

Why Visit a Temple?

In Love Your Neighbor evangelism training, we encourage (not require) planning a field trip to a Hindu temple as part of the course, led by the trainer. Some have asked, Why should a Christian visit such a place? Isn't it unholy, even demonic?

These are legitimate questions. Please allow me to present the positive and biblical reasons for a temple field trip.

1. It helps us develop compassion as a motivation for going to our Hindu neighbors with the message of Jesus. As we observe what goes on in the temple, our hearts are touched and burdened that our neighbors do not know the living God (Matthew 9:35-38).
2. It helps fuel our passion and urgency. As Paul "closely observed" the objects of worship in Athens, his heart was "stirred up," leading to powerful proclamation of Jesus and the resurrection in the marketplace and among the city leaders (Acts 17:16-34).
3. A field trip is a form of hands-on learning more vivid than reading in a book or hearing a lecture. For Jesus, the whole three years of His ministry was one big field trip, as He took His disciples with Him everywhere He went (Mark 3:14)!
4. We want to avoid the legalistic attitude that going near or touching anything associated with Hindus will make us unholy. Our Lord was perfectly holy though He ate with and touched the lepers, prostitutes, and demonized and was known as a "friend of sinners" (Matthew 11:19).
5. We have the right to be in a temple if we go for the right reason (Psalm 24:1). We do not go to participate in any ritual or to give the impression of ecumenism; rather, while in the temple we pray for the people we see around us.
6. We visit a temple in the power of the Spirit, without fear (2 Timothy 1:7). We are not unaware of the demonic element found in some Hindu activities and do not take it lightly, but we believe that Christians walking in the Spirit do not need to fear (1 John 4:4, Jeremiah 10:5).
7. We conduct ourselves politely while in the temple, so there is no cause for offense. We do not speak disrespectfully of idols (Acts 19:37), we ask only respectful, curious questions of the representative (which we learn in class), and we do not attempt to preach or witness at that time. However, most of the time, I do present the temple representative with a Jesus DVD.

If you have further doubts about the temple field trip, please do contact me, Cathy Douglass, at nayajeevan@cru.org.