.
4. Share your testimony of faith in Christ.



New Age Spirituality

Estimated North American Adherents:

Unknown – no formal membership, but as many as 20 million people may be involved in some form of New Age spirituality.

People Groups Impacted:

American and Canadian Anglos
Some African Americans
Some Native Americans and
First Nations (aboriginal) Canandians
Some Jewish Americans
Some Asian Americans

Action Points for Churches, Associations, and State Conventions:

1. Partner with NAMB to host New Age training events for Interfaith Evangelism Specialists (IES).
2. Recruit interested individuals to attend the IES training events and follow through for IES certification in New Age.
3. Utilize IE Specialists trained in New Age to hold local events training Baptists as effective witnesses.
4. Utilize 4truth.net materials on New Age.
5. Partner with collegiate evangelism and campus ministries at colleges and universities where New Age ideas are being promoted.
6. Plan to attend and participate in New Age fairs, festivals, or expositions where Bibles or other Christian resources can be distributed and witnessing opportunities may occur.



Barriers:

1. New Age spirituality is actually a broad umbrella term for a diversity of spiritual beliefs, organizations, and practices. As one pundit (teacher) put it, “Trying to define the New Age movement is like nailing Jell-O to the wall.”
2. These diverse movements include New Thought, Theosophy, astrology, Westernized Buddhism, and Hinduism (e.g., some forms of yoga), alternative medicines, spiritualism, spirit channeling, divination, and many others.
3. This lack of doctrinal and organizational cohesion makes it difficult for Christians to know exactly how to approach a New Ager with the gospel message.
4. Many New Agers regard Christianity as doctrinally confining, intolerant of other views, hypocritical, and morally restrictive.
5. New Agers generally have an unbiblical pantheistic theology, believing God is all and all is God.
6. New Agers generally have a monistic (“all is one”) worldview of reality.
7. Many New Agers believe in reincarnation and karma.
8. Since all is God and God is all, then most New Agers regard humans as divine. The goal is to discover and experience the divinity within.
9. Many New Agers regard Jesus as a highly evolved, spiritually enlightened man who realized the “Christ Principle,” or innate divinity, present inside him, as it is in all people.
10. Most New Agers have a relativistic view of morality, though they generally favor doing good to others and saving the earth.
11. Many New Agers are convinced that the earth is on the verge of a new era of spiritual enlightenment and peace as people’s minds are transformed.

Bridges:

1. People involved in New Age spirituality are open to new ideas and experiences and are not limited to materialistic and rationalistic concepts of truth and knowledge.
2. Christians can affirm the New Agers’ search for truth and spiritual reality. In most cases they are willing to discuss spiritual issues.
3. When sharing with New Agers, the Christian should ask them to explain their personal views about God, Jesus, life after death, etc.
4. The Christian should sensitively explain the implications of the New Age belief system, such as pantheism implying that God is impersonal or that the law of karma implies there are no innocent sufferers.
5. Show the New Ager the inherent contradictions in their philosophy and the reality of their lives. For example, if there are no moral absolutes, then how can they assert anything or any behavior is wrong, including intolerance or even murder.
6. Offer the New Ager a Bible and ask him to read the Gospels about Jesus. Ask his opinion of what it says.
7. Ask the New Ager what things he or she is doing to relieve human suffering, encourage peace, help the environment, strengthen families, or promote other social causes. They may say they do so by raising consciousness, meditating on the need, or through some other purely metaphysical expression. Show them how, in the name of Christ, Christians are actively involved in these issues by building hospitals, doing family ministries, sending disaster relief teams, supporting missions, etc.



Roman Catholicism

Estimated North American Adherents:
75 million people

People Groups Impacted:

Mexican Immigrants, Mexican Americans
Cuban Americans, Puerto Ricans
Italian Americans, Polish Americans
Haitians, French Canadians, Irish Americans
American and Canadian Roman Catholic Anglos
French Descent Louisianans
Filipino Immigrants, Some Korean Immigrants
Some American Samoans

Action Points for Churches, Associations, and State Conventions:

1. Partner with NAMB where the above people groups are prevalent to host training events for Interfaith Evangelism Specialists (IES).
2. Recruit interested individuals to attend the IES training events and follow through for IES certification in Roman Catholicism.
3. Utilize IE Specialists trained in Roman Catholicism to hold local events training Baptists as effective witnesses.
4. Utilize 4truth.net materials on Roman Catholicism.
5. Partner with SBC ethnic fellowships of people groups that include significant Roman Catholic populations.
6. Partner with collegiate evangelism and campus ministries at colleges and universities with significant Roman Catholic populations.



