

FIRST HOUR'S LECTURE

Ajarn Wan

April 1972

How to Reach an Educated Buddhist with the Gospel

A person must study Buddhism many years if he is to understand it. Studying Buddhism in English texts is not adequate because it lacks contact with actual Buddhists.

Even if you know Buddhism, it is difficult to use your knowledge in your evangelistic ministry because you can't use Christian terms. (In the Church you can use Christian terms, but not in your witness to Buddhists.) Thai people will only truly understand Christianity if the terms used to explain it are weighted heavily on the side of Buddhist terminology.

This lecture is not on "what is Buddhism." This lecture is presenting some points on how to witness to Buddhists.

Point 1

Newspaper article. "All religions teach one standard of righteousness for all, regardless of whether the person involved is a priest or not, because all men are equal in the sight of God. Therefore they should all behave according to the will of God.

Buddhism is different from other religions because it teaches two levels of righteousness:

1. The worldly level.
2. The level above the world.

This is a cause of pride among Buddhists because they say all other religions teach on the worldly level; in Christian terms, the level of the flesh.

A missionary asked the head of the Buddhist World Fellowship what she thought of missionary work in Thailand. She answered, "We must thank the missionaries who have come and built hospitals and done social services, but there is no hope for the Christian religion in Thailand." In the western world the problem of the Christian religion is that it is not a part of daily life. So, in communicating the Christian message they take it to bars, night clubs, the places where people go for fun, where the people are, using

soft music. They do all this in an effort to take God to man, but it is done in a way that might be said to cheapen God.

In Thailand, because Christian teaching is already received as being on the level of the “flesh” only, if you take Christianity to Thai people in this way, it cheapens the Gospel and will cause people to say that it is not on the high level that Buddhism is. When we take the Gospel to the Thai, we should make it appear on a high level so they can’t say this. To the Thai, God who the Christians teach about is the equivalent of their law. (ธรรมะ) God is just what man imagines as the personification of the righteous standard of the law. (ธรรมะ) to the Buddhist. They look down on God who is merely a projection of man’s imagination of what righteousness personified would be.

Buddhism sees Buddhists as being on four levels.

1. โสดาบัน A precious person, who is able to live by the righteous standard of the law. There are no people on this level in this age, only in the age of Buddha were there any.
2. สกทาคามี
3. อนาคามี Buddhists place Jesus at this level.
4. อานนต This is the highest and is the level attained by Buddha, “The perfect one.”

Therefore, when you go out to evangelize, don’t cheapen the teaching you give about God by making it seem ordinary and on a low level. Don’t try to make it a simple message even though the people you are teaching are illiterate or semi-literate. Even these people are influenced by radio, TV, and the teaching of Buddhist priests, to make them think that Christianity is on a lower level than the teaching of Buddhism. Use parables, examples, to help people understand the Gospel, to simplify it. Don’t use words in connection with God that lower Him in their esteem. Examples of people lowering God in the eyes of the people

Why did God make man? The preacher answered, “Because God liked fun, like I do. If I want to have fun in my free time in the evening, I draw a picture, God wanted fun so made man. “A Buddhist hearing this thinks it’s awful. They think God made man for fun, but our creation has brought us terrible suffering in this world. They want to curse God.

Someone said, “God made the world to play.” The word “to play” in Thai is a low word, not something that refers to something high and exalted. Don’t use this to refer to God.

Even though Buddhists believe Buddha was merely another man, they nevertheless believe there was no other man comparable to him. Therefore, they do not think God is wonderfully superior.

God is a Spirit. But Buddhists have two theories about spirit.

1. Spirit exists forever. This is a false view, according to Buddhism. Eternal Life is a false view therefore, to Buddhists. Buddha taught that it is false. In the ages before Buddha, Indians believed in eternal life. But Buddha taught that this is false.
2. When you die, there is no spirit remaining. This is false according to Buddhism too.

You must explain the spiritual life like this. The life of the spirit is something human beings can't understand. It is a kind of life that God gives. No one by human wisdom seeks this kind of life. Even Buddha didn't seek it or find it.

Point 2. Be careful of the words when you witness.

Be careful of saying, "God is Love. God loves every human being." If you say this, those listening will respond, "Oh, it's the same." If they respond by saying it's the same, then you have lost your case, because it means "We don't need to change." Try to get the response, "That's right, it's not the same." If they respond, "Yes, in Buddhism we have this. We call it the righteous law. ตัวธรรมะ" that's not a good response.

The righteous law in connection with the idea of a Creator they call "Ignorance." Villagers don't know this but educated Buddhists know this. They would say, "Your God who is the Creator we call 'Ignorance.' 'Ignorance' is basically sin. It is the chief sin, in their eyes. The world came from sin, then, in the eyes of Buddha. The reason they think this, is that this world has no wholeness, perfection, wellness. It is full of suffering, problems trouble. Therefore the world is not good. If God made the world and God is holy, therefore the world must be holy. But the world is not holy. Therefore it must have come from ignorance. Therefore be careful in talking about God as the One Who created the world.

If you talk about God as the Sustainer and Controller (ควบคุม) of the created natural world, then God is to Buddhists 'natural law.'

If you talk about God as the Rewarder of men, whether good or evil, then to them He is the law of Karma.

