

Worldview Onion Peeling Helps



What people with these worldviews may believe about
God, Man, Sin, Death, Christ, Cross, Faith, and Life

Agnostic Animist Buddhist Hindu
Biblical/Non-Believer
New Age Jehovah's Liberal Protestant/Pluralist
Muslim Witness Materialist/Naturalist Scientology
Orthodox Postmodern Mormon Roman Catholic

And some tips to consider while talking with them.

One page/worldview? Is this all there is?

Yep. First of all, you need to know that there are already a lot of good hints in the Worldview Persona cards used in the seminar, so this material should be used in *conjunction* with the helps already on the persona cards, available at www.GoodSoil.com/resources

Also, this in no way should be considered the definitive research on any one of these worldviews. There is a lot of material out there on all of them. If your host culture has a worldview that is dominant, you should research that worldview more extensively. This is intended to give general helps for all the worldviews.

Where did this come from?

Research was done

- On the internet
- In books
- In interviewing missionaries and using from some of their research who work predominantly with a particular worldview.

At the end of each worldview page a short list of helpful books/sites are given.

Significant books read in preparation of this material that should be part of anyone's library who is serious about peeling worldview onions:

Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult, Nick Pollard, Inter Varsity Press, 1997.

The Gospel in a Pluralist Society, Lesslie Newbigin, Eerdmans, 1989.

The Open Secret, Lesslie Newbigin, Eerdmans, 1995.

Understanding World Religions, Irving Hexham, Harper Collins, 2014.

Missionaries interviewed and/or who contributed according to the dominant worldview on their respective fields: Scott Carter, Harry Gebert, George King, Dale Marshfield, John Morgan, Jim Ruff, Jane Schmitz, Fred Seiferth, Jack Shiflett, Gil Thomas.

We encourage you to never stop researching the dominant worldview in your host culture.

How do I use it?

The first part of each page gives a brief synopsis of what one with that particular worldview would believe about the eight concepts we consider the Eight Essential Truths of the Gospel. Of necessity, this is very brief, but it at least gives one an idea of how they differ in belief from one who believes in Jesus Christ as personal savior from sin. What we believe about these eight Gospel concepts can be found in *The Story of Hope*, pages 32-39.

The second section gives a couple hints as to how to converse with someone from this worldview as you try to "peel their worldview onion." Remember, the worldview persona cards have some other hints—use these two documents together.

Finally, at the bottom of each page at least one or two resources are given where you can get more help on a particular worldview.

Have fun peeling onions!

Worldview Onion Peeling Helps – *Agnostic*

What They Believe

God – Does not believe or disbelieve in God; the agnostic believes that we cannot know whether or not God exists.

Man – Agnosticism comes in at least two versions: hard and soft. The hard agnostic would say that one cannot know anything for sure. Therefore, an agnostic can't know anything about anything, including each of these propositions.

Sin – Most would be aware of evil in the world, but without a solid belief in the Bible, neither the origin nor the consequence of this evil can be known.

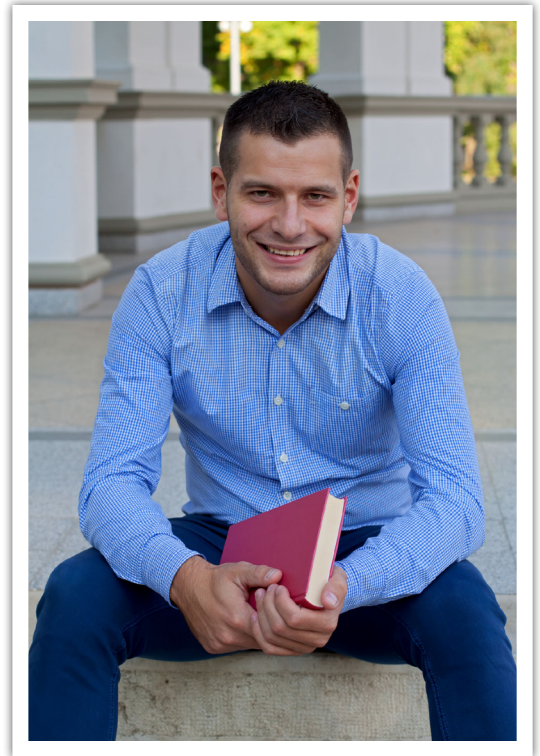
Death – Again, agnostics are aware of death, but would have no authoritative document which could tell her what happens after death.

Christ – Without a god or any way for this non-being to communicate to mankind, there would be no existence of or reason to believe in a redeemer from sin which we don't know why exists or what the results of it may be.

