

The Middle Path offered people practical guidelines for how to end suffering. The guidelines were known as the Eightfold Path, which those who sought enlightenment had to master one step at a time, like ascending (going up) a staircase. According to the Buddha, the steps of the Eightfold Path included right knowledge, right purpose, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditation. By following the Eightfold Path, anyone could attain nirvana and escape suffering. In addition, the Buddha believed in a cycle of rebirth—that individuals were reincarnated (reborn in another body without memories from previous lives) and subjected to lifetimes of suffering until they reached enlightenment.



- What is the Eightfold Path?
- According to the Buddha, what happens to people who do not reach enlightenment?

In the years after the Buddha's death, there were two important developments in Buddhism. First, Buddhism evolved from a philosophy of life into a religion. In many branches of Buddhism, the Buddha is now worshipped as a god and Buddhists pray to Buddha, asking him to help them reach enlightenment. Second, travelers and missionaries spread Buddhism, and it became a major religion throughout East Asia. Buddhism was brought to China in A.D. 200 by Buddhist monks and traders, who traveled from India and Central Asia to China. In the centuries that followed, Buddhism grew in popularity until its influence rivaled that of the major native Chinese belief systems, Confucianism and Daoism.

Despite efforts starting in 1949 by the Communist government to repress (prevent or put down) Buddhism—such as arresting Buddhist monks and priests and closing Buddhist monasteries and temples—it continues to be an important religion in China. In the mid-1970s the Chinese government allowed a limited revival of Buddhist institutions. In modern times, Buddhist rituals continue to be followed in many important ceremonies.



- How did Buddhism change after the Buddha's death?
- When and how did Buddhism reach China?
- What role does Buddhism play in Chinese society today?

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### Quotes from the Teachings of the Buddha

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**Quote 1:** *"Like fish caught in a net, desires trap us as we swim downstream in the violent flood of birth and death. Turn away from desires and leap out of the torrent... of misery."*

**Quote 2:** *"The mind is flighty, and hard to grasp; the mind pursues all its desires. To tame the mind is great goodness. Subdue the mind and know tranquility."*

**Quote 3:** *"Diligently cultivate moral precepts, concentration, and wisdom. Put an end to greed, hatred, and stupidity."*