



ANIMISM

MAJOR BELIEFS

God

- No real sense of deity. Animists believe that a Supreme Being is remote from creation, too abstract to be known.

Jesus Christ

- No reference to or role for Jesus.

Source of Authority

- Largely based on local traditions and teachings.

Human Nature

- Like other beings in the world, each human has a unique spirit.

Basic Human Problem

- At the mercy of the powers, which can be angered.

Solution to Basic Human Problem

- Through magic and ritual, with reliance on gifted persons, the animist seeks to influence the powers for good.

Afterlife

- There is a general belief in some continued existence after death, but animists tend to focus on immediate, everyday needs rather than ultimate truth.

WHEN SHARING THE GOSPEL

- 1 Show empathy in the face of beliefs that may sound bizarre.
- 2 Communicate the gospel clearly and with sensitivity to the context.
- 3 Tell the individual stories of Jesus' power over nature, demons, death, sin, and Satan.

QUICK FACTS

- Animism comes from the Latin *anima*, which means “soul” or “breath.”
- They believe that the physical world (including both objects and events) is heavily influenced by spiritual forces.
- Animism is more of a folk religion than a formal religion, as it relies on oral traditions rather than an organized body of written teachings.
- Whether or not they realize it, Buddhists, Muslims, and followers of other religions often subscribe to some animistic beliefs.
- Community is a priority for animists, and respect for one's family or tribe may extend to the worship of one's ancestors.

READING

Gailyn Van Rheenen,
Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts