



PRAYING FOR THAI BUDDHISTS



by CIM NETWORK

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Introduction to Thailand

Thailand is without question a beautiful country. It has a rich culture and history, beautiful beaches and delicious food. Thais are very friendly and helpful. Old people are respected, and kids are loved. The weather is hot all year long. The famous Thai smile is renowned worldwide.

Thailand is divided into 77 provinces, which are grouped into 4 regions: central, north, northeast (Isaan) and south. Nearly 75% of Thailand's almost 70 million people are ethnic Thai. The rest of the population consists of Chinese, Malay and other minority groups.

95% of the population of Thailand is Buddhist and 4% is Muslim. After almost 200 years of evangelistic effort, only around 0.65% of the total population are actual followers of Jesus.

Around 51% of them are located in only 3 provinces (Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Mae Hong Son) which leaves 74 provinces with a very tiny Christian presence. Around 40% of Christians are not ethnic Thai but belong to several hill tribe peoples. All of this means that the majority of Thai Buddhists are almost completely unreached. If you count the 4 Thai people groups together (central, northern, northeast and southern), they would be one of the 10 biggest unreached people groups worldwide!

One of the meanings of Thailand is the land of the free. The Thai people are very proud that Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia that has never been a western colony. Sadly, many Thai people in the land of the free are not as free as most people worldwide think they are.

Why Pray for Thailand?

God is moving among the nations. Worldwide, we can see thousands of Muslims, Chinese and Hindus turning to Jesus. Indeed, more Muslims are turning to Jesus than ever before in history. Some of the biggest church planting movements occur in Muslim countries with harsh persecution. In contrast, the majority of the Buddhist world is still waiting for breakthrough and big movements towards Christ. Why is that?

Could it be because God limits His action in this world to some degree based on the lack of prayers of His people? Every major revival was preceded by an abundance of earnest prayer. Prayer leads to breakthrough. Since 1993 millions of Christians worldwide have been praying for the Muslim world every year with the help of the 30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World prayer guide. As a result of all those prayers, God sent breakthrough in the Muslim world.

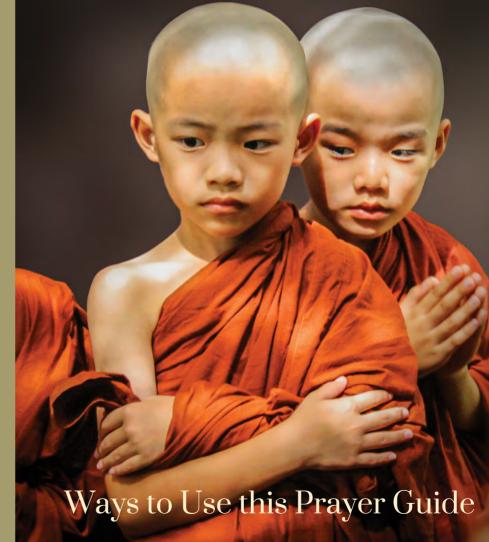
Buddhism is one of the last remaining giants of world religions that is still waiting for breakthrough. We believe when the people of God start to pray, breakthrough will come.

Thailand is 95% Buddhist. Even though thousands of missionaries have worked hard for almost 200 years to reach the Thai people, Thailand is still largely unreached. In fact, Thailand is one of the countries with the most missionaries but the least fruit in Southeast Asia.

In this prayer guide, some of the dark sides of Thailand are mentioned which are not very commonly known worldwide. They are the result of hundreds of years of having no or very limited access to the gospel. Without Jesus, darkness spreads in many forms. Because we love the Thai people and the beautiful country of Thailand, we want to see the people and the nation prosper and live in light instead of darkness. Therefore, we ask all our brothers and sisters worldwide to stand with us in prayer for this nation so that we will see breakthrough in this spiritually difficult country.

Our hope is that through the articles you'll learn more about the real Thailand and get a heart to pray for the people of this country and their huge spiritual needs. We are convinced that prayer will bring breakthrough in the midst of darkness.

Thank you for blessing Thailand through your prayers.



While going through this prayer guide, you may pray (and fast) in a variety of ways.

Here are a few ideas:

- Spend 5-10 minutes of your daily personal time with God to read one article and pray.
- Read an article in your small group, your Sunday school or your family devotions and pray together for the topic.
- Start a bi-weekly prayer meeting with friends and pray through 3 or 4 topics every time you meet.
- Host a Thailand Night at your house or your church with delicious Thai food and a time of prayer for Thailand.
- While having a 24/7 prayer session at your church, have one area that is dedicated to prayer for Thailand.