Cross – Therefore, the cross would have no purpose other than being a cruel, merciless judgment employed by the Romans centuries ago.

Faith – Agnosticism is simply a set of tenets and not a religion. Therefore, faith is unnecessary.

Life – As with God, life after death—eternal life—is unknowable.



Conversation hints that could break through levels as you carefully peel an agnostic's worldview onion:

If someone appears to be “looking for a fight” it may be better to ***move on*** to someone else and only come back to him when he is truly seeking or facing a crisis that opens him up.

While ***praying*** that God will help him realize his need for Christ, we can ***talk in natural conversations about how God gives us peace***, or helps us in certain situations, which may ***create curiosity*** in an agnostic about his principal question: Can we really know there is a God? Apparently his friend (that's you!), has a relationship with Him! Developing a sincere relationship with our agnostic friends can open their minds and hearts to the possibility of God.

Helpful Books and/or Sites:

Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry (CARM): <http://carm.org/what-is-agnosticism>

Ray Comfort has a series of interesting films (available on youtube.com) with people on the street using logic to try to show them that agnosticism/atheism doesn't make sense which may give ideas for dealing with them, but know this: Ray Comfort's talent may be difficult to reproduce by the average Christian.

Worldview Onion Peeling Helps – *Animist*

What They Believe

God – Normally their concept of a Creator God is that He is distant, impersonal, and works slower than Satan, so working through Satan or with a sorcerer is preferred. A loving, holy God is inconceivable. The spirit world controls all and is to be feared.

Man – Man is considered the center of the universe.

Sin – Offending traditional customs which everyone follows is “sin” (Many times the word does not exist.), or ruinous. “Getting caught” is wrong, not breaking some moral standard. Sins are socially defined. [i.e. adultery (don’t get caught!) could be considered wrong while fornication would not.]

Death – Death is the passage to the spirit world and is not necessarily judgment for sin. Passing to be with their dead ancestors may be more appealing than living with God forever.

Christ – With a lack of understanding of sin, there is no need of a Savior. Mediators are used to settle differences, so use of this term for Christ may be helpful in illustrating reconciliation.

Cross – One animistic group (the *Kabiye* in Togo) have a term, *nuu yabu*, which means to have one’s head purchased and may have come from times when slavery was rampant. This type of substitution, when found in a culture, may be able to be used in referring to Christ’s substitutionary death on the cross.

Faith – Words for faith, though existent, may be foreign, difficult to understand, and need explanation in animistic cultures (as in the *Kabiye*). Care should be taken to find and use words that clearly convey the concept of belief and transfer of trust from self to another.

Life – Animistic groups may lack this concept, having focused on the spirit world (which includes their ancestors) which actively participates in the destiny of the living.



Conversation hints that could break through levels as you carefully peel the worldview onion of a non-believer with a biblical worldview:

Remember that the spirit world is considered powerful; the spirits control everything. Try to find out which spirit(s) is the most important (fearsome) to your friend; which one is she trying to appease? As you find out these things, look for Bible stories that address the issues she is facing (e.g. If dreams are an issue, Joseph and Daniel clearly teach that God is the only revealer of dreams; if powerful spirits are creating fear, other Bible events show how God is greater than all spirits; God created all spirit beings and is authoritative over those who are rebelling.)

Helpful Books and/or Sites:

Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts, Gailyn Van Rheenen, Baker Book House, 1991;

Quest for Power, Robert Blaschke, Guardian Books, 2001.

<http://www.reference.com/browse/animism>

Worldview Onion Peeling Helps – *Biblical/Non-Believer*

What They Believe

God, Man, Sin, Death, Christ, Cross, Faith, Life

– A non-believer who has somewhat of a biblical worldview (because of growing up hearing the gospel and/or attending church) may have a variety of views on these essential gospel elements. That is why peeling the worldview onion is particularly crucial with these folks. Just knowing the person was “raised Baptist, or Lutheran, or whatever” may give us an idea of where to start, but we will still need to probe to see what our friend *truly* believes about God, man, etc. The fact of the matter is that our friend’s former religion might teach that God is all-powerful, for example, but he never believed that, or something disillusioned him about that last year, for example, and he no longer holds to that truth. That said, understand that a non-believing person with a biblical worldview could “believe” basically everything you believe about all these gospel elements, but it is merely an intellectual assent—there is no faith or trust involved. He could also have a “biblical worldview” and have very little Bible knowledge.



