

# What's the Difference?

- **Foundational assumptions**

- « I believe that Christianity is not merely the first amongst equals.
- « We will respect all faiths. We do not ridicule the heartfelt beliefs of our brothers and sisters, even when we disagree. Instead, we strive to learn and witness.
- « My perspective is shaped by reformed theology, which I believe allows for the closest and purest interaction with God's Holy Word.
- « I will not seek to “prove” any particular set of truths over and against others.
- « Questions, discussions, debates, and even arguments are encouraged. We're children of God, not passive robots.

- **Theological fine print**

- « We cannot possibly delve into the depths of any faith or denomination in four weeks.
- « There is great diversity in all faiths. The general beliefs of a particular faith which we discuss do not speak for each sect or each believer within that faith.
- « Every faith tends to have a gap between theory and practice.
- « Many belief systems are more historical than contemporary.
- « Those who practice a particular faith will not always agree with how outsiders interpret or describe their faith.
- « In 21st century America, theological differences between denominations have faded, as proximity and program have trumped faith and belief.
- « I do not know everything about every faith; and even if I did, there are not always definitive or obvious answers to faith questions. I will be open and honest if I need to research a question before responding.

- **Buddhism**

- « The Buddha...Buddha (or “the Enlightened One”) refers to Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. They believe he lived many previous lives that he might attain enlightenment and, thereby, lead us on the right paths.
- « Four Noble Truths
  - + Suffering exists
  - + Suffering arises from attachment to desires
  - + Suffering ceases when this desire ceases
  - + Freedom from suffering is possible by practicing the Eightfold Path, which centers around Wisdom, Morality, & Meditation
- « Friends along the way:
  - + Loving kindness
  - + Compassion
  - + Sympathetic Joy
  - + Equanimity (balanced demeanor)
- « Fetters on the way:
  - + Self-delusion,                   + Doubt
  - + Clinging to Ritual           + Sensuous Lust
  - + Conceit                           + Restlessness
  - + Ignorance                       + Ill Will
  - + Greed for Fine Material Existence
  - + Greed for Immaterial Existence
- « Comparison:
  - + “You make the effort,” as opposed to “I will lift you up.”
  - + In Christianity, suffering arises from sin. There is no explanation in Buddhism.
  - + Buddhists deny existence of a personal God.
  - + Buddhists generally accept Jesus as a “good teacher.”
  - + Buddhism strives to do away with suffering, but, surprisingly, does not emphasize social ministries.
  - + Buddhists are called to love everyone in general, but, in practice, no one specifically.