It really doesn't matter how we pray but what matters is that we pray! Our desire and prayer is that the Thai people will be saved. We trust that as you pray through this prayer guide, God will show you more of His heart – a heart for all people to know, love and worship Him.



- · Pray that Thai people wil understand that Jesus is the only way to find freedom (especially freedom from fear) from the results of their bad deeds (karma).
- · Pray for them to understand that they will never be able to overcome their karma by good deeds, but that the sacrifice and mercy of Jesus is the only way out.

It was 5 a.m. and Buu was waiting in front of his store. He had already been awake for 1 hour preparing gifts for the group of monks that would soon pass by his store. When they arrived, he put his gifts into the monks' alms bowls. After chanting and blessing him and his business, the monks proceeded on to his waiting neighbor. Sometimes Buu wonders why his business is doing so badly even though he makes merit every morning. Probably it is because his bad karma is just too great.

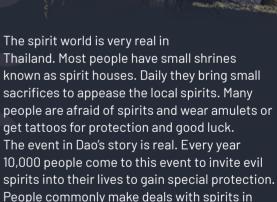
Thai Buddhists believe: "Do good, receive good; do bad, receive bad," This is the law of karma. It means that the deeds you do, both good and bad, affect every part of your life. Therefore, everyone is responsible for their own fate.

Everyone is stuck in this cycle of karma. All Thai people are aware that they can never live up to the good standard which Buddha taught (e.g., to always think the perfect thing, speak the perfect thing and do the perfect thing). To balance the horrible consequences of their bad karma (resulting from evil deeds), they make merit (i.e., do good deeds). Hence merit-making is one of the most important foundations of Folk Buddhism. By doing as many good deeds as possible, Buddhists hope they will have more luck in life and attain a better life in the next reincarnation. The problem is that nobody knows how much merit is enough merit. Thai Buddhists eagerly look for ways to make merit to ease the fear of the consequences of their karma, but they never achieve the peace of mind that they have done enough.

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Belief in the Spirit World

Carly in the morning Dao was standing in a crowd of around 10,000 people. Last night he had gotten his tiger bamboo tattoo from the monks in the temple. Now everybody in the crowd was waiting for the monks to start chanting at 9 a.m. to recharge the demon power of the tattoo. It is said that the demon power in the tattoo gives special protection. While the big crowd waited for the monks to start chanting, Dao suddenly felt the power of the demon rising in him. It overcame him and he started to act like a tiger. Without thinking, he started to run to the big bucket with holy water at the front of the crowd. He stumbled over people, fell, stood up and kept running. Before he could arrive at the holy water, he was caught by some soldiers. They calmed him down. The power of the demon left him, and he realized what had happened. He thanked the soldiers for calming him down and went back to his seat. There he would wait and watch how hundreds of others manifested in the same way he did just a few minutes earlier.



The belief in spirits has nothing to do with real Buddhism, but it is a central part of Folk Buddhism.

order to gain something.

Prayer Points:

· Pray that Thai Buddhists will stop giving their lives to spirits and will start giving their lives to Jesus.

- Pray that Thai Buddhists will find freedom in Jesus from their fear of the spirits.
- · Pray that they will know and experience the power that Jesus has over every spirit.





Stronghold of Sexual Immorality

f It was Nene's first day at university. The older students welcomed the freshmen with many games on their first day. Suddenly somebody pointed to Nene and another male student and told them to go into the middle of a circle. They were told to reenact a rape scene. Horrified, Nene watched the boy start to act as if he would rape her and everybody around them watched and cheered. After it was over Nene felt dirty and full of shame.

In Thailand, the younger generations in particular are highly sexualized. A 2016 survey found that 70% of young Thai men have had multiple secret sexual relationships with

women, while almost half of married Thai men commit violence against their spouses. Their first sexual experience is usually around the age of 15.

Even though prostitution is illegal in Thailand, it is very common everywhere. Some women are forced into prostitution by their poor families, but probably most of them are victims of human trafficking.

Rob was sharing with an older lady about a case of child sexual abuse that happened in his family. He gave testimony about how Jesus healed the broken heart of the victim. When he finished sharing, the old woman said: "Child abuse is very common here. Every child in this village has been abused."