Conversation hints that could break through levels as you carefully peel a Biblical/Non-Believer’s worldview onion:

Don’t assume anything! Just because someone grew up Baptist (or in some other Bible-teaching church) does not mean he *knows* what the Bible truly teaches nor (more importantly) that he *believes* what the Bible teaches. Many people in this category may never have heard or understood the Bible’s big story and how it all fits together. By asking questions we may uncover this fact and be able to offer them a way to gain that understanding.

If your friend is struggling with difficult questions (the validity of miracles, God sending people to Hell, etc.), don’t argue. You might share that you believe the Bible has the answers to these questions and you’d be glad to do a study or story time with her to discover the answers. If disbelief is a strong issue, but it is clear to both of you that your friend really does not know the Bible, you might try something like this: “I understand that you don’t believe in God (or whatever it is she says she doesn’t believe), but the Bible has so much we can learn about these things. I would encourage you to simply set aside your unbelief for now—let’s just see what the Bible says—then you can decide for yourself whether you believe it or not. What do you say?” In this way, the Holy Spirit can use God’s word to change a disbelieving heart.

Helpful Books and/or Sites:

How to Lead a Seeker Bible Discussion, Rebecca Pippert, Inter Varsity Press, 2003.

Worldview Onion Peeling Helps – *Buddhist*

What They Believe

God – Although a personal, all-powerful God is not taught in Buddhism, some of the branches of Buddhism see Buddha himself as a deity who can exhibit supernormal powers. However, there is no creator; the universe has always existed.

Man – Man is simply a bundle of properties, which when the body dies, are reincarnated according to pure deeds or evil deeds done. There is no “self,” no distinction between material and immaterial parts.

Sin – Sin, self, illness, etc. are not real. This breaks down, however, when they say that ignorance of one’s true self is sin that will keep one trapped in the death/rebirth cycle. Suffering is the true human problem which is brought about by desire.

Death – Many “hells” are stops along the way in the cycle of rebirth (*samsara*) until extinction.

Christ – A Christ-like figure, the *bodhisattva*, delayed entering into *nirvana*, returning to the wheel of *samsara*. Buddhism predates Christianity, but some see Jesus as a *bodhisattva*, giving up (sacrificing) his entry into nirvana for the sake of mankind.

Cross – This concept does not exist in Buddhism.

Faith – Although some sects believe that faith is the doorway into paradise; meditation prepares the mind for enlightenment.

Life – When desire stops, one enters into the ultimate state of existence, *nirvana*.



Conversation hints that could break through levels as you carefully peel a Buddhist’s worldview onion:

- Do you think this life is all there is? If you were to die, what would happen to you?
- Although you try to be the best person you can be, is anyone really perfect?
- Why do we feel guilty or ashamed; could it be that we were made to feel that way so that we would seek an answer to our evil thoughts and desires?
- What did the Buddha teach about desiring things? Didn’t he teach that desires lead to suffering? What other things did he teach? Can you keep all of his commands?
- Can you tell me a story about what you believe? Would you let me tell you a story from the Bible?
- What would it mean to you if there were a personal God and you could know Him?
- What does Buddhism teach about sacrifice? Do you know that God sent His Son into this world to die so that you might have life that goes on forever?

Helpful Books and/or Sites:

www.sacred-texts.com

www.khandro.net/deities.htm

Worldview Onion Peeling Helps – *Liberal Protestant/Pluralist*

What They Believe

God – These folks could believe anything from God being almighty Trinity as the Bible depicts Him to being “the Big Guy Upstairs” who has no power.

Man – For many the Bible is symbolic; not a true account, therefore, characters such as Adam and Eve are simply stories to teach lessons.

Sin, Death – As above, Adam and Eve are simply a story; the sin nature is not inherited, nor does Satan even exist. When a person dies, there is some way in which he will be rewarded for good and punished for evil done during his life, how one shows his faith and lives his life on earth are more important issues.

Christ – Some believe He came literally to this earth as a baby and grew to be the perfect God-Man; others believe His coming was symbolic for God’s incarnation; while still others would say we are all sons and daughters and Jesus was exemplary, but not God.

Cross, Faith, Life – Beliefs range from all will go to heaven (since God is so loving) to good works will get you saved, to baptism will save you. Some even see salvation after death as merely symbolic—there is no real life after death. Therefore, the cross carries little soteriological weight.



Conversation hints that could break through levels as you carefully peel a Liberal Protestant’s worldview onion:

Particularly for people in this situation, asking if they have read the Bible or understand it is important (even though this can help with nearly everyone). Many liberal Protestants *should* know the Bible but don’t and often admit it. Being able to then tell someone, “I have this easy to understand book—kind of a guide—that helps one get to know the Bible from beginning to end and understand its purpose” can bring a yes response to, “Would you be interested in going through it with me?” (*The Story of Hope* is such a guide.)