Don't say anything about God that will enable the listener to say He is the righteous teaching (ธรรมะ).

It is a pity they translated John 1:1 as พระธรรม because if you have distributed this book and then you go to give a witness about God, they will just say "God is only the righteous law that we have always had, that's all."

Be careful when you talk about Satan, because they will say Satan isn't anything, merely sin. (กิเลส) The same as what you say.

Heaven	Buddhists understand that heaven is merely happiness.
Hell	Buddhists understand that hell is merely suffering.
Miracles	As when Jesus made the bread and fish feed 5,000 people, they will say, that when the people heard Jesus preach it made them feel excited so they felt they were full; so happy that they didn't need food. That is the meaning they give it, like a parable. All Jesus' miracles they will treat as parables.
God is a jealous God.	Example: You must not worship other gods. You must worship only God. If you worship other gods, God is jealous. Like when a husband goes and talks to another woman, the wife is jealous. Jealousy is one of the qualities considered as sin in Buddhism. If you say God is jealous, you are saying God sins .
Rom. 9:18	So then he has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills.
God does according to His will.	Buddhists regard this as doing as you please. This is sin because it's not according to justice, or fairness. But our God is a God of righteousness. We don't want them to misunderstand this by our teaching.
God created man to praise Him	This is a sin in Buddhist thinking because the eight lusts are happiness, trouble, good, evil, gossip, praise. ลาภ, ไม้มิลาภ are the ธรรมะ of the world. If God desires praise, that puts Him on the fleshly level. People desire this. If God has this quality it makes God have sin.
John 3:16	Presents many problems because Buddhism regards love as sin. Buddha taught: Suffering comes from love. Danger comes from love. Sorrow, unhappiness, etc., come from love. They are thinking of love on the worldly level. They don't understand about God's love.

Therefore if we teach that God is love they conclude that God has sin. In Buddhist teaching, Buddha was the one who stamped love out of his being. Even his wife, he didn't love, or his child. His wife pleaded with him to come back and rule his country, but he didn't. This Buddhists call release from the snare (บ่วง) that ties us to this world. Love is like a chain. You must cut it off. If you cut it off you are released from the worldly level of living. Therefore if you say, God loved the world, then they conclude that God is still tied to the snare of this world. Then they conclude that God is still tied to the snare of this world. If so, how can he help others to escape the snare? It's not that Thai people don't appreciate love. They do. But when you explain the love of God you must be careful that they understand what you really mean by God's love.

O.T. stories

God is angry. Thai people don't like this. Anger must be kept secret. Don't let it out. If you show anger then you're not เด็ดขาด Example. If I'm fighting with my wife and someone comes in, I must immediately change and be very polite to them and not let them see my anger. Buddha taught, if you can kill anger you can live happily, also that anger is a fire that burns your heart. You must control it. God was angry and sent the flood. This is a difficult thing for Buddhists to accept. Or God sent one nation to kill another nation. For new people or in open air preaching, you can't use this teaching in preaching the gospel. But in teaching Christians you should teach this so they understand what the meaning is.

In saying this, I am not denying the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is able to make people understand these things correctly. But we are the instruments of God and must be careful.

Example. One man holding a knife to stab another one. He must be careful that the other man isn't able to turn that knife back on him. We want to stab someone else's heart with the Word of God. We don't want them to be able to turn it back and use it against us.

Killing animals. Be careful when talking about that in your preaching. If they don't bring it up, don't you be the one to bring it up. But if they bring it up, you should answer it. But don't start by

sitting down next to someone and saying, "You want to be a Christian. Do you know it's not a sin for a Christian to kill animals?" Don't start like that! Talk about something else, something more important than this. This is not an important point.

Example. Spirits. Thai people are practically 100% afraid of spirits. Why are they afraid? Because it's been in them ever since childhood. This feeling about not killing animals has been in them since childhood too. When you try to give reasons to get rid of their feeling that killing animals is a sin, you won't be able to do it. Therefore don't use these things in your witness to unbelievers. But even this depends on the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Teaching a Christian

Question: How is Christianity better than Buddhism?

If Christianity isn't better, then better not to change. If Buddhism is better than Christianity, then better to stay a Buddhist. If Buddhism and Christianity are equally good, then better to be a Buddhist. But if Christianity is better, then it's better to be a Christian.

I use the answer that God the Creator and man whom He created is the heart of the matter, not religion, or teaching.

How many Thai Christians are able to answer this? They may say, "I work with the missionaries", "I study English with them". Associating with missionaries has many good features, but these answers are mostly fleshly.

But a Thai Christian who can say, "In this world there is nothing so precious as God." How many are there? If they can't answer this question, it will be difficult for them to lead another soul to Christ.

Missionaries who have had much experience of God, have difficulty getting through to the Thai. There are many Thai who are Christians and can get through to the Thai mind, but don't have much experience of God. Or, Thai become Christians and receive missionaries' teaching so much that they become completely like the missionary. Many Thai preachers use missionaries' language. They have lived and worked and taught together and pick up the language of the missionary. If they happen to use language that the missionary doesn't understand, the missionary may ask them afterwards, "What were you teaching today?" And they change their teaching back to what the missionary understands. Actually they shouldn't change. If the missionary doesn't understand the words used, explain it to him outside of the pulpit. If missionaries teach Thai Christians how to lead people to the Lord, the missionary should try to follow the

lead of the Thai Christian. Don't try to force him to go according to your feelings about it. But you should teach them.

Example. We had a missionary try to do this with a Thai Christian. He didn't know what to do. He understood the feeling of the missionary but he felt it wasn't suitable for using with Thai. He decided not to use that method and it caused a problem and made him feel uncomfortable when the missionary wanted him to use this method.

So, if there is something you don't understand, try to get them together with you to discuss it and come to an understanding about it. But don't force them.

Another important point in bringing Thai to Christ. 80% of those who become Christians in Thailand, fall away. What is the reason for this? Most people become Christians because of a problem in their life. When the problem is cleared up, they fall away. Therefore, while that problem still exists you must take advantage of that time to teach them. Teach them fully. If you don't, when the problem is gone, they'll stop being a Christian.

The thing you should do in teaching is: dig out Buddhism, and put God in its place. The thing that generally happens is that they already have Buddhism in their hearts and then they put God in on top of it. So that they are a person who has Buddhism mixed with Christianity. Buddhism and Christianity in the same mind. Then when something comes up in Christianity that they don't like, they revert to Buddhism because it's still in their hearts.

Example. They have the ship Buddhism and the ship Christianity in their hearts. When the ship Christianity develops a leak, they go back to riding in the ship of Buddhism and stop being a Christian.

Example. When a woman puts powder on her face, she washes first and then puts the powder on, otherwise it's not pretty. When we bring someone to Christ we must, as the communists say, "brain-wash" them.

Because two kinds of belief cannot exist in one mind, one must be destroyed and the other remain. The work of destroying Buddhism is the work of the Holy Spirit. But we are instruments in God's hand too, to help dig the old beliefs out of people's hearts. This is difficult, but the important thing to do is to answer the problem of the world falling apart (ปัญหาโลกแตก) for the Christian, first. Most Christians aren't interested in this problem. If you start to talk about it they say, "That's enough for today. I have to go home." Questions such as: Is there really a God? If God made the world, why is there evil?

These are problems I mean by “the problem of the world falling apart. (ปัญหาโลกแตก)”. These kinds of questions in the heart of man are never a dead issue. No matter how long you live as a Christian, you will never be completely rid of doubt. One day or another doubt will occur again. Even missionaries have times of doubt.

Example. You are driving and hit a family. You wonder why God let this happen. Why didn't God take care of us so this didn't happen.

People who have problems about the nature of the world and why it is the way it is, have constant doubts because whenever trouble or suffering comes to them they doubt God. Therefore you should answer these problems about the nature of the world for Christians right from the beginning when the Christians come together for a meeting you should teach them the answers to these questions.

Why do we believe there is a God?

Why do we believe that God created the world?

Why do we worship God when the world He created has suffering in it?

Teach the answers clearly and have the Christians keep these answers as a permanent part of their daily life which they can turn to when troubles and problems come.

Along with these answers, put the new beliefs into their hearts, teach the new doctrines. When a Christian is able to give the answers to the nature of the world and to explain Christian doctrine, then when someone asks him, “Why do you believe the teaching about God is true?” He can answer point by point. He can say, “I believe in God because of this and this and this reason.” But when a Christian gives a testimony and doesn't answer the questions about the nature of the world and why it is as it is, and somebody asks him why he believes in God, he answers, “Because the Bible teaches it's true.” This is not enough. If they press him very much, he's apt to end up by saying, “whether our belief in God is true or not, I don't know.” Doubts will begin to arise. Then when people ask him and ask him about these things and criticize him for believing them, he will begin to say to himself, “It's better to stop being a Christian. It's easier. Before I was a Christian nobody criticized me like this. Now that I'm a Christian my friends criticize me every day. There's nobody I can go to to borrow money or rice or fish sauce. If I go to my own home, my friends there don't like me because I'm a Christian. It's much more comfortable to stop being a Christian because of all these problems. So I will stop being a Christian.”

But if you teach a Christian how to answer questions and to know what his own faith teaches, even if other people criticize him, he will have an answer. Instead of doubting his own faith, he will give the

reasons why the other person asks as being because they don't know, whereas he does. When he feels like this, he's not afraid when questions come up.

We say that everyone who becomes a Christian must proclaim it even from the first day. Christians, when they go out to witness, meet up with Buddhists immediately, and get pushed into a corner and in the end are disappointed in their beliefs about God, and stop being a Christian.

In my experience, Christians, regardless of their age, if they receive teaching about the basic nature of the world and its problems, and clear and detailed answers to these problems and the basic doctrines of their new faith, only a very small percentage of that kind of Christian will leave the faith. But the Christian who cannot answer these questions or answer about the Christian faith will leave the faith at a high percent.

I am not denying the power of God but simply trying to help you get a background understanding of the problem. I know God, by the power of His Spirit is able to do everything. Eph. 3:20.

For you missionaries, if you sit down every day and try to give clear answers to these problems of why the world is the way it is, not just say, "Yesterday I answered that problem one way and I can't even remember what answer I gave." Have the answers clearly in mind.

Why do we believe there is a God?

Why do we believe He made the world?

Know it so it's clearly in your mind. Write it down. But have it in your memory so it's always with you whether you take your written answers along with you or not. As soon as someone asks you these questions, immediately you answer point after point. One of the problems of the church in Thailand is that when someone comes to ask about the Christian faith first of all they look to see if the missionary is there. If the missionary isn't there, they say, "Too bad, if the missionary were here you could ask anything you wanted and he could answer you. I am a Christian. Christianity is good, but I can't tell you why." There are many problems like this. You need to know the traits of the Thai.

SECOND HOUR LECTURE

Ajarn Wan

April 1972

How to Reach an Uneducated Buddhist with the Gospel

I am not speaking on Buddhism, I am speaking on the feeling of Buddhists. In Thailand, Buddhism and Christianity are as different as day and night, but the actual beliefs of people all over Thailand are not very different from Christianity at all. They are very similar to Christianity. But when we find people saying Christian ideas are like Buddhism it makes us misunderstand them because Buddhists in Thailand are almost 100% not Buddhist. This means that, in fact, we have to talk to Thai, not Buddhists.

Example. Buddhism teaches there is no spirit remaining after death because in Buddhism there is no spirit. But Thai people all over Thailand teach that after death the spirit must be born again. Even though Buddhism teaches re-incarnation, Buddha taught that re-incarnation was not connected with a spirit, in the re-incarnated body. e.g. If you have two volumes of a book, the second volume didn't come from the first. But they have a slight relationship in that one is a continuation of the other. In the same way the old person and the new person are related slightly. The Karma of the old person is related to the Karma of the new person. But that doesn't mean that the spirit of the old person was reborn in the new person. This is Brahmanism, not Buddhism.

But Buddhists all over Thailand hold that the spirit of the former person is reborn in the body of the new person. Thai people believe that men have a spirit that is eternal but this spirit will come to an end when it goes to Nirvana. So, when we preach the Gospel, we must understand that Buddhism is one thing and the beliefs of the average person are another thing, and we are preaching to the average person, not to a true Buddhist. But if you were preaching to someone who was a true Buddhist, you should know this and preach accordingly. If you're preaching in the country you should make it suitable to the average person's beliefs. So the two groups are different.

In Thailand you have to work with two groups, the true Buddhists and the average man. (ชาวนาน)

From the beginning of Christian work in Thailand it has been with the average man, not with the true Buddhist. We say we are working with Buddhists but in actual fact we are not working with the true Buddhist. The Christian who teaches has already solved many of the problems of the average man. But many of the problems of the true Buddhist have not been solved. Therefore, the true Buddhist thinks his religion is the best in the world. First, not second. All over the country the leaders of Buddhism feel this way. You can see this in the books, radio, TV and the preaching in temples everywhere. They think Buddhism is the number one religion in the world. Foreigners are entering the priesthood and this makes them think this all the more and makes them proud of their religion. People come from England, America, Germany to become monks. This shows that Buddhism is the best. But when I entered the Christian religion, this didn't make them say Christianity is number one! When someone who had been a Buddhist priest many years, attained the level of มหา became a Christian, it should have made them say, "God is number one." But they didn't say this! Instead they said, "A person who has been a มหา and then becomes a Christian is selling out his own nationality." Just the opposite of what they said about the foreigners who became Buddhist monks.

Some characteristics of Buddhism.

1. Buddhism has some teaching that has to do with things in your own personal nature. Salvation lies in yourself, nowhere else. Not in God, not in heaven. It's in yourself. The most important characteristic in Buddhism is the use of the intellect to examine everything in the world to see that in this world there is nothing permanent or certain (เที่ยง) There is nothing in this world that will not die. There is nothing that doesn't come into existence, age, get sick and die. There are only things that come into being, change and die. Everything is examined according to this quality (of impermanence), and when you see that everything is like this, we don't love it, we don't love anything. We don't like and we don't hate anything at all, - neutral - without feeling. We withdraw our hearts from being under the power of anything else, because in everything else we see that there is nothing sure (permanent, unchanging, no sure reality). This is Buddhist doctrine.

2. Everything is suffering. Wherever there is love there is suffering. Is this true? Yes, it's true. Jesus Christ suffered so much that he perspired blood! If you are teaching Buddhists, be careful of this, because Buddhism teaches us to escape suffering. But in Christianity God is a God who suffers! Isaiah 53. If even God suffers, how can a Christian expect to escape suffering? No, religion doesn't allow us to escape suffering. Therefore you must be careful in teaching people because they want a religion that enables them to escape suffering. This is the feeling of Buddhists. If Buddhism had you endure suffering they wouldn't want it. But according to truth there is no religion that enables you to escape suffering without enduring suffering. If we are to escape suffering we must endure suffering. If we are to make a profit we have to make an investment. If we don't invest anything we don't get any profit. Jesus said, "Whoever loves his life shall lose it." If you love your life in the flesh, your worldly life, you will lose your spiritual life. If you love life in the spirit you must lose your fleshly (worldly) life.

Example. A man ran into a large rock every day when he came out of his house. He bumped his foot on that rock. The next morning he went around the rock, and the next morning he did the same thing. But one morning he was in a hurry and ran right into the rock again. He wasn't willing to remove that rock from his path but kept trying to go around it. Whenever he forgot about it, he ran into it again. This is like the character of Buddhism, in which it tries to escape suffering. It always tries to avoid suffering. Christianity doesn't teach us to try to avoid suffering. It teaches us to pick up the rock and put it somewhere else. It is for this reason that Buddha became a monk, an ascetic, recluse. He was trying to avoid a society which has suffering. Jesus Christ lived in heaven but entered into a society such as this. This is one characteristic difference between Buddhism and Christianity. Salvation in the Christian religion does not rest on us. It comes from above. We have no value that enables us to produce salvation from within ourselves. Our intellect is not enough. Isaiah says, "*As the heaven is high above the earth, so far are my thoughts from your thoughts.*" God's thoughts are much higher than ours; God is much higher than our understanding. Actually Buddhism is willing to admit that we have no value. I don't understand why it is that if we have no value they think we can produce salvation from ourselves. Vanity, suffering, no permanence, no reality, these things make them willing to admit that we ourselves have no purpose or meaning. But they have the belief that even though we have no meaning, still we can produce salvation from within ourselves. Live according to the Buddhist teaching and you will go to Nirvana. This is a funny thing. I have asked many Buddhists and they don't understand it either. There is no real person (อนัตตา). No person, no reality. But then (คำว่า) ตัวเองเป็นที่พึ่งของตน) you yourself are what you should trust in. If there is no real person, how can

you trust in it?" This is something interesting to think about. If someone comes to chat with you, try asking him, "They say we human beings should trust in ourselves. But Buddha taught that we have no real self (อนัตตา), so how then can we trust in it? Those who know have an answer, but generally it's an answer that side steps the issue. It's not clear. But those who don't know can't answer at all. For those who have an answer, this is what they'll say. "A person is a hypothetical person. You are to trust in this imagined person." But if they answer this way, you can answer them this way, "How can you trust in an imaginary person?"

I had to teach this last week at the American Baptist Youth camp. There were 4 young people who came into the church to study Christianity but they opposed Christianity. Two of these had opposed it for 15 years. They weren't Christians, but came in to oppose it. The other two had been in the group for 10 years, they invited me to preach at that camp. I tried to preach about God and talked a little about Buddhism. I saw people laughing when I talked about Buddhism and thought, 'they must want me to talk about Buddhism.' So for the next 2 or 3 days I compared Buddhism and Christianity, brought up a point of Buddhism and then a point of Christianity and taught. No one criticized this at all. They liked it so then I really preached a lot like that, comparing the two religions. On the final day 21 young people became Christians. And the 4 who had opposed Christianity for 15 years all became Christians. This is something to thank God for. God worked in the lives of these young people. They had some problems they couldn't solve about some points of Buddhist doctrine and some points of Christian doctrine. e.g. Christianity teaches we ought to trust in God. Buddhism teaches we ought to trust in ourselves. In these two things they understood 'trust in yourself' better than 'trust in God.' Therefore we who are witnessing Christians must help them understand the meaning of 'trust in God', better than 'trust in yourself.'

I preached, backing up to beyond the time when they were born. When they were in their mother's womb for 9 months, who did they trust? After they were born, suppose their mother died and no one took responsibility for them. Would they die? Who did they trust? Milk bottle, air they breathed, the earth, water to drink, for everything they used to maintain life, who did they trust? Did they trust in themselves? When they were bigger and went to school, who did they trust? Who did they trust for their clothes? The ground they walked on, who did they trust for that? The air they breathed with every breath, who did they trust for that? Is there anyone in this world who trusts only in himself for everything? No, there is no one. Raise your hand if you think there is. There is no one in the world who trusts only in himself. In the end you have to yield. You have to trust in God.

In Buddhism, the doctrine is like this. Nirvana is up there. We are down here. We want to go to Nirvana. It's like climbing a tree, we want to climb to the top. We call it climbing. This is Buddhist teaching.

But Christian teaching is this. God is over there and God receives us up with Him. One teaching is that we try to climb up ourselves, like a space ship. But in Christianity the pulley is in heaven already. The rope is let down and we sit on the carrying frame and God pulls up the pulley. This is different from Buddhism, God leads us up. God from above, leads us up. We, from the bottom try to climb up. This shows a difference between Buddhism and Christianity.

In relation to a savior, when you preach about a savior, people don't appreciate it very much. Generally people like it, but there are some people who think like this, they disapprove of it because they have hated policemen who have helped people who do wrong to do right.

e.g. You hit someone when driving. You might go to jail, but you give money to the policeman and he helps you to escape going to jail. (ผู้ชายให้รอก).

You see how it is, people who have experience of injustice disapprove the idea of a savior. It's better to save yourself than to trust in a savior if it means that whenever someone saves us it is an unjust person. Therefore many people see God as someone who is unjust, when we preach on God as our Savior. To have justice you have to leave people alone and let them save themselves by their own goodness, their own effort, not by helping them.

Another way I could speak about it is this: Buddhism's aim is to destroy. Christianity's aim is to create.

Buddhism says, 'In this world there is nothing certain. Everything is suffering. Everything is unreal. Therefore don't accept or take anything, or as the ordinary person says, don't put any stock in anything.

Laws that you can't put any stock in, are useless. Therefore, you can say of a person who has gone to Nirvana, he is useless, not interested in anything. Doesn't take anything as a burden or responsibility. That kind of person reaches Nirvana.

