

BUDDHIST WORLD PRAYER GUIDE

**15 DAYS OF PRAYER
2020 EDITION**

**CHRISTIANS LEARNING ABOUT AND
PRAYING FOR THE BUDDHIST WORLD**

27 JANUARY—10 FEBRUARY

Join Christians around the world in prayer for our Buddhist neighbours



Resources or advertising



This prayer guide is an invitation to awakening

Welcome to the 15 Days Buddhist World Prayer Guide

Jesus challenged Martha to believe her dead brother could live. Jesus himself rose from the dead and declared that He is the Resurrection and the Life. Christians first began sharing the good news of Jesus with people in the Buddhist world over 1,700 years ago, yet to this day there is little Christian presence in most places where Buddhists live and worship. Like Martha, we can look at this reality and wonder if things will ever be different. In, say, Japan, Tibet or Thailand. We can struggle to have faith.

People didn't believe that Lazarus could live again but Jesus called him forth. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. As we pray we step out in faith for the Buddhist world, asking our mighty Risen Lord for a fresh wind of the Holy Spirit to "bring forth" the peoples of the Buddhist world. Our prayers are the first step forward in faith to see a growing movement of Jesus' disciples across the Buddhist world.

This guide does not attempt to delve into the complexity and depth of Buddhism as practiced around the world. Instead, it presents stories from people in various Buddhist contexts to awaken our concern and align our hearts with God's heart for those who are still far from Him.

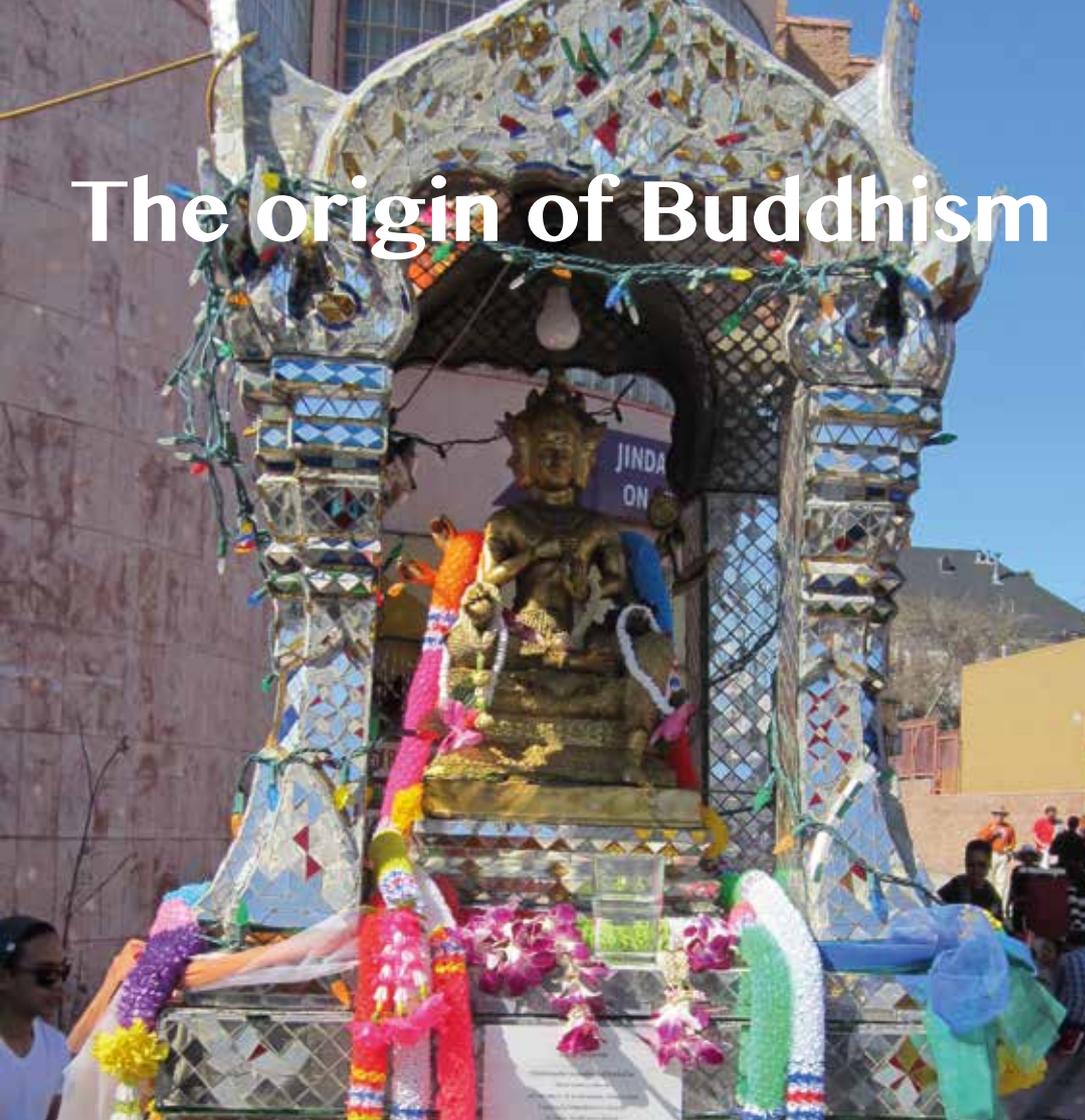
We encourage you to use this prayer guide together with Christians around the world from **27 January–10 February, 2020**. If you receive the guide after those dates please choose 15 days that best suit your church, ministry, or personal calendar, and continue praying throughout the year.

"Jesus told them, 'Roll away the stone.' Then Martha said, 'But Lord, it's been four days since he died — by now his body is already decomposing.' Jesus looked at her and said, 'Didn't I tell you that if you will believe in me, you will see God unveil his power?'"

John 11:39–40

Page for national distributors

The origin of Buddhism



Prince Gautama was born in the southern part of modern-day Nepal in the sixth century BC. According to tradition, a holy man noticed marks on the child's body and foretold that he would grow up to be a world ruler and enlightened one. His father, desiring Gautama to be a great ruler, sought to protect him by providing a life of luxury.

At age 29, however, Gautama was exposed to the suffering outside the palace where he lived. As a result he spent six years as a wandering ascetic in search of a solution to the problem of suffering. In vain he tried various meditation techniques, hoping for insight. Finally, he resolved to sit beneath a bodhi tree until he had attained the enlightenment he sought. Though tempted by Mara (the Evil One), he persisted and eventually achieved what he believed to be a realization of supreme truth. From that point on he was considered to be the "Buddha", which means an "Awakened One" or "Enlightened One".

continued overleaf

The origin of Buddhism

The teaching of Buddha (called the Dharma*)

The Buddha found his original companions in the search for enlightenment and preached his first sermon to them. Unlike most religions there was no supreme deity involved. Instead he outlined the “Four Noble Truths”:

- 1 Life is full of suffering.**
- 2 Suffering arises from ignorance and desire.**
- 3 Suffering can only cease by ending ignorance and desire.**
- 4 The way to end ignorance and desire is through the “Middle Way” or “Noble Eightfold Path”.**

“Suffering” according to the Buddha arises due to our clinging to and craving for impermanent things that keeps us all caught in an ongoing process of death and rebirth where everything, even one’s very self, is impermanent and an illusion. The only way to get off that endless cycle of rebirths is to walk the “The Middle Path”, avoiding extremes and living with right understanding, thought, speech, conduct, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and finally right concentration. The end-goal is not eternal communion with God, but rather—like the flame of a candle being extinguished—a state where craving is ended.

Actual Buddhist practice today

People see Buddhism as their own folk religion, even though it does not relate to a high deity. As such, it’s like a blanket that falls



on existing cultures and conforms to the landscapes underneath. In Tibet, the Bon religion of shamanism was overlaid with Buddhist monasteries for meditation. In Buddhist Thailand, lay people offer monks cigarettes in their alms bowls; in Buddhist Bhutan, however, smoking is a sin. The Thai Buddhist council strictly disallows women’s ordination and forbids women from entering holy places inside temple grounds, yet Nepal and England ordain female monks. Cambodian Buddhists have no discussion in the temple concerning care for the environment, while Western Buddhists

* For clarity, this guide follows the Sanskrit spelling of Buddhist terms, rather than the Pali spelling. *Dharma* is the Sanskrit spelling; the Pali spelling would be *dhamma*.

incorporate environmental activism into their practice of the *dharma*.

There are three major streams of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana and Tibetan.

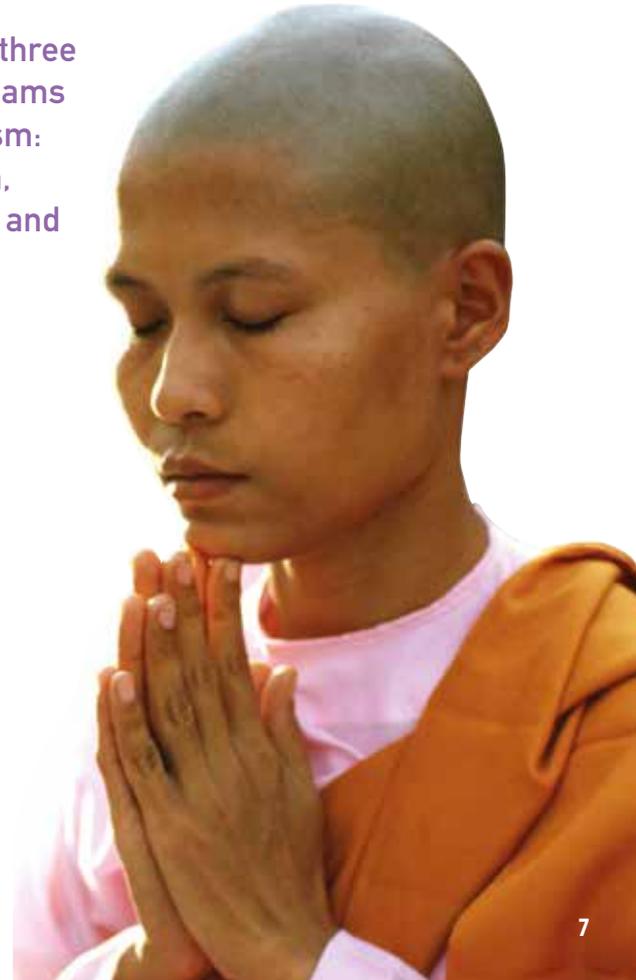
Theravada Buddhism emerged from Sri Lanka, where the Buddha's sermons and teachings were first canonized. It focuses on the attainment of enlightenment through personal meditation and good deeds. Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos follow in this tradition.

Mahayana Buddhism emerged based on texts attributed to Buddha, which taught that a *bodhisattva*, or enlightened being, could choose to delay entering *nirvana* (the ultimate spiritual goal of liberation) to deliver other sentient beings from their *karmic* suffering (based on a person's past actions). This stream of Buddhism was traditionally practiced in China, Japan, Vietnam and the Korean peninsula.

Tibetan Buddhism arose in India in AD sixth century, with a focus on accelerating enlightenment through ritual practices and visualizing heavenly bodhisattvas.

In recent years Westerners have adopted various forms of Buddhism that focus primarily on a quest for inner peace. Some have joined Theravada monasteries, seeking spiritual purification through meditation and by following the five basic rules of conduct. Others have committed themselves to a Tibetan *lama* (monk), study the Tibetan texts and learn chanting. Still others follow a Westernized form that mixes Asian traditions with Western notions of Buddhism. They often continue in their previous occupations and wear everyday clothes, but spend time in meditation and attend retreats.

There are three major streams of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana and Tibetan.



Countries with more than 100,000 Buddhists

Country	Country population	Number of Buddhists	Percentage of population
China	1,419,653,000	184,108,000	13.0
Japan	126,730,000	86,330,000	68.1
Thailand	69,540,000	59,421,000	85.4
Vietnam	96,378,000	49,707,000	51.6
Myanmar (Burma)	53,894,000	42,120,000	78.2
Sri Lanka	21,198,000	14,610,000	68.9
Cambodia	16,424,000	13,991,000	85.2
South Korea	51,147,000	12,159,000	23.8
India	1,360,301,000	7,809,000	0.6
Taiwan	23,729,000	6,483,000	27.3
Laos	7,100,000	4,270,000	60.1
USA	326,389,000	3,273,000	1.0
Singapore	5,768,000	2,392,000	41.5
Nepal	28,433,000	2,330,000	8.2
Malaysia	31,867,000	2,118,000	6.6
Mongolia	3,207,000	1,155,000	36.0

Country	Country population	Number of Buddhists	Percentage of population
Indonesia	269,193,000	951,000	0.4
Bangladesh	162,155,000	933,000	0.6
France	65,055,000	851,000	1.3
Bhutan	754,000	665,000	88.2
Australia	25,116,000	552,000	2.2
Brazil	210,865,000	513,000	0.2
Russia	144,504,000	413,000	0.3
Canada	36,293,000	385,000	1.1
United Kingdom	67,418,000	276,000	0.4
Angola	31,802,000	150,000	0.5
Italy	60,463,000	148,000	0.2
Germany	83,265,000	142,000	0.2
China, Hong Kong	7,392,000	139,000	1.9
Peru	32,443,000	124,000	0.4
North Korea	25,542,000	124,000	0.5

Source: Joshua Project (<https://joshuaproject.net>)

Buddhists around the world

Cities with the highest percentage of Buddhists in the population.