Barriers:

1. Most Roman Catholics, even if they are not active, are steeped in the traditions and doctrines of the church (see following).
2. In many cases, a person's cultural heritage is closely tied to Roman Catholicism. This is especially true for Latin Americans and some Europeans (French, Polish, etc.).
3. Roman Catholics believe there are two levels of sin. Venial sins are minor ones that affect one's relationship with God but are easily forgiven. Mortal sins are major ones that will disqualify them from heaven.
4. Most Roman Catholics have a notion that salvation is primarily earned through works and moral living. The doctrine of salvation by grace alone is foreign to their understanding.
5. They also see the various sacraments of the church as essential to one's salvation. These include baptism, confirmation, the Lord's Supper (Eucharist), matrimony, penance, holy orders, and anointing of the sick.
6. Most Roman Catholics regard theirs as the one true universal church since they have a pope, seen as the apostolic successor to Peter.
7. Roman Catholics also regard Mary as the sinless Mother of God and thus in a special relationship to Christ and God. Thus many Catholics revere and pray to her almost on the same level as Jesus.
8. Roman Catholic beliefs about life after death include having to spend time in purgatory to purge oneself from sin before entering into heaven (if good enough). They also have no real assurance of salvation.
9. Some Roman Catholics, as many as 25%, though members of the church, do not really believe the doctrines of the church and may embrace liberal theology or other belief systems (New Age, etc.).
10. Some Catholics may regard evangelical Christianity as too strict in personal moral values. For example, Catholics see no conflict between their church's ethical teachings and the moderate use of alcoholic beverages or legalized gambling.
11. Roman Catholics, though acknowledging the divine authority of the Bible, do not regard it as the only source of spiritual truth. Popes, church councils, and tradition are also accepted as equal to it.

Bridges:

1. Most Roman Catholics are believers in the essential doctrines of Christianity including the Holy Trinity, the deity and humanity of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, and heaven and hell. Thus, in most cases, there is not a need to convince them of the historical truth of Christianity.
2. In some cases, evangelicals and Roman Catholics share common moral concerns. For instance, most evangelicals and Catholics support pro-life public policy positions.
3. Focus on the need for a personal relationship with God through Christ. Most Catholics, even if devout, do not have that kind of faith.
4. Building genuine personal relationships with Catholics is the best way to engage them with the gospel.
5. Focus one's witness on the basics of the gospel: salvation by grace through faith in Jesus alone. Do not get side-tracked by denominational issues or personal ethical questions.
6. Ask God to open opportunities for you to talk with your Catholic friend and share your testimony of assurance of salvation.



Sikhism

Estimated North American Adherents:

500,000 people

People Groups Impacted:

Some Indian Immigrants (Punjabi)

Indo-Canadians (mostly in
British Columbia and Ontario)

Action Points for Churches, Associations, and State Conventions:

1. Partner with NAMB where the above people groups are prevalent to host training events for Interfaith Evangelism Specialists (IES).
2. Recruit interested individuals to attend the IES training events and follow through for IES certification in Sikhism.
3. Utilize IE Specialists trained in Sikhism to hold local events training Baptists as effective witnesses.
4. Utilize 4truth.net materials on Sikhism.
5. Partner with SBC ethnic fellowships of people groups that include significant Sikh populations to start new congregations.
6. Partner with collegiate evangelism and campus ministries at colleges and universities with significant Sikh populations.



Barriers:

1. Sikhism is a monotheistic synthesis of Hinduism and Islam, so they have no understanding of the Christian concept of the Holy Trinity.
2. Some Sikhs regard Jesus as a guru (teacher) but inferior to Sikh founder Guru Nanak (1469-1539).
3. Sikh communities tend to remain strong even in North American areas where they have been present for over a century, such as in British Columbia.
4. Sikhs adhere to traditional cultural and religious practices such as men not cutting their hair or beards and having regular temple worship events.
5. Sikhs retain the Hindu concepts of karma and reincarnation and cannot understand Christian ideas of heaven and hell.
6. In some cases of recent immigrants, language may be a barrier to an effective witness. However, most North American Sikhs speak English.
7. Most Sikhs have little or no knowledge of the Bible, only their own scriptures called the *Adi Granth*.