Someone asked KuKrit Pramoj, "How can you go to Nirvana?" KuKrit answered "Don't be concerned about going to Nirvana. If all the people in Thailand went to heaven, Thailand would be extinguished. If all the people in the world went to Nirvana, the world would be extinguished." That means the world would not continue to stand. Thailand would not continue to stand, because no one would take an interest in anything. Husband and wife would cease. Children would cease to come into being. Everything would be extinguished.

Christianity is a creative religion. True, this world has a part that is not good. But God has a plan that will get rid of the bad part. And he has the desire to make the things that are not good into good things. It is God's will that they should be eternal, lasting from now on. The desire of Jesus Christ is that God's kingdom be established in this world. That this world be full of righteousness, goodness, God. As for the part that is not good we aren't afraid of it or we don't hate it. I read a book which said, "Suffering helps humanity more." Buddhism tries to teach people to escape suffering or to blot it out.

Christianity teaches about God. Buddhism stresses Karma.

Karma has a broad meaning in Buddhism. If you ever have a chance to study the meaning of Karma in depth, you ought to take it. But today we won't have time to study it much. Karma is the creator. But actually Karma didn't create by his own person, it was Ignorance, who brought into being desire, conviction, evil deeds. Before you get to Karma, ignorance is the first sin, as I told you already. This is the original cause of all – ignorance – ignorance of good, ignorance of evil, ignorance of wrong, ignorance of right, ignorance of virtue, ignorance of faults. Whenever ignorance occurs in people, it makes that person have desire.

e.g. Suppose I want to kill someone. I don't know that killing is something very evil, so I think I will kill that person. I want to have a car. I want one because I don't know whether a car has more value than my life or whether my life has more value than a car. If we know clearly the purpose of everything, desire won't develop in us, that is if we have knowledge rather than ignorance. Knowledge in this context, means we know that nothing is certain, everything is suffering, nothing is real. 'Ignorance' means lack of knowledge that nothing is certain, everything is suffering, nothing is real. If we don't have this knowledge we have desire.

e.g. The priests in the temple, they don't want them to have anything to do with women. The priest try to find a way to help the other priests look at women as something that's not good, so they won't feel any desire in that direction. So they say they have a method of getting rid of desire. They say if you see a woman walking into the temple, see her as if she was a corpse walking in. This is the method of priests. If you see a pretty women they say you should see her as a corpse. See her as if she was infected, dying, decaying. This method helps priests not to wish for women. They call it getting rid of the body (ปลงสังขาร). If you're able to get rid of it, you have no problems. If you can't get rid of it, you have problems. When desire comes into being, the plan to get the thing which is desired is worked out. If you desire a car, you think of a way to get one.

You must think of a way to get the money for it. If you want a house, you must think of a way to get one. The effort to get things is called (อุปาทน-ความยึดถือ) the feeling that you must get it. This is what we call conviction (อุปาทน). Then when this conviction comes upon you, the feeling that you must get something, then you are bound to do something – that is called Karma. You must do something in order to get this thing. This conviction lies behind the action. Karma (action) happens because of three things. If these three things aren't present, Karma (action) doesn't take place.

1. อุปาทน conviction, strong feeling, adherence. In Buddhism there is a lesson relevant to God if we know how to explain it. When we are witnessing to Buddhists we should ask, "How do you define Karma? It means 'action.' An action requires an actor doesn't it?" Karma is also a law, similar to a natural law of nature. Laws such as this require a governor or administrator of the laws. Karma is not big in itself. I'm willing to admit there is Karma in Christianity. Christianity teaches Karma too. Do you believe that? Many people reject this, but I think they are wrong. Christianity accepts it. When you sin, you have three results, they call it อาชญา สวรรค, อาชญา แผนกฐ, อาชญา พระเจ้า.

Suppose you kill someone you sin against the person you killed. If you are going to get forgiveness from the person you killed, you have to communicate with them or with their relatives in order to make up for the loss you caused them and caused the person killed.

You have sinned against the law of the country. Even if you go and get things straightened out, the police still have to arrest you because you broke the law of the country.

You have sinned against God. When you have sinned against God you must confess it to Him.

If you sin against a person, you must straighten it out with the person. If you sin against the country you must straighten it out according to the law of the country. If you sin against God you must straighten it out with Him.

Whenever you sin, there are always three ways in which you sin. Therefore even if we have confessed our sins to God already, we still have to receive the punishment of the first two groups. When we still have to be punished by these first two factors, people say, "Oh, how can God forgive sin?" If you don't believe it, you go and kill someone and see if you don't get in jail! But these are two different matters. This is the punishment of the country. You must receive it. But in the sight of God, if we have confessed our sin to Him, He has forgiven us. So you should know how to explain this. Generally we explain everything in a lump. If you're a Christian, confess your sins to God and He will forgive you. The people who listen don't understand this. They say, "How can He forgive you? If you go and kill someone,

won't you go to jail? How can He forgive you? If He forgives you, you don't need to go to jail." They say this because we don't know how to explain it to them. We have to explain it so they see the three kinds of sin. For sin against man we must receive punishment by man. Sin against country must receive punishment by the country. This is on the side of the world. But on the spiritual side, we don't have to receive punishment if we confess to God. They are separate cases and have to be dealt with according to the point involved. If I sin against you, I can't come and confess to you because you don't have the power to forgive me if I didn't sin against you. If we sin against a person we confess it to God. Since against other people we can't be absolved from, be forgiven for. Sins against our country, God lets them be dealt with by the country involved. Romans 13 tells about this. God makes us responsible to the world too. But in every case there is a sense in which our sin is against God. I John 1:9.