Don’t be judgmental about what they believe or don’t believe and don’t let contemporary issues like abortion or gay rights (which are often important to people with this worldview) get you sidetracked.

Helpful Books and/or Sites:

<http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/2001/06/What-Liberal-Protestants-Believe.aspx?p=2>

Worldview Onion Peeling Helps – Hindu

What They Believe

God – Most Hindus don't understand the creature/Creator distinction. A Hindu's hope is to discover that she is god while a Christian hopes to discover that God exists who can save her and the world in which she lives. One universal being brought about the cosmos and entered into everything in it (polytheism).

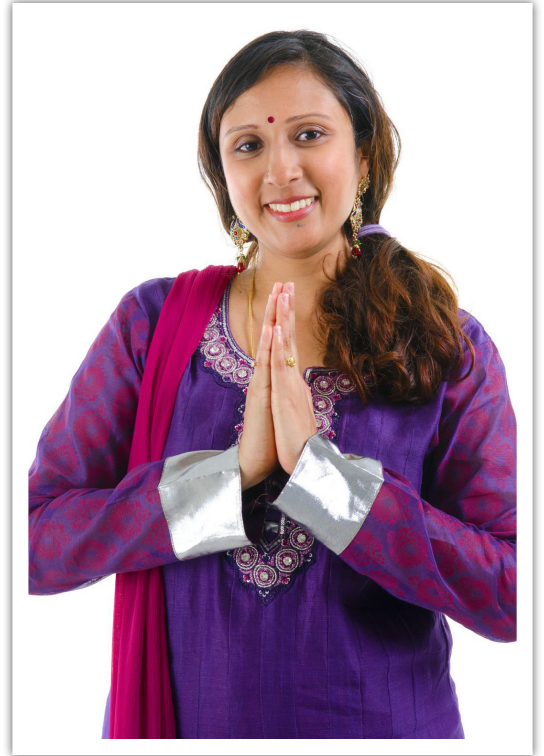
Man, Sin, Death, Christ, Cross – Humankind is not fallen; at their core, people are good, they are god.

Human suffering is the result of all that is bad in man—desire. The solution is escaping our material humanness. *Atman* (self—not the unique individual identity as Westerners see self—but the non-particularized, universal, collective self) is the core of human existence. It has no beginning or end; is outside of time and space; unchanging. "Those who realize the Self are . . . free from . . . death." (The Katha Upanishad)

This self does not need to be redeemed because it is eternal and good. Though the body will die, self never dies because it is born over and over again in a new body. Self is realized by denouncing desire since anger and pain are most often the result of human desire.

Jesus is respected as a teacher, but without the sin problem or the need for judgment, they cannot see the need of Jesus as Savior.

Faith, Life – There is really no need for faith. Banishment of desire is what brings immortality.



Conversation hints that could break through levels as you carefully peel a Hindu's worldview onion:

One of the missionaries interviewed who has worked for years with Hindus, said, "In my experience, the evangelization of Hindus requires teaching and connecting more than it does 'witnessing' in the North American sense. We must teach, pray, teach, love, teach, live, teach, pray, and then teach some more." Be prepared to discuss differences openly.

Chronological Bible teaching and storying are excellent methods because they expose Hindus to the creature/Creator distinction immediately. Get involved in their lives and share God's story with them, naturally in conversation.

Helpful Books and/or Sites:

"The Eternal Teaching: Hinduism" in *Eerdmans Handbook to the Worlds' Religions*, Eerdmans, 1982.

"Understanding the Hindu Worldview," Dale Marshfield available at www.GoodSoil.com/blog.

Worldview Onion Peeling Helps – *Jehovah's Witness*

What They Believe

God – Jehovah is the name of God the Father who has many titles (Almighty, Creator, Lord), but there is no Trinity. Jesus is the first created and the Holy Spirit is simply an “impersonal active force.”

Man, Sin, Death, Life – Because of disobedience in the Garden, human beings inherited death and sin. Suffering and vulnerability to disease accompanied this inheritance.

God allows Satan and his hosts to tempt humans to sin. This is a test of our faith in God.

When Jesus returns, He will raise the dead, joining dead bodies with their souls. Then all will be judged. Everlasting life (on a new earth) will be given to those judged righteous. The unrighteous will simply die, ceasing to exist. There is no torment in Hell for them.

Christ – Jesus is inferior to God, not part of a Godhead. A created spirit being, God's only son, He was sent to Earth as a perfect human.

Cross – When Jesus died, He sacrificed His life, paying the ransom to redeem mankind from sin and death. The Cross itself is a pagan symbol. Jesus did not die on a cross, but on a punishment stake.

Faith, Life – For salvation, we must demonstrate faith in God and Jesus as Savior *and* follow the practices (not observing birthdays and holidays, etc.), requirements, and sacraments of the faith. Fundamental of the above “practices” is “witnessing.”



Conversation hints that could break through levels as you carefully peel a Jehovah Witness's worldview onion:

Since Jehovah's Witness' views of contemporary issues (abortion, same-sex marriage) are similar to ours, one might build rapport here.

Questions one might use to go deeper in the Onion Peeling Process: What are *your* thoughts on the Jehovah Witness leadership predicting the end of the world incorrectly? What are your thoughts on Genesis 1: “God said, ‘Let us make man in our image?’” Who is “us”? Why in Revelation 22 is Jesus saying “I am the Alpha and the Omega the first and the last” if He is not God?

Helpful Books and/or Sites:

<http://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses>

<http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/What-Do-Jehovahs-Witnesses-Believe.aspx?p=2>

<http://christianity.about.com/od/jehovahswitnesses/a/jwbeliefs.htm>

Worldview Onion Peeling Helps – *Materialist/Naturalist*

What They Believe

God – They deny the existence of God. Everything happened (including how the universe came into being) and happens today as a result of natural properties and causes. There is no supernatural explanation. Even for a less philosophical materialist, matter is primary; spiritual and mental ideas are secondary.

Man – Humankind—all the world—came into existence through natural causes. Something like evolution—physical on physical—brought everything into being.

Sin – Since the naturalist doesn't start with God, she has no basis for objective truth or morality. Sin is a foreign concept.

Death – Since she can only work with what she sees in the physical realm, she cannot take a position on death. Nothing can be proved.

Christ – With no God and no sin, there is no judgment or need of redemption.

Cross – A materialist/naturalist's presuppositions will not allow her to believe that Jesus rose from the dead—even when presented with evidences. The tendency would be to accept by faith that, although the naturalistic explanation has not yet been found, it will be.

Faith – As stated above, the naturalist may display faith, but it is in her presupposition that nothing exists or happens outside of the physical world.

Life – Nothing can be known about life after death because it cannot be measured/studied.



Conversation hints that could break through levels as you carefully peel a Materialist's worldview onion:

You may ask your naturalist friend to prove naturalism scientifically. (It cannot be done—you can't prove that only the natural world exists; that there is no spiritual realm. One has to take it by faith.) Since that is the case, you could then ask your friend to simply look at the Bible through "different glasses;" through the presupposition that God does exist and has chosen to communicate with us. Ask her to let the Bible speak for itself and then decide. Then you can trust the Spirit to use His word to transform her thinking.

Helpful Books and/or Sites:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naturalism_\(philosophy\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naturalism_(philosophy))

<http://www.allaboutphilosophy.org/Materialism.htm>

<http://www.evangelismhelp.com/naturalism/>

Worldview Onion Peeling Helps – Mormon

What They Believe

God – God the Father (who has a body of flesh and bone), Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct personages; they are three gods. God the Father was at one time a mortal who has progressed to godhood.

Man – We existed eternally as individual intelligences. God married Mary and gave life to us as spirit children. We then came to earth in mortal bodies and can also achieve godhood and populate worlds as God did. This is called the Law of Eternal Progression.

Sin – Jesus (God's firstborn) and Lucifer (second born) presented their plans of salvation to God. Jesus' was accepted and Lucifer's rejected which prompted Lucifer to lead our other spirit-brothers and sisters (now demons) to rebel against God.

Adam and Eve were given conflicting commands: 1. Don't eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, 2. Multiply and fill the earth. However, they could not have children in the state of innocence. So choosing between mortality and immortality, they chose wisely, allowing for the procreation of bodies for all the spirit children still in heaven.

Death – At death sinners suffer punishment in Hell for a time but are able to be redeemed eventually by paying the price of their sin. "Outer darkness" is an eternal punishment reserved for those who hear the Mormon gospel, have opportunity to receive the Holy Ghost, but reject both.

Christ, Cross, Faith – Jesus, our older brother, while in preexistence progressed to godhood, then came to earth. Atonement was made **possible** in the Garden of Gethsemane, physical redemption by death on the cross and resurrection, but both are **made sure** by repenting, believing the Mormon gospel, and keeping the commandments. Faith in Christ alone is not sufficient; works are necessary. Baptism for the dead is to release those in "spirit prison" who never had the opportunity to become Mormons during their lives on earth.