Japan

“That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither —whatever they do prospers.”

Psalm 1:3

Sota walked down the forest path trying to clear his mind. The trees were peaceful, yet Sota felt empty inside and unable to receive any good from the beauty around him. He hoped the spirits that sometimes spoke to him would give words of hope but he heard nothing, only rustling leaves. “There is no reason for me to live,” he thought. At that moment a voice in his head said, “You are like a tree. You will be reborn in March.” “What an odd thing!” Sota exclaimed.

Sota shared this experience a month later with a kindly co-worker. Hinata was excited as she replied, “I know what the voice meant, it is right here in my book!”

Sota was shocked to read Psalm 1 on Hinata’s Bible app, “That person is like a tree planted by streams of water ...” Eagerly, Sota asked more questions and learned that those who follow

Jesus can be reborn spiritually.

Japan is sometimes classified as a Buddhist nation but like many modern nations it is increasingly post-religious. National surveys from 2017 show that Japanese still maintain ancestral graves, wear good-luck amulets, register births at the local Buddhist temple and sometimes perform other religious rituals, yet the majority of Japanese citizens do not identify as adherents of any religion. In fact many feel it is weak to rely on religion as a crutch. In every culture, spiritual emptiness is filled with worldly solutions. In Japan one solution to cope with isolation and loneliness has been a high suicide rate. About 30,000 people commit suicide every year, including more people in their 20s than in any other country of the world.



Ways to pray

- *Pray urgently that across Japan the Holy Spirit will awaken spiritual hunger and a willingness to seek dependence on a loving God.*
- *Ask for God to open Japanese people’s eyes to see that He created them, loves them and wants a close relationship with them.*
- *Pray that thousands of lonely Japanese people will hear God speak to them — personally calling their name.*



Buddhists of Bhutan, Nepal, and North India

“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Colossians 1:13–14

Norbu was born in a family with three boys, so by tradition his family was strongly expected to send one son to the military and one son to serve as a Buddhist monk. Norbu was chosen to be a monk. He was sent to Sikkim, India, to study Buddhism, yet much of what he learned involved shamanism, including black magic, palm reading, and incantations for good luck.

While studying Norbu was sometimes beaten by the leading lama (monk).

Norbu constantly wondered, “What happens when I die? Where can I find real peace?” Disciples of the Dalai Lama (the foremost spiritual leader of one branch of Tibetan Buddhism) told him, “For deep answers you must study at a certain temple in Central India.” Sadly, the recommended path to enlightenment in that monastery was complete isolation in a forest for nine months without bathing or changing clothes the entire time. Later, when Norbu had been a monk for 14 years he made good money performing religious ceremonies but was no closer to finding answers to life questions than when he started.

In Nepal, Bhutan, and North India, boys are dedicated to the monasteries as young

as the age of six. By adulthood many are disillusioned with monastic life, but with no skills to support themselves they are stuck in the monastery. Norbu’s story has a different ending than most Buddhist monks of Bhutan because his father became a Christian and persistently shared Jesus with Norbu and other family members. However, many Buddhist monks in Nepal, Bhutan and North India will

go their entire lifetime without ever meeting someone who knows Jesus personally.

Norbu constantly wondered, “What happens when I die? Where can I find real peace?”

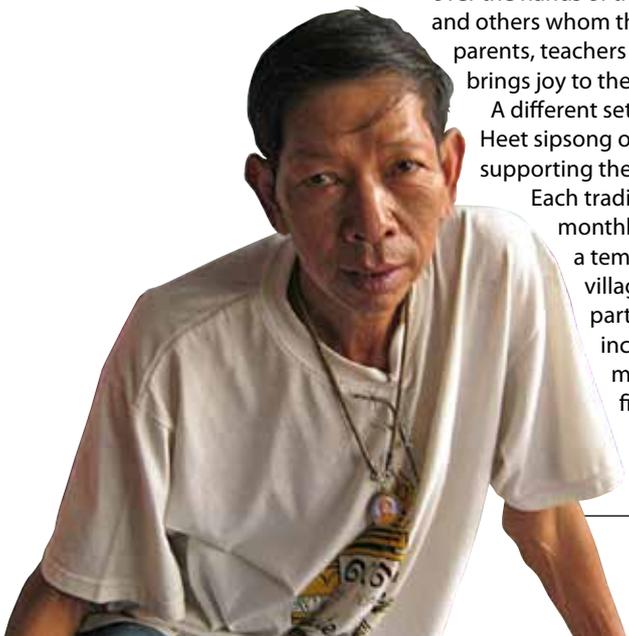
Ways to pray

- *Pray for the thousands of boys and men in monasteries across Bhutan and Nepal, that God will lead them to eternal spiritual truth, resulting in many becoming Jesus’ disciples.*
- *Ask that Bhutanese, Nepali, and North Indian Buddhists will receive dreams and visions pointing to Jesus. Pray that laborers will engage whole families who will become disciples together.*

Thailand*

“Blessed are those who act justly, who always do what is right.”

Psalm 106:3



On Mother’s Day, Buddhist children across Thailand buy hand-strung ropes of fragrant jasmine flowers tied into rings, which they present to their mothers. On Teachers’ Day, children sit at the feet of their instructors, place their palms together in a gesture called the wai and bow down at their teachers’ feet to thank them for imparting knowledge. Every April, at the Thai New Year, young and old alike pour cool scented water over the hands of their employers, village elders, and others whom they respect. Honoring one’s parents, teachers and elders pleases God and brings joy to the hearts of Thai people.

A different set of traditions called the Heet sipsong or “12 traditions” focuses on supporting the institution of Buddhism.