When we teach, try to avoid speaking on the subject of religion. Speak about God. Try to refuse to speak on religion, because if you take the subject of God and try to make it a talk about religion you will run into serious problems. Try to keep the teaching about God separate when you're trying to help people understand it. Try to explain very clearly the difference between religion and God. Don't let God be equated with the subject of religion or you will have trouble. I have met with this kind of situation many times already. It's been a terrible headache every time I've spoken wrong. I have said, "I am a Christian. I follow the Christian religion." As soon as I begin to say something about religion, it becomes a very confused situation. But if you begin talking about God, your problems are considerably lessened. So, in Thailand when evangelizing, you should begin by talking about God. Talk a great deal about God as the teaching in Genesis gives it. But as for teaching about Jesus you must pray a lot about that. This is because in my experience, people believe the teaching about God a lot more readily than they do the teaching about Jesus. Therefore, begin with showing them God. Then gradually lead them to Jesus. Because Jesus has a lot of problems for Thai people. Speaking about Jesus brings a lot of problems, from His birth, from His death, the resurrection, the redemption, and many other things which are big problems and very difficult for people to receive all at once until the Holy Spirit works and helps them to understand. So if we start to witness, begin at Genesis and speak about it a lot and then gradually lead to Jesus because God in Genesis is the foundation which makes people able to understand Jesus. If anyone doesn't understand about God as in Genesis, then he finds it very difficult to understand Jesus. So, start at the foundation. Jesus Christ is the last section of the story, not the foundation: therefore help them to understand the story of God all along and then the matter of Jesus is only a minor problem, which God can do easily. If He made the world, therefore, why can't Jesus be born of a virgin? If He created the world and life, why couldn't He cause

Jesus to be resurrected from the dead? Sometimes you can draw the foundation for these things from Genesis. Therefore when we begin giving a witness, many more people receive it. This is my experience.

Question. When you explain the Gospel in Bangkok Hospital, where do you begin?

Answer. You should start with God. And if you explain each time and at the end explain about Jesus. I mean start with God and end up with receiving salvation through Jesus. But you may start with Jesus if you incorporate certain aspects such as: The salvation which God gives by Jesus or in the name of Jesus. But you have to understand how to explain it and not take the end aspects which will present the biggest problems to people's minds and talk about those. The substitutionary atonement is the biggest problem in the minds of Thai because they don't believe in the possibility of one substituting for another. But if you know how to explain it, Thai people will receive it because they have a form of redemption too. When a priest sins, there must be two people who sit down and confess to each other. They say, "I ask forgiveness. I sinned like this and like that. Please forgive me." Buddhist priests even do this, everyday. It's a form of asking forgiveness for sin that we have done against other people. But if we sin against God, we ask His forgiveness every day. Every time we sin, we really sin against God. This is a certainty. Even though it's a sin against others, it's a sin against God too. Therefore, we ought to confess our sins to God every day.

You start preaching at the point of Jesus, but, if you know the problems of the ones who are listening, you will try to make your explanation fit the problems they have in their minds.

e.g. Suppose I say, "Jesus Christ died on the cross to make atonement for the sins of all people."
The Buddhist who hears this will say ...

A granny was listening at the hospital where I was preaching about Jesus dying on the cross. The granny said, "Oh, how pitiable Jesus is. He did some terrible sin!" Finished! That was the end of it in her mind! Because Jesus dies, as the Thai say, "ตายดหง" a violent death, a bad way to die. If you die like this you must be a person who has a terrible lot of sin. Therefore, when we preach about Jesus dying on the cross, instead of it informing the people that His death was an atonement for our sins, the people react and say, "My, Jesus had a terrible lot of sin." That's wrong. That's the wrong way to explain it. It shows that we don't know the feelings of the people listening. We explain the message in the hope that it will make people know about Jesus taking the punishment for our sins, but instead, they say Jesus had the sin, it wasn't our sin that was involved in His death. This is an example of what I mean. We must know the point we are aiming at in our explanations.

Then we can find the means of remedying the problems involved in explaining the subject of the atonement and other doctrines. I don't have time to separate out all the subjects involved.

Suppose you are praying to God and sitting and thinking of many subjects that are problems in Thailand, the subject of the atonement for instance. What is the correct meaning of it? Itemize it point by point, one, two, three, four. Then you can explain the atonement according to these 3 or 4 points – it will be in an understandable way.

The atonement is paying a debt.

The atonement is asking forgiveness.

The atonement is allowing God to resolve the problem of sin in us.

Things like this give the meaning clearly, and in the end, people will receive it.

How can one life atone for the lives of all the people in the world? Why? Because, if that one life has the value of all the lives in the world then it can atone for them all. Explain it something like this. Problems such as this can be solved if we have experience and understanding.