The Thai culture of "saving face" often leads to covering up any form of sexual misconduct. Abuse is widespread but nobody talks about it. The victims don't dare to speak up and if they do they are accused of bringing shame upon a respected person.

Many distorted sexuality issues lead to broken marriages which result in broken families and broken hearts.



Brainwashing



Prayer Points:

- · Please pray that this rumor loses its power and that it won't keep Thai people from following Jesus and meeting with believers.
- · Please pray that the desire to know more about Jesus will be stronger than the fear of being brainwashed.
- · Please pray for more hearts to be open to the gospel and to yearn for the truth.

Namfa was confused. After joining the house church meeting at her friend's house, she had so many questions. The people at the meeting appeared to be earnestly interested in her and showed her genuine love. The story they shared about Jesus intrigued her. She needed someone who would take away her fear of spirits, and this Jesus seemed to be more powerful than any other spirit she knew. But ever since she was a child, she had been told that Christians have the power to brainwash

others with their words. Even though she

wanted to join the house church one more time

she decided to stay away from it out of fear of being brainwashed.

Sadly, many Thai Buddhists stay away from Christians because they believe the rumor that Christians have the power to brainwash with their words. This nasty rumor keeps many Thai seekers away from finding and following Jesus. Even when they join a Christian meeting and experience the Holy Spirit touching their hearts, they interpret it as the beginning of brainwashing and start to avoid the meeting. This rumor is a powerful lie of the enemy, and it needs to be fought with prayer.

Prayer Points:

- · Pray for Thai Buddhists to find their fulfillment in Jesus and not in sex.
- · Pray for purity in the lives of Jesus followers in Thailand.
- · Pray that God will stop all kinds of sexual abuse in Thailand.



The Parable of the Sower

(Matthew 13)

Prayer Points:

- Pray that God will prepare the hearts of Thai Buddhists to be good and fruitful soil.
- Pray for young believers to become fruitful soil and to resist the many societal pressures and worldly temptations they face.
- Pray that those who share the gospel would be given wisdom from God on how best to do so.

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Seeds on the path (vv. 18-19):

Many times, the gospel is heard, but the Thai people do not understand it. The Buddhist worldview does not lend itself to the concept of a personal, all-powerful creator God, and the promise of eternal life rings empty in their ears. Thais have been taught since birth that life itself is a curse and the source of all suffering, and their only hope of escape is to cease existence. When the gospel is not contextualized to be relevant to Thai Buddhists, the seeds fall along the path and are quickly snatched up by the enemy.

Seeds on the rocky ground (vv. 20-21):

For those who receive the gospel message readily at first, the pressures to reform back to the societal norm often prove too much. It is easy to be excited about this new Way when it is heard in the supportive context of an evangelistic meeting or church. But when the moment has passed and accusations of abandoning their heritage, being brainwashed or idolizing the West start to fly – it is all too easy to go back to the way things were before.

Seeds among the thorns (v. 22):

Despite the teachings of Buddhism that discourage cultivating attachment to this world, the pursuit and idolization of material wealth is alive and well in Thailand. The lie that riches lead to happiness appears to be a universal problem, and Thailand is far from exempt.

Seeds on the good soil (v. 23):

In the face of all these obstacles, there is still a small population of Thai believers who have found their freedom and joy in God and follow Him faithfully. These national believers are by far the best equipped to reach out to their own people with the message of freedom and hope in Christ.



Prayer Points:

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- Pray for a wellcontextualized Bible translation into central Thai that is easier to read for Thai Buddhists.
- Pray that the already available, easier-to-read Bible translations will be used instead of the traditional ones by both missionaries and local Thai believers both personally and for outreach to Thai Buddhists.

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Wit had already been a follower of Jesus for a few years. Because he had a Master's Degree, he was used to reading difficult texts. However, he always found it difficult to read his Bible, often encountering words he had never heard of before. Wit felt sad that he had such a hard time understanding the book he loved most.

The Thai language has its own set of words which are used exclusively for the royal family. This is called the royal Thai language. The first Bible translators decided to use the royal language in the Thai Bible. This decision failed to take into account that many Thais have problems understanding the royal language. In addition, many Bible words did not previously

exist in Thai (e.g., baptism), so new Thai words were invented. These factors make it laborious for a Thai Buddhist to read the Bible and understand its meaning.

Thai Bible Translations

Today, there a several translations varying in their usage of high language and common language. Yet up until now, most full Bible translations are still hard for many Thais to understand.

A point of light is the widespread adoption of smart phones which makes it easier to install Bible applications with access to various translations free of charge and allows seekers to more easily find Christian materials in Thai.

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Persons of Peace

Prayer Points:

- Ask God to reveal to missionaries where He is preparing a new harvest of souls, so that they can join Him in His mission.
- Ask God to prepare the hearts of families and individuals to be people of peace throughout Thailand.
- Ask God that the persons of peace would openly welcome believers into their towns and villages regardless of the believers' age or nationality, even if there is pressure from their community to reject outsiders.

In Luke 10, Jesus sent out 72 of His followers to declare that His Kingdom was near. He gave them instructions about how to enter a new region – not taking extra things with them, staying in one place, eating whatever was given to them, and healing the sick. He said, "If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on them" (Luke 10:6). Even now, those who take the Gospel to new places are searching for men and women of peace.

It is amazing to see how God prepares the way for His truth to go forth among the unreached.

A person who doesn't know God, and in some cases doesn't even know anything about God, will open their home and their heart to a stranger.

They will often introduce the new person to their community of friends and relatives. Being introduced by a person of peace opens doors of relationship within the community to the outsider. Often they, or someone close to them, are the first to receive Jesus.

As missionaries share the good news in Thailand, they need persons of peace in every place that they go. They are not taking God to new places. He is already there! We need to join with God where He is already at work. We believe that "the harvest is plentiful." Even in places where there are currently no followers of Jesus at all, a great harvest is waiting.



Broken Families

The following is a true story of a Jesus follower from a Buddhist background.

Wanna was a teenager who always thought about running away from her parents' home. Growing up, it was common to hear her father and mother raising their voices and throwing harsh words at each other. Sometimes it was more than just words, sometimes they even threw things. One day, Wanna heard that her father had another child from an affair. Painfully, her parents started talking about divorce. Wanna felt heartbroken and insecure as she pondered the infidelity and the possible separation of her parents. She became hopeless and saw no more value in living. She hated men, and the concept of healthy family relationships was far from her understanding.

This very situation is common in Thai Buddhist families and leads to more problems in both

the parents' and the children's lives. Some of the problems that arise are addiction to drugs, adultery, depression, anti-social behavior and suicidal behavior.

Not long after, Wanna was invited to a fellowship group. Scriptures such as the following brought hope to her heart and soul: "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7, NLT). Eventually, Wanna accepted Jesus as her Savior God and prayed daily for her family.

Now, her whole family follows Jesus passionately and has stayed together. All the hearts in Wanna's family have been healed. As a redeemed family, they have learned a new way to have healthy relationships based on the Word of God. Jesus is the living hope and the source of healing. Many more families are still waiting for the Good News of hope to heal their brokenness, like Wanna and her family experienced.

Prayer Points:

 Pray that the broken families of Thai Buddhists will open their hearts to the hope and healing found only in Jesus.

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 Pray that God will restore the concept of healthy families in the hearts of Thai Buddhists and redeem what the enemy has destroyed in this society.

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- Pray for good discipleship that will lead to disciples who make disciples, which results in multiplication rather than addition.
- Pray for easily reproducible ways of sharing the gospel and making disciples, so that every believer can get involved, instead of having only a small elite group of Christians sharing the gospel.
- Pray that God will start several disciple-making movements in Thailand with strong disciples who are eager to make disciples.

Nok was excited. In 5 minutes his neighbors would come to his house to hear more about Nok's new faith. It was just 2 weeks ago that Nok decided to give his life to Jesus and was baptized. Now he was a transformed man. In the past, he was angry and restless, but now he felt peace and joy in his heart. He couldn't stop talking about this Jesus he had found. His neighbors saw the change in Nok's life and asked him what brought about this change. Nok was prepared for the questions. Right after his baptism, he had learned how to share his testimony and how to share the gospel with other people. When his neighbors asked, he was prepared. Now they came to his house to learn more about this Jesus. Soon this group started to grow and within a few weeks, Nok was leading a small house church with 15

people. The message of Jesus spread rapidly in this area because of young believers who were eager to share the message of Jesus with everybody they met.

After more than 200 years of mission work in Thailand still less than 0.2 % of all Thai people are Christians. If the church keeps growing at this pace it will take many more centuries to see Thailand reached. New strategies are needed in order to advance the kingdom of God in Thailand. Disciples need to make disciples, and churches need to plant churches. Multiplication is needed, not addition. Young believers need to be trained in sharing their new faith so that they can start house churches with their neighbors and friends.



The Barrier of a Foreign Jesus and Thai Identity



Prayer Points:

 Pray for those who proclaim the good news to have the courage to act outside the box of Christianity.

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- Pray for those who follow Jesus in Thailand to see and understand the barrier of a foreign Jesus.
- Pray for the few who follow Jesus in the Thai socio-religious context to be empowered to share Him with others.

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Westerners are Christians, but we Thai are Buddhists," or "Jesus is a white man, but I am Thai, therefore I am Buddhist." One doesn't need to spend much time in Thailand before hearing one of these phrases or something similar. Centuries ago, missionaries brought with them a white-skinned Jesus and a church covered in western culture and traditions. Those Thais who joined the church adopted western ways and were seen by the local people as outsiders at best and traitors at worst. Thailand desperately needs a Jesus for Thai people, coming from the God who created and loves Thai customs and ways of thinking and living.

Thai identity is rooted in Buddhism—but when a Thai person expresses this, we may understand something very different from what they mean. Most of the time to be Buddhist refers to a birth

identity, a community, not a belief system or rejection of God. Culture and community are things that the Bible affirms, not tears down. Most Thais are Buddhist not because they believe certain things, or because they have chosen to follow a certain path. In this sense, for them to be Buddhist has nothing to do with religion. Yet we see it through this lens even when it doesn't apply. Though this description is a simplification, this barrier has kept thousands of Thais out of the Kingdom.

Following Jesus was not meant to be a religion, nor was it meant to be only for westerners.

For this barrier to be overcome, we must completely reimagine following Jesus in the Thai context, allowing Buddhist Thais to choose how their faith is lived out and take Jesus out of the box of Christianity.



While Noi was listening to his friend explaining the gospel, he knew that it couldn't be true. Nobody could or would die for someone else. Ever since he was a small child. Noi was taught "one can depend only on oneself." He firmly believed this with all his heart. He needed to find his own way to salvation.

Jesus said, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is

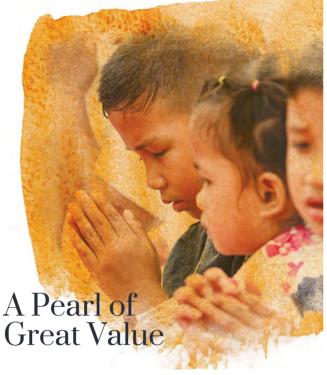
Prayer Points:

- · Pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal to Thai Buddhists that Jesus has already paid the ultimate price for their entrance into the kingdom.
- · Pray that Thai Buddhists will grow tired of depending only on themselves and will receive and enter into God's rest.
- Pray that they will encounter the gospel of the kingdom through the internet. Thai believers and missionaries, in an easily understandable way. and that they would see the great value of Jesus' sacrifice for them.

like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45-46).

A less common interpretation of this Scripture sees God as the merchant. He "sold" all that He had, giving His one and only Son, that He might buy those who are lost.

If you ask almost any ethnically Thai person whether or not they are Buddhist, you're likely to hear the phrase "To be Thai is to be Buddhist." Yet most Thai people are not adherents of philosophical Buddhism or deep seekers of spiritual truth. Many do spend time and money doing good deeds to make merit and obtain a better life now and in their future. They trust the Thai saying "one can depend only on



oneself," and therefore, they often work hard to get better "luck/fate."

The concepts involved in understanding the kingdom of God are indeed hidden to Thai Buddhists. The journey to enter the kingdom of heaven requires searching, humility and letting go of our desire to save ourselves.





In Habakkuk 1, the prophet is complaining

Judah. Habakkuk saw the broken state of his

nation and longed for God's intervention. He

"Look among the nations, and see; wonder

and be astounded. For I am doing a work in

your days that you would not believe if told"

(Habakkuk 1:5). God didn't forget His people.

He had a plan of intervention ready. He had a

begged God to save the nation. God answered:

about the injustice which was going on in

Prayer Points:

- · Pray that God will work in astounding ways in Thailand. so incredible that people won't believe them even if told.
- · Pray that God will transform Thailand from a broken nation to a nation that worships and follows Him. from ashes to beauty.
- · Pray that all Christians workers in Thailand will receive a revelation of what God wants to do in this nation.

perfect plan to purify the nation from injustice, but the plan was different from what everybody expected. The plan was indeed so unexpected that nobody would have believed it even if they were told.