Life – At death one goes either to spirit prison or paradise. Mormon spirits have the privilege of going to paradise where they will continue on to godhood while they preach to those in spirit prison. Those who receive the gospel in spirit prison are given the opportunity to receive proxy baptism—that is, if someone will be baptized for them.



Conversation hints that could break through levels as you carefully peel a Mormon's worldview onion:

Ask probing and insightful questions to see if your friend agrees with Mormon teaching or has his own twist. However, since Mormons often feel persecuted, avoid blunt statements and judgments. By asking questions, help her see she has placed her trust in a system that is not trustworthy.

Helpful Books and/or Sites:

www.ChristianAnswers.net

www.mormon.org

Worldview Onion Peeling Helps – Muslim

What They Believe

God – Allah (Arabic name for God used regardless of mother tongue) is One—not Trinity, no partners, no son. His characteristics are described by his 99 names: (some listed) eternal, transcendent, almighty, judge of all, absolute sovereign, gracious, merciful.

Man – God created the universe in six days and finished with his highest creation: Adam and Eve (mankind), before whom the angels bowed after their creation and who were made to serve God. Mankind was made with a limited free will and mortal; destined to die.

Sin – Unforgiveable sin is the failure to recognize the Oneness of God which manifests itself in idolatry and other wrong sinful actions (which can be forgiven).

Death – Once the body is in the grave, two frightful angels will interrogate one's soul about Muhammad. Confessing Muhammad as God's messenger results in conscious bliss and comfort until the final judgment. Martyrs go directly to paradise. However, those who answer the angels incorrectly will be tormented until judgment day.

Christ – People do not need a savior since only God decides who will be saved, although many hope Muhammad will intercede for them at the judgment. Jesus, the only person born of a virgin, is just a man (not God) who was a great prophet and miracle worker. He brought a new book the *Injil* (gospel) to the Jews. He is not to be worshiped as God and will, in fact, return and rebuke those that have done so.

Cross – Jesus did not actually die on the cross; people were deceived into thinking he was. Ransom cannot be made one person giving his life for another.

Faith – Belief in Islam, obeying Allah and Muhammad, and doing righteous deeds brings mercy.

Life – "The seventh heaven," or paradise is a place of beauty and delight.



Conversation hints that could break through levels as you carefully peel a Muslim's worldview onion:

Why is your family (extended) always around/so important to you? Is religion important to you? Do you celebrate any holidays in your religion? Can you tell me a bit about what you believe? These are "early-on" questions and people will appreciate your sincere interest in them and what they believe.

Then, you can get more specific: How does the Qur'an help you in your daily life? Why is Muhammad so important?

Helpful Books and/or Sites:

A Wind in the House of Islam, David Garrison, WIGTake Resources, 2014.

<http://www.islamreligion.com>

Worldview Onion Peeling Helps – *New Age*

What They Believe

God – New Agers generally believe in pantheism—God is everything; everything is God. Although some may talk of God in personal terms, most would see God as impersonal—a force or energy.

Man – Since everything is God, you and I are God, also—how exciting! (Except that rats and maggots are God, too. Oops.)

Sin, Death – Our lives and actions produce *karma* (not really sin) which is carried by our souls to the next life. Positive *karma* will move us toward a realization of unity with the All. Negative *karma* can prolong this journey for us and/or bring us back in a lower life form.

Christ – If all is One, then there is no right or wrong; there is no need of a savior. Though Jesus lived on this earth, He is only one of many great teachers who, through self-actualization, obtained the “Christ Spirit.” Many believe that Jesus studied Hinduism in India before beginning his ministry and was rejected and crucified for those Hindu teachings.

Cross – The cross has no meaning other than being the instrument of the cruel death of this one with the Christ Spirit whose teaching of Hinduism was rejected.

Faith – The doctrine of reincarnation produces a salvation by works mentality. Yoga, meditation, and other exercises can transform our consciousness to bring us back to what we have forgotten: that as part the All we are divine. These techniques will enlighten us to our true divinity, helping us realize that the sensation we have of being finite creatures is just an illusion.

Life – At death, we are reborn as babies (reincarnated) and begin again. This helps contribute to the idea of Monism—all is one.



Conversation hints that could break through levels as you carefully peel a New Ager's worldview onion:

Ask your friend what she believes about God and Jesus Christ (and listen to her answers!). With the diversity in the movement, you will want to be sure you are starting where your friend is and not going down trails that are not necessary to travel. After you know where she is coming from, carefully, lovingly show inconsistencies in her belief system. For example, ask, “You say there is no right or wrong way to God. If that is the case, how can you claim that our gospel is wrong? Don’t let a lack of results frustrate you. It may take time and many “hearings” of the gospel to get through.