Each tradition is associated with the monthly moon cycle and highlights a temple ritual in which every village family is expected to participate. The traditions include activities such as merit-making at harvest, giving finances for monks to do penance, offering monks special sticky rice treats,

listening to Buddha’s greatest sermons, pouring sacred water, and giving robes to Buddhist monks.

Older Thai people often say, “I can’t follow Jesus — that would mean abandoning the 12 traditions handed down by our elders.” Those who do follow Jesus are ridiculed. That was the case with Somphet, whose neighbors derided him, saying, “You sinner, how dare you not join in making offerings at the temple!”

Older Thai people often say, “I can’t follow Jesus

Ways to pray

- *Ask God to strengthen traditions in Thailand that please and honor Him, and to deliver multitudes of families across Thailand from traditions that do not bring spiritual life.*
- *Pray that God will raise up a vibrant reproducing church in every district of Thailand.*

* Used with permission from *30 Days of Prayer for Isaan* (published by Isaan Joint Venture, 2017).

Buddhists in Tibet*

“When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled ... Jesus wept.”
John 11:33–35)

Lhamo’s experience is very different from the way Jesus interacted with people.

Lhamo sat quietly in her family’s tent as the monks chanted mantras and burnt juniper over her grandmother’s body. Her mother and father had used precious financial resources for this religious ceremony so Lhamo was especially well behaved; showing emotional attachment to grandmother would betray a relationship that their practice of Buddhism strongly discouraged, even for the dead.

After the monks left, Lhamo sat quietly. No one expected her to do chores or gather yak dung today. Tomorrow morning at dawn grandmother’s body would be taken to the sky burial site up the hill past many prayer flags. Lhamo imagined the mantras written on the flags flapping wildly in the breeze and blowing goodwill into the air as grandma passed by. At the burial site monks would beat gongs to summon the birds of prey. Someone would disassemble grandma’s body. A tear slipped down Lhamo’s cheek. Across the tent mother noticed and said plainly, “Don’t cry. It is an act of generosity and compassion for grandma to provide her body as food for other living beings. Her consciousness will seek out a new body. In 49 days she will be reborn into another physical form.” Lhamo wiped her tears, but wished

silently she could see her loving grandmother again.

Lhamo’s experience is very different from the way Jesus interacted with people. Jesus lived in close community; he related warmly to disciples and strangers alike. Jesus expressed emotions including anger in the temple, exasperation with religious leaders, and sorrow over the death of his friend Lazarus. Jesus freely prayed and healed people with no payments ever required.

Ways to pray

- Ask God to deliver Tibetan Buddhist families from a belief system that robs them of life-giving relationships, including relationship with their Creator.
- Pray that Jesus will reveal Himself as the true compassionate One who loves all aspects of the lives of Tibetan Buddhists.
- Ask God to help enable Tibetan Buddhists to comprehend they can be born into the family of God for eternity, resulting in many families becoming Jesus’ disciples.

* Adapted with permission from the *Losar Prayer Guide 2019*.

Mongolian Buddhists



“Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless.”

1 Samuel 12:21

Most of the world’s 7.6 million Mongolian people live in China. “And we really stand out,” said Solongo, who grew up there, “because Mongols drink a lot and it makes us violent. Parents beat their children. Mongol men get drunk and fight in the streets. So much anger in our community. Growing up, I was so upset inside I went across town looking for children from other schools to fight.”

As a child Solongo often stopped in a Buddhist temple to light incense and pray for help. After she was married Solongo bought an expensive image of Buddha. Although she prayed to it many times a day, her husband found another girlfriend. Then Solongo injured her back. During her recovery she lay in bed praying to the image but it did not answer.

One day, when she felt stronger, Solongo climbed many stairs up to the main temple in town. Right next to the temple was a big hole full of broken Buddha statues. She watched a man

throw his in. “Didn’t it help you?” she asked. “No,” he replied. “It was too cheap. If only I could have bought a solid gold one! That would have worked.” Solongo began to wonder: “Why did so many Buddha images in that pit fail to help people?”

Mongols living in China and Mongolia light incense, buy Buddhas for their homes and perform yearly rituals to bring good luck or ward off evil. In recent years, temples have begun handing out “blessed cellophane tape”, which Chinese Mongolians put on their car windows to protect against accidents. Despite this, people still get sick, crash their cars and drink heavily. Many feel a lack of real love in the family.

Ways to pray

- *Pray that God will raise up laborers to engage with whole Mongolian communities.*
- *Ask that emptiness from anger, violence and alcoholism will drive Mongolian people to seek help from the Heavenly Father.*
- *Ask that Mongolians living traditional lives outside of the cities will hear the message of Jesus and become His disciples as a community.*



Vietnamese Khin Buddhists*

**“He has made everything
beautiful in its time. He
has also set eternity in the
human heart; yet no one can
fathom what God has done
from beginning to end.”**
Ecclesiastes 3:11

Lan grew up in a fishing village in a coastal town by the sea. Her parents regularly took care of the family ancestral altar and sometimes took Lan to the Buddhist temple to burn incense for good luck on exams. Once they even went to a famous temple where they paid a whole month’s wages for the monk to “erase” their bad karma. Lan was unsure. How could anyone really know what happened with their karma? Like other Vietnamese Kinh people, Lan believed in the existence of Ong Troi, the highest-ranking power who created the heavens and earth. Lan knew Ong Troi influenced daily life by rewarding good and punishing bad. She wanted to connect to him but he seemed distant.

Thuy grew up in a communist family in which religion had no place. Like many other city dwellers she worked at her parents’ business, had a second job at her friend’s noodle shop, and took part-time university classes. Thuy also knew of Ong Troi and understood him to be the creator of the world, so when she faced stress or problems in life she prayed for his help. One day

Once they paid a whole month’s wages for the monk to “erase” their bad karma.

a customer in her noodle shop told her about the creator God and his son Jesus. Thuy wanted to know more because the customer called that God “Ong Troi”.

Vietnamese people grow up with a mixture of traditional ancestor worship, folk Buddhism and government atheistic teaching. However, the concept of Ong Troi is a recurring link in stories of Vietnamese people coming to know the true living God.

Ways to pray

- *Pray that God’s people will communicate good news in ways Vietnamese Buddhists can fully understand and embrace.*
- *As Vietnamese people pray to Ong Troi ask that Almighty God will send laborers to tell them Jesus is the One they seek.*
- *Ask that a budding discipleship movement among women across Vietnam will grow and expand to every district and village.*

* Adapted with permission from OMF’s *Billions* magazine.

Khmer Buddhists of Cambodia

**“I revealed myself to those
who did not ask for me;
I was found by those
who did not seek
me. To a nation
that did not call
on my name, I
said, ‘Here am I,
here am I.’”**
Isaiah 65:1



Inside the ornate gold and red temple Samedy bowed down three times in front of the two-story Buddha image, then quietly put on his shoes and slipped out. His seven-year-old grandson Sayha followed him. They stopped next to the temple before two seemingly insignificant shrines, each the size of a chicken coop. These unimpressive structures were drab and cheap, and the images inside were roughly-formed. Sayha’s parents didn’t take him to the temple very often so he inquired, “Grandpa, these are so small compared to the beautiful gold Buddha inside. Why are we offering here?” Samedy lit three sticks of incense and stuck them in a sand-filled pot before the shrines. “We call these ‘Mjas Tik and Mjas Dey’, meaning ‘Lord of Water’ and ‘Lord of Land,’” he replied. “Don’t they have names?” asked Sayha. Grandpa shook his head, “If so, we have never known their names. They are powerful spirits of our land which were here long before Buddhism.”

Grandpa Samedy bought snacks from a cart, which they ate in the shade of a large tree in the temple grounds. Sayha felt awed by the towering temple

spires and colorful depictions of Buddhist mythology on the buildings. He felt sok here, the Cambodian word for happiness, contentedness and peace. “Grandpa, will I have sok when I leave here and be safe from evil things?” Sayha asked. Samedy tried to reassure his grandson, “Today we placated the spirits of the land. But I will buy you an amulet for extra protection just in case.” Actually, Samedy wasn’t sure himself. Despite repeated worship at the temple and multiple offerings to Mjas Tik and Mjas Dey, Samedy had never achieved lasting peace nor had he ever truly felt safe from evil – and he was 55 years old! Buying an amulet for his grandson was the best he could do.

Ways to pray

- *Pray that God will thrust out laborers from existing churches in Cambodia, who will boldly proclaim peace in Jesus’ name to the 14 million Cambodians who identify as Buddhist.*
- *Ask for Cambodian Buddhists to understand that Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and for entire families and villages to become His joyful disciples.*

Shan of Thailand, Myanmar and China

“I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.”

1 Corinthians 9:22

Fear and tradition make it difficult for Shan to see the beauty of what Jesus offers them.

As Christians placed Uncle Nam’s body on the funeral pyre a leading Buddhist elder from the village cried out, “Stop! His head cannot point down the valley — it must point up!” Although the pyre was lit, it had not yet caught fire. Quickly, the Christians rearranged the body to face the “appropriate” direction. The Buddhist neighbors sighed in relief as the pyre began to burn.

Years before, the first Christian burial in that village had been a disaster — outsiders who did not understand Shan customs had buried the dead in a plain white sheet with no ceremony. “Like a pig or a dog,” neighbors had said. “Who would want to follow Jesus if that is how one is buried?” Uncle Nam’s funeral, however, was different. Important Shan burial practices were observed, such as inviting the

whole community, sitting watch around the clock so that no person or animal had walked across Nam’s body, providing quality food for everyone, and holding a dignified ceremony where Buddhists and Christians alike were able to pay respects.

Shan people strongly identify as Buddhists. Alongside dharma (universal truth) teachings, however, spirit priests protect villages through ritual activities. Fear and tradition make it difficult for Shan to see the beauty of what Jesus offers them, so in this context good funerals speak very loudly. When Uncle Nam was finally buried a Buddhist school teacher in his village remarked, “I am deeply moved by Uncle Nam’s holy life and honorable burial. I would like to know more about this God whom Nam followed.”

Ways to pray

- *Pray that Shan believers will engage neighbors well through appropriate funerals and other cultural events that honor Jesus and portray him accurately to the community.*
- *Ask that households and entire villages of Shan in China, Myanmar and Thailand will eagerly examine the claims of Jesus together and will believe as social units.*



Sinhalese of Sri Lanka

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

Much of what Sinhalese Buddhists believe and practice, however, does not come from Buddha’s teachings.

Buddhism is portrayed as a peaceful religion. In some ways life in rural Sri Lanka fits that image. Busy families till rice fields by hand or work long hours at tea plantations. Buddhist temples are the center of village life. Villagers give regular alms to monks and annual offerings such as new saffron robes at the end of the rainy season. Hospitality is valued and practiced with smiles.

Much of what Sinhalese Buddhists believe and practice, however, does not come from Buddha’s teachings. Things such as facing west when one dies to ward off the chief of the underworld; or wedding ceremonies where an uncle ties the pinky fingers of bride and groom together then pours sacred water over the knot; or making offerings to bodhi trees (a kind of fig tree under which the Buddha is said to have sat when he achieved his enlightenment). One of the most famous Sri Lankan religious celebrations is the Festival of the Tooth, held every August, where a replica of the Lord Buddha’s eye-tooth is paraded by elephant through the streets of Kandy in an elaborate ten-day festival complete with fire dancers. The tooth relic itself is kept locked inside a gold case at a nearby temple.

Perhaps the most striking disconnect between Buddhist philosophy and practice in Sri Lanka are violent ethnic struggles that national writers have observed grew from harsh

policies promoted by prominent Buddhist monks and Buddhist Sinhalese political leaders. Such policies equate Buddhist religion with nationalism. One conflict with Hindu Tamil separatists resulted in a civil war that lasted over 25 years. Recently, some monks have incited violence against Muslim minority groups. After the Easter bombings of 2019, which killed 258 people, Professor Asoka N I Ekanayaka published a highly controversial article in the Colombo Telegraph challenging the use of Buddhism to promote Sinhalese nationalism and control of society. His article stirred great controversy.

Ways to pray

- *Pray for a deep seeking after truth at all levels of society. Ask that God will especially visit monasteries and temples and open the spiritual eyes of Sinhalese Buddhist leaders to seek Jesus.*
- *Buddhists accuse Christians of buying converts. Ask that those sharing Jesus will rely less on activities that bring in money or services and more on the message of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Pray that hearts and lives will be radically changed by God in every village.*



Bamar of Myanmar

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.”

3 John 1:4



Myint sat completely still with a large sheet of newsprint spread across his lap as his mother soaped and shaved his head. To his left and right other boys aged between seven and ten also held papers so as not to let a single hair fall to the ground. Each boy wore an ornate outfit to imitate the Lord Buddha when he was a prince. They were being ordained as monks in the village temple. Shaving their heads was a symbol renouncing attachment to the world.

Every Bamar Buddhist boy is expected to enter the monkhood once before the age of 20. The ceremony is expensive, so villagers these days share expenses by performing group ordinations. After offering robes to elder monks and reciting the ten precepts each boy asks an elder monk to teach him. Each one receives a new name to be used only while in the temple. Finally, all the parents bow down before the young people, who are no longer considered boys but sacred novices.

Myanmar is a country rich in natural resources such as gems, jade and natural gas, yet it's one of the least-developed, poorest countries in the world. Most still farm rice by hand using water buffalos. Military leaders tightly control national life. They own all mining rights and even take substantial cuts from tourist-generated income. Infrastructure is limited, though Bamar Buddhists have few personal freedoms and little money for

travel. By contrast the military pours money into building temples and paying salaries and free air/land travel for monks who achieve high levels of Buddhist studies.

Myint did not plan to achieve such honours — he planned to stay in the temple two weeks then return to normal life. His eight-year-old neighbor Chit, however, came from a poor family and planned to be monk permanently; in the monastery he would be fed, clothed and sponsored to study. Chit's parents hoped he would advance far enough to earn a good income for himself and the family.

Ways to pray

- *Less than 0.3 percent of the Bamar Buddhist people identify as Jesus-followers. Ask God to raise up laborers for every village where the 31 million Bamar live.*
- *Pray that young monks will see visions of Jesus while meditating at the temples. Ask that older Bamar Buddhists will receive dreams from Almighty God. Pray such visions and dreams will lead them to become Jesus' disciples.*

Western Buddhists

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.”

Colossians 2:8

Average citizens place Buddha figurines in the garden to evoke calm.

Matteo grew up in Switzerland. Coming from a Western secular background, Buddhism seemed to promise the inner peace he longed for. “I became a monk at a temple in Thailand where we lived an ascetic life,” he explained. “Every day we practiced three forms of daily meditation. I wanted to connect with a living personal God but instead I discovered a ‘life-philosophy’ and the impersonal force of karma. Pure Buddhism has high moral standards but I was deeply disappointed when I realized the goal of Buddhism is the annihilation of self. I became a monk to find fullness and peace. I left the temple three years later totally empty.”

Buddhist ideas are actively promoted in Western societies to people like Matteo through images of peace, calm and wisdom, without any discussion of the worldview behind it. One example is the “Compassionate schools”

program in the USA, which promotes itself as secular yet was developed by a professor of Tibetan Buddhist studies. The curriculum is based on two Tibetan Buddhist tenets of “mindfulness” and “contemplation”. The latter involves emptying one’s mind (in contrast to Christian meditation where one fills the mind with Scripture and gazing upon God’s beauty).

Buddhist worldview shows up in movies such as Star Wars, Kill Bill and Dr Strange of Marvel Comics. International business figures such as the late Steve Jobs of Apple embrace and promote Buddhist meditation. Average citizens place Buddha figurines in the garden to evoke calm. Buddhist terms even show up in Christian circles, such as the pastor who exclaimed, “Our retreat was like nirvana!” He had no idea that nirvana is a state of nothingness in which the flame of human soul is extinguished.



Ways to pray

- *Ask that the living God will open people’s eyes in the West to see the true end of Buddhism—annihilation of self.*
- *Pray that Western Christians will pray for and engage with Buddhist friends and neighbors with love, mercy and the truth of Jesus.*



Navayana Buddhists in India

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding.”
Ephesians 1:7–8

Buddha was born in Nepal but achieved enlightenment in India. He preached “the middle way”, which was a reaction against extreme ascetic practices found in Hinduism on the one hand and comfort, greed and exploitation on the other. Some have called Buddhism a reform movement of Hinduism. Some 2,600 years later, Hindus in India are finding Buddha’s teaching attractive and are converting again. This time the motivation is social.

Dalits, or untouchable castes, make up about 20 percent of the population of India. Laws protect their rights yet are often ignored, as in the high-profile case in 2016 when hardline Hindus were captured on video beating a Dalit cow-hide tanner and his relatives. The video went viral, prompting street protests. Despite anti-conversion laws, the men who were beaten all converted to Buddhism, as did an estimated 300 others from their area.

Dalits who convert are joining a new sect of Buddhism called “Navayana” or “new vehicle”. There are 8.4 million of them in India from

Navayana Buddhism considers karma and rebirth to be superstitions.

multiple language and cultural backgrounds, though the majority live in Maharashtra state. Navayana Buddhism sprang from reformer B R Ambedkar, a Dalit who studied Buddhism, created a new sect, and then converted in 1956 shortly before his death. Navayana Buddhism considers karma and rebirth to be superstitions. It teaches that nirvana is not a state of eternal oneness with the universe but is a kingdom of righteousness on earth. Converts take 22 vows, which include renouncing Hindu gods by name and promising not to lie, steal, get drunk, commit sexual sins or participate in Brahmin ceremonies. There is no monkhood, temple worship or meditation practice and no Buddha images. At Navayana shrines, however, Buddhists bow down to images of Ambedkar.

Ways to pray

- *Ask for a discipleship movement that will liberate entire Navayana communities.*
- *Pray that Hindu families or groups considering Buddhism will consider Jesus and be drawn by the Father who gives them dignity and hope.*

Diaspora Buddhists

“The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.”
Leviticus 19:34

Suntanee grew up in a rural village of central Thailand but after high school moved to a beach town, hoping to find a Western husband. Lukas met her while on vacation and they eventually married. Suntanee moved with him to Switzerland but was very lonely. Other Thai women who had married Swiss nationals invited her to church but Lukas was opposed, “That’s not your cultural background!” he insisted. In time Suntanee began drinking. There was a Thai Buddhist temple in another town but when Suntanee managed to get there the monks could not help her marriage nor her loneliness.

Karma-namgal’s Buddhist family in the mountains of Nepal sacrificed to send him to Kathmandu University. After graduation Karma landed a job in Penang, Malaysia. He was open to spiritual things but no one talked with him about anything, let alone religion.

Suk’s friend in Bangkok told him about a construction job in Singapore. A Korean couple came to Suk’s worksite and spoke to him in Thai about Jesus. Suk was so intrigued he joined a discovery Bible study to learn more.

Every year, thousands of Buddhist-background workers from East Asia find temporary jobs overseas or marry foreign nationals. In their new settings they are ignored and sometimes discriminated against. Many of them would

discuss spiritual things if only someone would take the time. What would it take for you to connect with Buddhists in your town to tell them your testimony and the gospel message?



Ways to pray

- *Pray that Western churchgoers will actively walk with Jesus and introduce the Prince of Peace to Buddhists in their midst.*
- *Ask that Buddhist-background believers living abroad will become disciples and tell their families back home too so they also can become disciples.*

Ask the Lord of the Harvest!

“After this the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’”

Luke 10:1–2)

Jesus was a better teacher than any of his disciples. So why did he send out 72? His solution to a shortage of laborers was not to draw everyone to his preaching but to raise workers who would personally engage with those far from God.

In North-east Thailand, Christians have held evangelistic meetings for about three decades. The result has been thousands of “raised hands for Christ” but less than a few hundred lasting disciples. In 2018, by contrast, 14 ministry teams of ordinary church members regularly went out prayer walking, sharing their testimony and giving simple Jesus presentations. By mid-2019 these teams had started 35 new discipleship groups, with 240 new disciples regularly attending.

In Central Thailand a completely different group of Christians went house to house talking about Jesus. Interested people from a single village were invited to hear the gospel as a group. Those who responded to Jesus were formed into faith communities, which met in that village. By mid-2019 they had planted 423 simple village churches.

Most Buddhists in Asia live in rural societies that maintain strong community bonds. Good news must include God’s care not just for individuals but also for families and villages.



Ways to pray

- *Pray that Buddhist-background believers will not rely on famous preachers or tracts but will share their testimonies of Jesus personally with neighbors and friends. Ask for conviction from the Bible that ordinary Christians can and must be God’s witnesses today for their own people group.*
- *Ask that new believers and near-neighbor believers will be filled with the Holy Spirit to speak truth boldly. Pray that they will start groups of disciples who go out and do the same — share the good news and start new groups!*

With God it's possible

“Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”

Matthew 19:26)

“As it is written: ‘I have made you a father of many nations.’ He [Abraham] is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed — the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.”

Romans 4:17

When Thai Buddhists hear about Jesus they usually end the conversation by saying, “All religions teach people to be good.” A Taiwanese reader commenting on a Christian webpage stated what many Buddhists believe, “God’s words and wisdom are not only found in the Bible but also in other religious doctrines. Nor does salvation only belong to Christians.”

Judaism, Christianity and Islam disagree about the nature of God yet all three focus spiritual life upon a single divine creator, each with a book detailing God’s intentions for people. By contrast, Buddhism has no god, only an impersonal force called karma that is believed to balance one’s good and evil deeds over many lifetimes. Pure Buddhist practices involve walking a middle path, which avoids asceticism on one hand and pursuing a life of sensual indulgence on the other. Balance is achieved through right thinking and right action. Yet Buddhist doctrine offers no specific discussion about marriage or funerals, neither does it offer teaching about bad luck or evil spirits, or about a Creator to help in time of need.

To cope with all these pressing life issues Buddhists turn to shamanism, ancestor worship, animism and cultural practices.

Their resulting worldviews tolerate and even embrace viewpoints that are contradictory. It can be difficult for those from monotheistic backgrounds to understand this. It is just as difficult for Buddhists to understand Jesus’ words that He is the way, the truth and the life.

All over the world God is moving in the hearts of secular, Hindu- and Muslim-background believers. Millions of people from these groups have become disciples of Jesus in the past 25 years. Yet the response among Buddhists during the same time-frame has been minimal. Can God change this?

Jesus says, “Yes!” Jesus challenges us to ask that God will do the impossible.

Millions of people from these groups have become disciples of Jesus

Ways to pray

- o *Almighty God, please bring to reality that which is not, namely a vast spiritual movement across the Buddhist world that awakens people to their need for you and the provision Jesus offers for our eternal souls. We pray you will do the impossible by launching disciple-making movements in each Buddhist people-group and that we who pray will live to see it.*

Ways to pray using Scriptures

Over the 15 days of prayer we have joined with others from around the world, all together at the same time, focused on the same places and people. We would like to encourage everyone not to stop. Let's keep going and use the content of the guide throughout the year.

Below are a few ways to use the Scriptures to pray for needs and peoples in the Buddhist world. God's Word is powerful and effective: Jesus, the living Word of God, created the universe by the power of His Word. We encourage you to use the Scriptures to help you continue to pray.



"And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.'"
(Revelation 5:9–10)

- Pray that Jesus, the slaughtered Lamb, would get the glory His Name deserves through the worship of every tribe, language, people group and nation.

"'Have faith in God,' Jesus answered. 'Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.'"
(Mark 11:22–24)

- Ask God to give His people great faith to ask for things that seem impossible, leading to a Jesus movement in each people group and place in the Buddhist world.

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."
(2 Corinthians 10:3–5)

- Ask God to tear down all the strongholds that hold people under Buddhism, and to set them free in Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

"'Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?'" *(Luke 14:28)*

- Pray for God to raise up His people who see the big picture of the Buddhist world with His eyes and can see where there are areas really needing His workers and His resources.

- Pray that these people would be able to share this in a way that the Body of Christ can act in God's way, sending workers and resources where God needs them.

“But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

(Matthew 13:23)

- Ask God to have Jesus-followers grab hold of every opportunity to share the good news far and wide.
- Ask that they would share in ways that the people would really understand and as a result respond to God.

“Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.” *(Mark 16:20)*

- Praise God that he promises signs and wonders to confirm his word.
- Pray for believers to expect miracles without any doubts as they proclaim who God is and pray for those with a Buddhist background.

“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ 6 If someone who promotes

peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you.⁷ Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.”

(Luke 10:5–7)

- Pray for believers to recognize when people’s hearts are ready to receive Jesus.
- Pray that believers would reach out through family, neighborhood and village relationships to see disciples become disciple-makers, who in turn become disciples who become disciple-makers.

“Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.” *(Psalm 27:14)*

- For every believer sharing the gospel in the Buddhist world, pray for the power to withstand hardship, stress, persecution and suffering.

“Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. 9 But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly

maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.¹⁰ This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.” *(Acts 19:8–10)*

- Pray that as Jesus fellowships grow deeply and multiply very quickly, these new fellowships would start growing into neighboring people groups and even into other cultures so that all peoples and places would hear the good news and have a chance to respond.

“Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.”

(Luke 10:4)

- Pray that believers sharing the good news with Buddhists would have all their needs met.
- Pray also for such a strong desire from the Lord to pray, share the good news and to make any sacrifices needed to see groups of Jesus fellowships start and multiply.