Thailand is in a broken state. Very often the Thai smile is only a mask, and under the mask, enslavement to alcohol, anger and sexual desires can be found. Many families are disfunctional, and abuse is common. Injustice and broken hearts rule many relationships. Thailand needs God's intervention. He alone can save this needy and hopeless nation.

We desire to see God move in Thailand in incredible ways, in ways that are too high for our thinking. He has a plan to redeem this nation. His plan is perfect even though we might not understand it at first. We believe that His kingdom will advance in Thailand and that He will do such an incredible work in Thailand that other nations will be astounded and marvel at what God is doing. May Thailand become an example of how God can transform a broken nation from ashes to beauty. May testimonies of His transforming power be shared everywhere in Thailand and throughout the nations.



- Pray that Thai believers and missionaries alike would understand deeply who God is as King, being filled with hope and proclaiming hope to the nation.
- Pray for a message of hope to go out and for total freedom from karma through Jesus.
- Pray for the spirit of despair to flee from those tormented by it

by it.

Mifan was desperate. She didn't know what to do anymore. Her family had fallen apart. Her husband wasn't interested in her, and her children behaved very rudely towards her. On top of that was all of her shame. Her failures of the past weighed on her like a heavy burden. There was no way she could ever make enough merit to get rid of all her bad karma. For her failures, she would suffer in this life and in her next lives, and she had no way of escape.

For the Theravada Buddhist, hopelessness is not a new thing. The religion does present a

way to escape bad karma; however, it remains nearly impossible for any person to actually attain true freedom or enlightenment. It's as though everyone has a debt of 2 trillion dollars and yet still insists on making their monthly payments in the midst of the impossibility of redemption. Needless to say, despair is not far from those born into this debt. For most, the best they can do is begin chipping away at it anyway. In 2016, the noble and great king of Thailand passed away after more than 70 years on the throne. His hundreds of royal projects, devotion and honor are unmatched. A standard was set that cannot be reached by just anybody: another near impossibility. Hopelessness has a lot of ground to stand on in this nation.

But this is not Thailand's destiny! Christ has paid the price to free the people from their karma. He has come to reign as eternal King over the nation fulfilling the highest of standards. Hope has come.

"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14).



Prayer Points:

- Pray that family values will be restored and have an effect on the Thai culture as a whole.
- Pray that women will be valued, loved and supported.
- Pray for all ministries working with prostitutes to find creative and effective ways to help them, and that they will not only get out of the business, but also find healing for their hearts in Jesus.

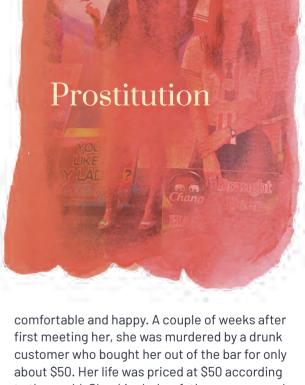
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Prostitution in Thailand is not a modern phenomenon. In fact, it not only used to be legal for over 200 years, but it was encouraged, accepted as a natural "rite of passage" and culturally ingrained into the Thai national identity.

Most Asian cultures adhere to the notion that women are lesser than men, an object to possess and not fully human. Thailand is no different. Even today, while prostitution is technically illegal, it brings in too much revenue for any real change to take place. In 2015, it was estimated that prostitution alone brought in roughly \$6.4 billion a year. There is even a popular saying, "There are two things that Thailand does best, rice and women."

Prostitution isn't safe.

There was a woman named Joy who came for a couple of weeks to one of our English classes that we hold in the middle of a major red-light district in Pattaya. Joy was an appropriate name because she was always smiling and making the students and her younger sister feel



comfortable and happy. A couple of weeks after first meeting her, she was murdered by a drunk customer who bought her out of the bar for only about \$50. Her life was priced at \$50 according to the world. Shockingly, her father encouraged her younger sister to stay at the bar and continue to work, since Joy was no longer able to provide money for the family. Joy's story is not an isolated one.



Praying the Bible



More Scriptures to pray: Psalms 62:5-8, 66:4-5, 95:6-8, 103:1-5; Isaiah 54:4-8; Jeremiah 29:11-14; Ephesians 1:17-19 Lord, with my prayers, I want to prepare the way and remove every obstruction from the Thai people's way. Your Word is like fire and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces!