Helpful Books and/or Sites:

<http://www.4truth.net/fourtruthpbworld.aspx?pageid=8589952991>

<http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1989/05/reaching-out-to-new-age-people>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Age

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Aquarius

Worldview Onion Peeling Helps – Orthodox

What They Believe and *Onion Peeling Questions*

God – He is transcendent, sovereign, angry, a mystery, beyond our intellectual comprehension. He is not only invisible, but inconceivable as well. *Do you believe that God desires a personal relationship with you?*

Man – Man's physical and spiritual parts are equally important. Man was made for "participation in God" (theosis). *Why did God create man? What is the highest good to which a man may attain? Is that goal still in effect, or not?*

Sin – Adam was not created perfect, but was endowed with the potential for perfection (lessening the gravity of the Fall). Instead of growing up into perfection as was God's plan for Adam, he disobeyed God's will, creating an existential barrier of mortality (as opposed to a legal barrier of sin). Adam and Eve sinned *personally*. The only thing passed on was death, not the sin nature. Therefore each child is born innocent and becomes guilty when she personally sins. *What is sin? Do your own choices produce sin or remit sin? To what degree has sin affected man?*

Death – A person's spirit leaves the body at death and wanders the earth for 40 days, facing various barriers or sins. Living friends and relatives pray their loved one will pass the "test." *Is man ultimately responsible for his life on earth? Why or why not?*

Christ – Since man cannot come to God (see **Sin** above), God came to man in Christ, which reopened the way to God (the *incarnation*, not the atonement). Salvation is supposedly a 50/50 effort between Christ and the individual, but practice makes it appear more like 1% Christ, 99% individual. Mary is also as involved as Jesus in any soteriological achievement. *Why did Jesus come to earth, and why was His coming necessary?*

Cross – Through baptism (not repentance and faith) new and immortal life and the Holy Spirit are imparted. The "participation in God" (see **Man** above) obscures what the Bible teaches about Christ's death securing salvation. *Why was it necessary for God Himself to sacrifice His human life, and what did His death accomplish?*

Faith – The above doctrine along with the emphasis on orthopraxis (doing right) totally negates the need for faith in a savior. *How does one attain a life pleasing to God? What is the object of your faith? A person? An organization? Something else? What are the goal and means of your faith?*

Life – The goal here is to become like God, the theosis idea of participation in God. This is accomplished by going to church, receiving the sacraments, praying, reading the gospels, and following the commandments. *Why did God place you here on this planet? What is the meaning of life?*



Helpful Books and/or Sites:

Donald Fairbairn, *Eastern Orthodoxy through Western Eyes*, Donald Fairbairn, Westminster John Knox, 2002

http://orthodoxinfo.com/general/averk_orth.aspx

Worldview Onion Peeling Helps – *Postmodern*

What They Believe

God – While modern man said, “There is no God,” postmodern man says, “There is no single God.” That doesn’t mean there are many gods (polytheism) or necessarily that there is *any* god. What you believe is right for you, what I believe is right for me. Therefore, no god is authoritative (defining truth for all) nor historical (existing for all).

Man – The only creator recognized is self. Therefore, human-kind is not responsible to a transcendent Creator. When asked if a person is both material and immaterial, the answer will probably be “yes and no”—it depends on what you believe. Pluralism and syncretism are foundational.

Sin – The only sins that exist are intolerance and the assumption of absolute truth. Everyone has the right to do anything they believe is right.

Death – If asked what happens to a person at death, one might answer, “I don’t know, you tell me. Then I will know what happens *for you*. But what happens for someone else depends on what *they* believe.”

Christ – There are many savior figures, but certainly not one exclusive savior for all of humankind. You like Jesus? Great! He’s not relevant *for me*. I’m glad He is *for you*.

Cross – Substitutionary death makes great tear-jerking movies, but has no universal significance.

Faith – Pluralism strikes again. The means of transformation, what must be believed to move into the ideal state of existence, is self-determined.

Life – The goal of someone with a postmodern worldview, her “ideal state of existence,” is tolerance.

Conversation hints that could break through levels as you carefully peel a Postmodern’s worldview onion:

Someone said this worldview group “hears with their eyes and thinks with their feelings.” In our conversations we must remember that they honor beliefs and choices of others (tolerance). Although we don’t hold to their definition of tolerance, we must demonstrate true tolerance and caring. They are searching for a caring, fair, authentic community. We must demonstrate we are that community with our words and actions.