Bridges:

1. Since Sikhs have been in North America for a long time, they are familiar with western culture and usually are open to developing friendly relationships.
2. Christians can begin with the commonalities of their faiths such as monotheism.
3. The Christian can ask the Sikh what he knows about Jesus and offer him a copy of the New Testament to read.
4. Sikhs may be open to visiting a church service. However, Christians should be ready to respond positively in turn to the Sikh's invitation to his temple.
5. Recognize that Sikhs have a long and proud history in India and Canada, and commend them for their contributions to those societies.



Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)

Estimated North American Adherents:
200,000 people

People Groups Impacted:
American and Canadian Anglos
Some African Americans

Action Points for Churches, Associations, and State Conventions:

1. Partner with NAMB to host UUA training events for Interfaith Evangelism Specialists (IES).
2. Recruit interested individuals to attend the IES training events and follow through for IES certification in the Unitarian Universalist Association.
3. Utilize IE Specialists trained in UUA to hold local events training Baptists as effective witnesses.
4. Utilize 4truth.net materials on UUA.
5. Partner with collegiate evangelism and campus ministries at colleges and universities with UUA student organizations.



Barriers:

1. Most people in the Unitarian Universalist Association of Churches (UUA) are either atheist or agnostic in their view of God. In any case, they reject the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity.
2. Most members of the UUA do not recognize the Bible as authoritative or uniquely inspired in any way.
3. Members of the UUA reject the deity of Jesus and do not regard Him as any more than a moral teacher or religious reformer.
4. Most members of the UUA believe that reason is the way to truth, are philosophically naturalistic, and reject the supernatural and divine revelation.
5. Some members of the UUA are believers in paganism and practice nature worship.
6. Most members of the UUA are humanistic in values, believe mankind is basically good, and believe they can find their own self-fulfillment in life.
7. The UUA has no stated view of life after death. Most members do not believe in it or hold unbiblical ideas such as reincarnation or universalism. Nearly all reject the Christian doctrine of hell.
8. Most UUA members usually question any formal or absolute system of right and wrong, believe ethics and morals are relative, and believe the highest virtue is tolerance of all beliefs and lifestyles.

Bridges:

1. Christians should try to develop friendly relationships with those in the UUA so they may have respectful conversations about spiritual issues.
2. Since the UUA has no formal doctrine, Christians should begin by asking the UUA member what his or her personal beliefs are about God and Jesus.
3. Christians can affirm the UUA's beliefs about religious freedom and tolerance of the ideas of others. Make sure they understand that by "tolerance" Christians mean they affirm not only a person's right to believe, but also their right to disagree and to persuade (evangelize).



Wicca (Witchcraft)

Estimated North American Adherents:
250,000 to 500,000 people

People Groups Impacted:
Canadian and American Anglos
Anglo teenagers and young adults
(some are “Goths”)

Strategic Processes for Churches, Associations, and State Conventions:

1. Partner with NAMB to host Wicca training events for Interfaith Evangelism Specialists (IES).
2. Recruit interested individuals to attend the IES training events and follow through for IES certification in Wicca.
3. Utilize IE Specialists trained in Wicca to hold local events training Baptists as effective witnesses.
4. Utilize 4truth.net materials on Wicca.
5. Partner with collegiate evangelism and campus ministries at colleges and universities where Wicca is being practiced.
6. Work with Baptist prison and military chaplaincy to conduct training in Wicca for relating to and evangelizing Wiccan prisoners and military personnel.



Barriers:

1. Wiccans generally believe that their faith is a revival of pre-Christian European pagan nature and fertility worship. Thus they regard Christianity as an imposition on those beliefs in the middle ages.
2. Most Wiccans reject the biblical view of God and embrace either a pantheistic or panentheistic worldview where everything is in god, or gods or goddesses are in everything.
3. Wiccans often practice magic (or magick) to exert supernatural influence on the world and people.
4. Wiccans conduct ritual ceremonies in which people may be possessed by the spirit of a god or goddess.
5. Wiccans are often mistaken by Christians for Satanists, which leads them to feel angry or fearful of Christians.
6. Most Wiccans know little of the Bible or Jesus and have rejected organized religion of any kind.

Bridges:

1. Christians should not be afraid of developing friendly relationships with Wiccans. They are not Satanists and will not cast evil spells on them.
2. Allow Wiccans to explain what they believe and why they have adopted that faith. Many times it is a reaction to conventional faith or rebellion against authority.
3. Christians should offer Wiccans a Bible, ask them to read the Gospels, and then ask them to give their opinion of Jesus.
4. Christians should become knowledgeable of Wicca so Wiccans will not think they are just prejudiced against them and their faith.



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