(Isaiah 57:14; Jeremiah 23:29)

I pray, Father, that the Thai people will be still and know that You are God. You will be exalted among the nation of Thailand.

(Psalm 46:10)

O Lord, the gospel is veiled to the Thai people, who are perishing. The god of this world has blinded their minds, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For You said, "Let light shine out of darkness!" So shine in their hearts so that they may receive the glorious knowledge of God, as they gaze into the face of Jesus Christ.

(2 Corinthians 4:3-6)

Lord, I pray that you will open the eyes of the Thai people, so that they may turn from

darkness to light and from the power of Satan to you, O God. Let them receive forgiveness of their sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in you.

(Acts 26:18)

Father, I thank You, that You hear the cry of the Thai people. I pray that You would draw them up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set their feet upon a rock, making their steps secure. Lord, put a new song in their mouth, a song of praise to you, O God. Many peoples shall see and fear, and put their trust in You, Lord. You bless those who make You their trust.

(Psalm 40:2-4)

Lord, when the Thai people cry to You in their trouble, deliver them from their distress. Send out Your Word and heal them, and deliver them from their destruction. Let them thank You for Your steadfast love, for Your wondrous works towards them! And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of Your deeds in songs of joy.

(Psalm 107:19-22)



Media Evangelism

Prayer Points:

- Pray for culturally appropriate media to be developed to reach Thai Buddhists.
- Pray for media training to be available for Thais that they may grow in the area of media evangelism.
- Pray for more workers to step into this frontier of media evangelism.

One worker living in a Thai Buddhist village made an interesting observation. Most families lived in simple wooden or concrete houses. They did not have much furniture or many appliances or even common things that would be found in a city dweller's house. They lived simple lives, eating from their gardens and spending as little money as possible for other things. Most families had only a motorbike for transportation and owned the simplest phones, if they had one at all. The children, however, each had their own smartphone as early as age 6. YouTube videos, music and games were all accessible to them through their phones. In fact, instead of playing with dolls, the children would watch videos on YouTube of others playing with dolls. High school and collegeaged kids are connected through every social media app available and spend their evenings surfing through Facebook newsfeeds and watching viral videos.

In Thailand these days, it is more unusual to meet someone who doesn't have a smart phone than the other way around. This is a huge opportunity to expose millions of people to the gospel who are currently unengaged. But there is a fear associated with using social media for evangelism, and those with a gifting in media arts may be unsure how to use it to reach the Thai Buddhists. Wouldn't it be great for Christian workers to have at their fingertips an arsenal of videos, games, songs and pictures that could engage the Thai Buddhists? Expensive equipment, heavy books, TVs, DVD players and projectors would not be necessary. All that would be needed is one's mobile device. Relationships and face-to-face interactions are still critical in a Thai context, but the current generation has adapted to a very media driven world, and so should we.

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Apathy

Prayer Points: and Prayer Points: sho

 Pray that Thais would clearly see how to honor the value of sabai in a way that reflects Christ, rather than in a way that promotes apathy.

• Pray that God would give Thais a passion to chase the grand dreams He has for them.

• Pray that the power of apathy will lose its grip on the Thais.

Big felt unfulfilled. He wasn't desperate, but he wasn't satisfied either. It was as if something was missing. In fact, it felt like a lot of things were missing. He was frustrated with his mom and dad, he had just gotten scolded at work for showing up late again and his girlfriend was mad at him for ditching her to hang out with friends. If you asked him, Big could tell you what needed to change in order to see his relationships improve or his career advance. But overshadowing Big's dissatisfaction with his life was the ugly truth that he just didn't care. Life was mediocre, but apparently, that was enough.

Big's story, and the difficulties he was facing, were not dire circumstances. They were commonplace, normal worries to which many can relate. Yet, Big was seemingly unable to

make the changes necessary to deal with the problems because of his apathy. Apathy, like a heavy cloud, pours rain on the sparks of motivation preventing the fires of change from getting started. For many like Big, it simply takes too much effort to tackle the puzzles of relationships, education, occupation and financial security.

A high value in Thailand is being sabai, which is the feeling of being okay, relaxed or at peace. This beautiful value, if expressed in the wrong way, can be a major factor in perpetuating apathy. Many of the best things in life require the investment of hard work and sacrifice in the immediate, in order to reap something beautiful, peaceful and relaxing in the future. Apathy, on the other hand, perpetuates poverty, broken relationships and hopelessness.

