

Feb. 9 Topic: Buddhism

Homework Feb. 9-15 (for discussion on Feb. 16)

To view the Buddhism lecture online:

<http://www.tlc.org/tuesday-morning-bible-study/>

Day 1: What Buddha got right

Buddha observed somethings about human existence that hit the mark. Today we're going to see how the Bible agrees with many of these observations.

1. Read Psalm 90:5-6, and 10. What is the Psalmist's observation about human life?
2. Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11. In this passage, Solomon describes the various craving and desires he indulged and other things he pursued in order to bring meaning to his life. List his various pursuits.

What did he discover about these pursuits? Have you ever thought you could bring meaning and satisfaction to your life through any of these pursuits?

3. How are these observations similar to what the Buddha observed?

Prayer: Confess to God how you have been pursuing things that will not bring you ultimate joy and satisfaction in life. Ask him to help you seek him, the one who is the answer to all the longings of your heart.

Day 2: Permanence and Impermanence

Yesterday we saw that Buddha made some accurate observations about human life. But for the next few days we will see how he missed some important truths.

1. Read Psalm 90:2 and Revelation 1:8. Buddhism teaches that nothing in existence is permanent. How do these verses contradict that claim?

2. Read Psalm 102:25-27. How is God contrasted with his creation? What does it mean when it says “God remains the same”?

3. Buddhism rejects the whole idea of a Creator God. What difference does it make to know there is a God who was, and is, and is to come?

Prayer: Praise God as the One who was, and is, and is to come. Thank him for not just creating this world, but for desiring to know you and for you to know him.

Day 3: God’s live-giving abilities

The Buddhist insists that nothing in existence has “life in itself”, therefore no life or “self” can be permanent. The Bible teaches otherwise.

1. Read Isaiah 40:6-8, 21-25, and 28-31. How are humans described in these verses? How is God described? What point is Isaiah trying to make by comparing humans and God?

2. Read John 5:24-27. Look first at verse 26. What does this verse tell you about the “source” of God’s life? How does this truth lend credibility to the offer of life being made to human beings in the rest of the passage?

3. Read John 10:25-30. According to these verses, what is the destiny of those who “listen” to the voice of Jesus and follow him? How does this differ from the Buddhist vision of what future “you” might have?

Prayer: Thank God for his love and for the gift of eternal life that is given to you through Jesus! Thank him for the wonderful future life he has planned for you.

Day 4: Suffering

For the Buddhist, the ultimate solution for human suffering is to quit being reborn. This can only happen by following a difficult and complex spiritual path over many lifetimes. In the biblical story we see a different solution and a startling paradox: the end of suffering for all is made possible *because* of one person's suffering.

Read Isaiah 53. In this chapter we see a remarkable prophecy about a "Servant of the Lord" who will obediently and willingly endure intense sorrow and suffer for "us all". Of course, this was fulfilled in the life of Jesus. In Philippians 2:5-8 we are told that Jesus emptied himself, took on human form, and humbled himself even to the point of going to the cross—for "us all".

As you reflect on these verses, what does it mean to you that God was willing to take on human flesh, live among us, and become a "man of sorrows and familiar with suffering"?

Jesus endured the *ultimate* suffering, on the cross, to redeem us and give us life. How does that change the way you view suffering? How does it change the way you view your own suffering?

Prayer: Thank God for taking such drastic measure to redeem you. Thank Jesus for taking your sins upon himself, at great cost. Ask him to help you be bold in sharing this good news to a suffering world. If you are in a season of suffering, ask him to comfort you with his promises.

Day 5 & 6: Desires

In the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha identifies *tanha*—thirst, craving, desire, clinging—as the primary cause of suffering. Does the Bible agree with this assessment? Do *all* our human longings, cravings and desires lead to suffering, or are some of them good? Over the next two days, look up these verses and list things the Bible says are *good* desires, *good* thirsts, *good* cravings . . . and what the Bible says are sinful, harmful or ultimately unfulfilling desires.

Scripture	Good desires	Sinful desires
Deut. 5:21		
Psalms 37:4		
Psalms 40:16		
Psalms 42:1-2		
Psalms 63:7-8		
Psalms 84:2		
Psalms 145:18-20		
Prov. 2:3-5		
Matthew 5:6		
2 Corinthians 5:2		
1 Tim. 6:9-10		
2 Tim. 4:8		
1 Peter 2:2		
Hebrews 11:16		
James 1:14-15		
James 4:1-3		
1 John 2:15-17		
Rev. 22:17		

Prayer: Thank God that he has created you with longings and desires that are good and righteous. Confess those desires you might have that are harmful or sinful. Ask him to help you long to become like Jesus.