

## Conversation Starters

- How familiar are you with Eastern religions?
- What questions do you have about them?

## Discuss

**Eastern religions, namely Hinduism and Buddhism, are becoming very influential in the West, due in large part to the embrace by many celebrities and prevalence within entertainment, writing, and health practices.**

- What other areas or examples in Western culture have you seen influenced by Eastern religion?
- Does the influence of any of the ideas and philosophies surprise you?
- What influence have they personally had on you?

**There are some key differences between Christianity and Eastern religions. Christianity believes in a personal God who wants to be in a personal relationship with us, whereas Hinduism and Buddhism are atheistic religions. When determining our greatest need in life, Hinduism seeks to fix bad karma and Buddhism seeks enlightenment to deny your own existence. Christianity says our greatest problem is that we are estranged from the God who created us due to our sin, but we can be met with grace and forgiveness from God, as opposed to getting what we deserve or try to earn.**

*"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" ([Matthew 5:6 NIV](#))*

*"His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.' But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him... We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began." ([Luke 15:21-24 NLT](#))*

- Why are these differences important?
- How have you attempted to address our greatest problem in life?
- What makes grace so special and unique?

**Religions of the East are without a doubt attractive. Whether it's buying into ideas you picked up from a movie or innocently practicing yoga for health benefits, it's important to consider your spirituality when you allow something to enter into your life, because there will be an effect.**

- Is there something about Eastern ideas or practices that are attractive to you?
- How can these affect your spiritual life?
- Are there any changes that you may need to make?

## Next Steps

The difference between religions of the East and West are bigger than a divide between East and West, and really is a question for all of humanity to answer about whether there is a God or not. Have you settled on an answer for this question? If you have, how are you letting it affect the rest of your life?

## Further Reflection

Read [Luke 15:11-32](#).

## Pray

God, thank you for what we are learning. You are the God of the universe, and you are what we need most in life. Thank you for the amazing grace that you offer us. Help us to let that grace shape the way we think and live, and to use wisdom when it comes to our spiritual life.