Helpful Books and/or Sites:

The Post-Church Christian, Paul and Carson Nyquist, Moody, 2013

Free download: “Preaching Christ to a Postmodern World”

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/itunes-u/preaching-christ-in-postmodern/id378879885>



Worldview Onion Peeling Helps – Roman Catholic

What They Believe

God – God is the all-knowing, all-powerful Creator of the world and humankind who, because He loves us infinitely and wants to have a relationship with us, created a plan to appease His wrath as the Just Judge. He is one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. However, Mary is given a role as “Mother of God;” dangerously close to being part of the Godhead.

Man – Man and woman were created innocent, “made for each other,” and “established in friendship with their Creator and in harmony with himself and the creation around him.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. 374)

Sin – Since original sin wounded its nature, humankind is subject to error and inclined to evil in exercising freedom. Sin, an offense to God, severs communion with God.

Death – Suffering and death are unavoidable consequences of sin—even for Church members.

Christ – However, new life in the Holy Spirit (reaching its ultimate fulfillment in heaven’s glory) is available to those who believe in Christ.

Cross – Through His death, Jesus Christ delivered the faithful from Satan and sin. He gives us the new life in the Holy Spirit; His grace restores the relationships which sin damaged.

Faith – Since faith needs the community of believers and since the faithful can only come to believe within the faith of the Church, it is only through the sacrament of faith (baptism) that one can be saved. The faith of the members must then grow *after* they are baptized.

Life – Salvation, which includes eternal life with God, can only be attained through baptism. This doctrine is affirmed in no less than six places in the *Catechism* (pp. 14, 1263, 1265, 1266, etc.), going as far as to say that God “bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism.” (p. 1257)



Conversation hints that could break through levels as you carefully peel a Roman Catholic's worldview onion:

Don't assume your friend believes everything the RC Church teaches. Many and varied are the beliefs and practices of Catholics around the world. Peel the onion! Find points of contact where you agree with your friend (e.g. the Trinity, the deity, death, and resurrection of Christ). Then you may be able move to major differences you have (the exclusive authority of the Bible, the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice alone for salvation) more easily. As with any worldview, sharing God's story from the beginning can help to deconstruct their worldview, dealing with false beliefs as they are dealt with in the story.

Helpful Books and/or Sites:

<http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/it.html>

<http://www.scborromeo.org/ccm.htm>

Mark Pereira's blog series on reaching Roman Catholics starts here:

<http://reachportugal.com/2014/04/18/reach-roman-catholics-gospel-part-1/>

Worldview Onion Peeling Helps – *Scientology*

What They Believe

God – Scientologists believe survival is our primary goal. *The Eight Dynamics* (dynamic defined as urge, drive, or impulse) are eight pieces of the path toward survival. The first dynamic is self (the effort to survive as self), the second is creativity (surviving as family including reproduction), etc. The idea is that individuals master one level after another until they reach the eighth dynamic which is the urge to survive as infinity. This is their “Supreme Being.” It is our attaining to the level of being God or infinity.

Man – People are immortal beings (called *thetans* placed on earth by an alien eons ago) who forgot their true nature. We all are or have *thetans* in us—this is our true identity which is intrinsically good, omniscient—our non-material core. Spiritual rehabilitation (auditing) is a counseling procedure that helps people relive pain and trauma to free themselves from their limiting effects and eventually bring them back to realize their true nature.

Sin – In the prehistoric past these *thetans* began to identify with their creation, resulting in a fall from their original state of spiritual purity. While spiritual progress depends upon high ethics, rationality is considered more important than morality. Actions that promote survival in all eight dynamics and benefit more people would be more ethical.

Death, Christ, Cross, Life – *Thetans* are reborn over and over (assumption). Each rebirth has the potential of making the *thetan* and the universe (*MEST*—*matter, energy, space, time*) stronger. There is a causal relationship between how a person lives and her next life; goodness, kindness, etc. make the next life better.

Faith – We mustn’t accept anything on faith alone. As spiritual awareness grows through auditing and training you gain certainty on each dynamic (level). We are immortal beings trapped by *MEST* who can be freed of our bad engrams through “auditing.” Therein lies salvation.



Conversation hints that could break through levels as you carefully peel a Scientologist’s worldview onion:

With someone recently involved in scientology, tactfully ask questions that will expose inconsistencies, absurdities, and the total lack of evidence in the system while maintaining a *non-judgmental, caring relationship* with her. Especially with people who have spent a lot of money on auditing, etc., you must know well what they believe to show you care for your friend. Do research; spend time with her.

Helpful Books and/or Sites:

<http://www.scientology.org/what-is-scientology.html>

<http://www.marketfaith.org/non-christian-worldviews/the-gospel-according-to-tom-cruise-scientology>