“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”
(1 Timothy 4:12)

- Pray for both men and women and for all generations to be totally involved in being both disciples and growing as fruitful disciple-makers among the harvest of those ready to respond to God.

“Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” *(Philippians 3:13–14)*

- Ask God to help every believer keep forward momentum as they daily hear His voice, obey Him and faithfully and fervently share with others.

“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.” *(John 15:4)*

- Ask Father God to help every believer have life so intimately connected with Jesus that he or she would bear much fruit for God’s glory.

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”
(Ephesians 4:3–4)

- Ask Jesus to help the Body of Christ work together as one even as He and the Father are one.

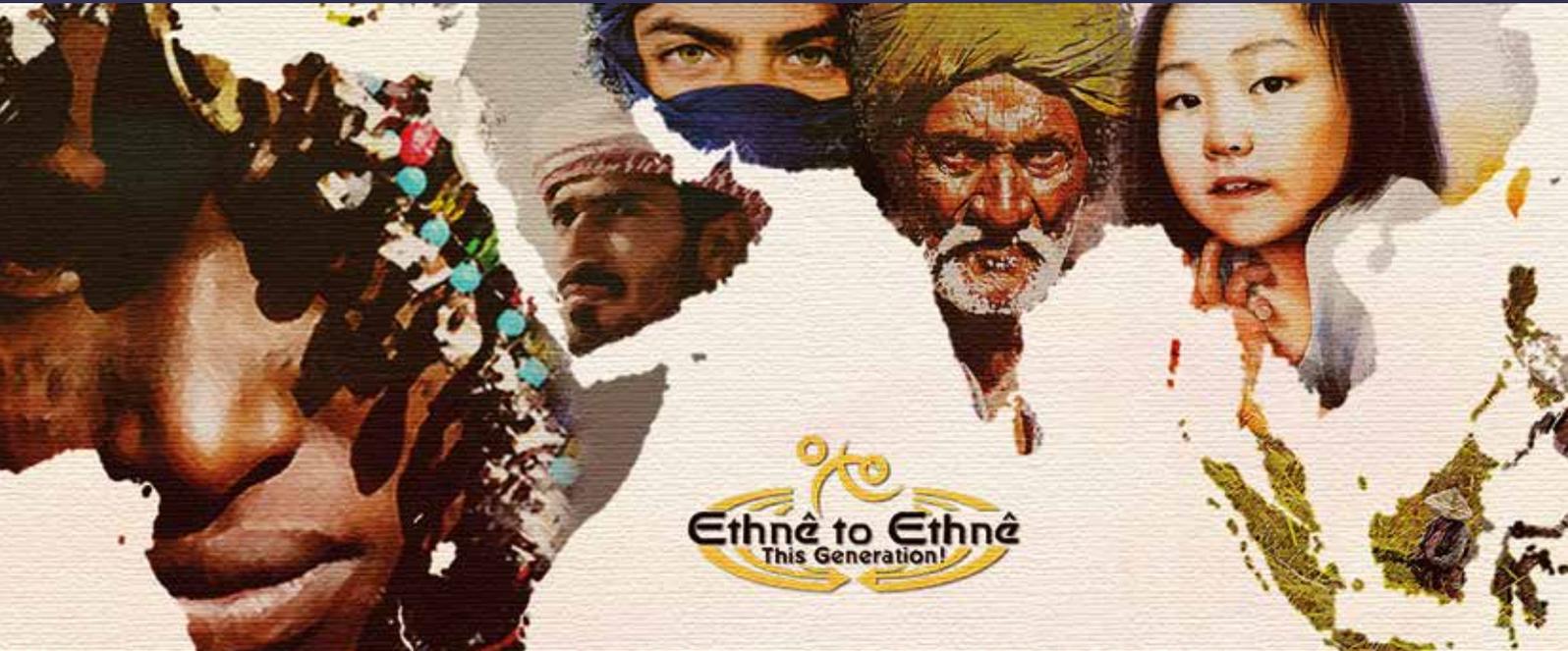
“For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”
(Matthew 6:13, most Greek manuscripts)

- Pray that every person and every place that is now under the influence of Buddhism would come to fully experience God’s kingdom, the power and glory of Jesus, His righteousness, and the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit.



ACCELERATING MOVEMENTS TO CHRIST AMONG ALL PEOPLES

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OUR MISSION

- **CELEBRATING** Great Commission Progress among the Least-Reached Peoples.
- **ASSESSING** Current Opportunities and Resources.
- **ACCELERATING** Movements to Christ Amongst All Peoples.

Be a part of
the community

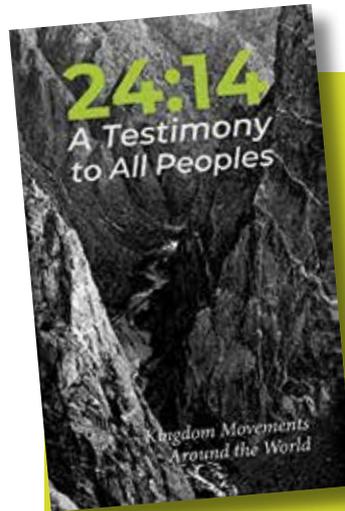


24:14

24:14 is a community of people catalyzing, nurturing, and supporting church planting movements globally.

The vision of the 24:14 Coalition is to see every unreached people and place engaged with a reproducing Church Planting Movement team by the end of 2025.

Join us as we pray for these movements and movement catalysts as they find and fill every gap where there is not yet CPM engagement!



Representing the voices of a diverse group of movement leaders and strategists, this a book about the 24:14 Vision and a clarion call to mobilization and urgency.

Jesus promised: “This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed in the whole world as a testimony to all ethnê (people groups), and then the end will come.”

We long to see the gospel proclaimed throughout the world as a testimony to all people groups in our lifetime. We hope you will catch that vision as you read and join us in praying and serving to start kingdom movements in every unreached people and place.

Go to www.2414now.net/resources

For more information about the 24:14 Prayer Team please email prayer@2414now.net

More than 500 of the world's
unreached peoples are Buddhist.



get involved at: joshuaproject.net/buddhist

Supporting organisations

The following organisations can provide you with further resources, prayer tools and opportunities to be a blessing to the people of the Buddhist world. We encourage you to find out more about their activities and how you can become involved.





Distributor contact
details etc

www.buddhistworldprayer.org For more information: info@buddhistworldprayer.org

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