Another kind of teaching besides the doctrine of God, which we ought to stress (Actually there are many other topics in connection with the doctrine of God that we could talk about) – Is for instance the doctrine of, the savior, or, as one man said to me, "I have only a little time, could you please summarize the Christian religion and the Buddhist religion clearly and briefly for me?" I summarized like this.

"Suppose that you want to go to America. Buddhism says, Come here. I'll draw you a map and then you can go. Turn left, turn right, turn left, turn right and then you have reached the States. But, Christianity says, Come here. I'll take you there! There you are. That's it, in its shortest form and most basic element."

Another thing which we should stress if we are talking about ethics or morality, something which people ask about continually, is this: "If you're a Christian how many commandments do you have to keep?" This is an outstanding question. Actually, if you are a Christian it's a good thing if you know how to answer this question. Explain it like this. "Christians don't keep commandments. We aren't under the law, or if we speak as the local people do, we say, we don't keep commandments. It's like this. Commandments are for people who don't love goodness, and you have to force them to do good.

e.g. I like to go for a walk every day. My father makes a law forbidding me to go out like this. I have to keep it, because it is a law my father has made. If I stay at home every day am I under this law? I don't have to keep this law because I stay home every day anyway. Christians don't keep

laws because when we have God, He makes us love to do good, without having to be under any force. This is the way of explaining this, but not in detail. Its just a brief point you can make.

Some other things you should stress which Buddhists like a lot, if you know how to explain them are: "We are the temple of God." This point is very precious. God is a Holy God. We are sinners. When we confess our sins to God and believe in Him, God stays in us, and He makes us into a temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when God who is holy, lives in us, He will live in a holy temple. We, then should keep ourselves a pure and holy temple so that God can live in us all the time. Then we have peace and happiness. This is a point that Buddhists like a lot.

Another point is, "We are members of Christ's body." This is similar to the teaching that we are the temple of God, if you know how to explain it. I have explained ethics in these terms and someone said, "The teaching of Jesus has only one point, but that one point covers all, is equal to all the commandments of Buddhism. We are the temple of God is equal to all of the teachings of Buddhism."

Another point, "Love others as you love yourself." This is the same as the previous one in that it covers the entire set of commandments in Buddhism, if you know how to explain it. This is equally true of the teaching, 'We are the members of Christ's body.' (But if we are talking about the Nirvana of Buddhism...but I will talk about this another day...the subject of Nirvana and Ignorance as the creator).

Answer to question. We must try to understand the subject of God. The method of communicating with Jesus Christ, for this we must understand about the Holy Spirit and we must have the other person willing to accept the internal state of men's hearts. Because if we talk about the human heart, Buddhists may not understand it too well. But if we change it so that we talk about it like this and say, "In ourselves there is a heart. This heart has the duty of guarding over us and has the greatest power of anything in our bodies. This heart God created in us so that it could be the vehicle we can use in communicating with God. Because God is Spirit (พระจิต) and in us is our heart (spirit), we can communicate with God by means of our spirits which have come from God, from on high. We know this, because normally we don't have that type of feeling in us. But in this we have a feeling that comes from outside us and occurs in us, after we are united to God.

e.g. Today I am exhausted. I want to go to sleep. But the feeling that comes from on high says, "go out and visit that person." This is not my normal feeling, this is not my normal characteristic. According to my normal characteristic I would sleep. But because I have characteristics from God, I have a command from God, which is not my character, I have to go. This shows that I can

communicate with God by my spirit. You must have an illustration when you speak about this, so that they understand.

Answer to question. Actually in the Buddhist doctrine about the subject of goodness, doing good, much of it is very similar to Christianity. You have to admit that the things that are identical to the Word of God which are found in Buddhism, are things that are correct, not completely wrong. But trying to make us people who are 100% good by means of the line of teaching of Buddhism is impossible, because the teaching of Buddhism doesn't lead a person to the level of 100% goodness. Generally it leads a person to อุนเบกขา a state of equanimity, to having no feeling one way or the other. When you lead a person to feeling nothing it means you have led them to 100% goodness. If any religion can lead a person to 100% goodness, that is a religion that can lead people to God, because the righteousness or goodness of God is goodness of 100% quality. Actually God used this kind of religion in the OT didn't he? He gave various commandments to bring the Jews to God, and in the book of Romans, Paul explained this subject clearly. God established a new goodness (or righteousness), Romans 1:17 the kind that is begun by faith and finishes by faith. It is new righteousness. The old righteousness was keeping the law, to make you a good person.

But if mankind was able to follow that way, Jesus Christ would not have had to come. But because mankind was not able to walk by the righteous way, the old way, therefore Jesus Christ had to come and begin a new kind of righteousness that begins by faith and ends by faith.

If you go by the line of teaching of Buddhism, I understand that it is impossible for you to be 100% righteous because Buddhism tells you that arriving at the highest point is to have no feeling one way or another, to be non-committal, to be indifferent, not a matter of being good all through your life until you reach death, which is the best. I read a book which said (it was a medical science book) "How many people are there in the world who are 100% good?" It said "there are none." "If there was a person who was 100% good he wouldn't be a person." Therefore, in Buddhism, Buddha taught that nobody would be 100% good, but good in many ways. Buddha almost attained to God's level in many ways, but he didn't reach it completely. (For example...we'll keep it till the next lecture).