DAY

Unreached Villages

Prayer Points:

 Pray that God will send workers into the harvest and that His workers will be willing to go to the places where the unreached live.

- Pray that God will bring His light and hope into the dark places of unreached villages
- Pray that the gospel will spread in Thailand so that horrible tragedies like what took place in Phrom Phiram will not happen anymore.

In 1977, a small village in Phrom Phiram District (in central Thailand) created big headlines. A young girl was found dead near the local railroad But it wasn't a train that hit her. Apparently, a huge group of men raped her until she died.

Today, more than 40 years later, the message of Jesus still has not reached this district with its dark history. Until now, the almost 90,000 people of Phrom Phiram have no idea how to find forgiveness from their sins. They don't know a single Christian and have no church close by.

Sadly, Phrom Phiram isn't the only village facing this problem. 44 million Thais (60% of the entire

population) live in a sub-district without a single church! After almost 200 years of mission work in Thailand, the big majority of villages are still completely unreached. They are cut off from the gospel, have no access to a church and don't know even one Christian.

Even though Thailand is an open country, the majority of Thais are unengaged because there are no Christians in the communities where they live.

Thailand desperately needs more gospel messengers who will go to these unengaged people to bring light into the darkness.



Lek had kidney cancer, and her left kidney was scheduled to be removed in a few days.

When we visited her, we prayed with her and gave her *The Book of Hope* (a book with Bible stories) to read. She warmly received our prayers and gift, and we wished her well and left.

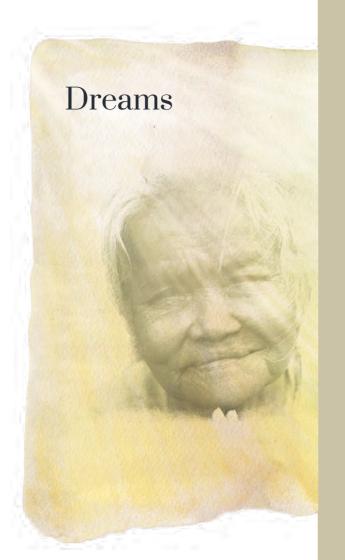
Prayer Points:
• Pray for Lek's faith to grow stronger and for her testimony to be heard in her neighborhood. Pray for the stage 3 cancer to recede and for our friend to receive full

• Pray for more Thai Buddhists to receive dreams from Jesus.

healing.

 Pray that divine healings will accompany the proclamation of the gospel among Thais.

The next week we went to visit Lek in the hospital. As we handed her some oranges, we looked into the radiant face of our new friend. She was obviously in a weak state, having had the surgery only the day before, but she was positively beaming. She immediately showed us where they had made the large incisions, and we prayed again for her, for a good recovery and for the cancer to be gone. Then she told us that she had had a dream, in which she met with God, Who took her to a mountaintop and said He would take care of her. In the dream, everything was white. Afterwards, she felt elated and was full of trust and peace. She was convinced this was God the Father looking after her and being with her. She said she had been talking with Him constantly since she had the dream. We were amazed, most of all with her obvious state of being in the presence of God. Every time we looked into her eyes, she was full of the joy of the Lord.



DAY

Praying the Parables: The Prodigal Son

The Prodigal Son is one of my favorite stories showing the Father heart of God. Like the younger son, I took everything God had set aside for me and then turned my back on Him, thinking that I could make it on my own. After a few years of trying to keep my head above water, I realized that it would be better to submit to Him, even if it meant giving up my independence and living as a servant, rather than to continue to live in the squalor of what my life had become. When I came back to God, He never held those years of rebellion against me; in fact, He blessed me more than I deserved.

Living in Thailand, I have observed many Thais turn away from God, thinking they don't need Him and seeking their fulfillment in other things like parties, sex or careers. There are new believers who have experienced God, but, due to cultural or familial pressure, have stopped following Jesus. This especially tends to happen in villages where one becomes an outcast for not being Buddhist, or when students return home after becoming a followers of Jesus during their time in university.

Prayer Points:

- Pray for Thais to have opened eyes that find fulfillment only in Jesus and that the emptiness in their hearts will drive them to truly repent and follow Jesus.
- Pray for Thai believers who feel pressure from culture or family to stay strong and to keep following Jesus.
- Since many Thai children have had absent or bad fathers, pray that Thais will experience God as a good and loving Father.



The Elderly

Prayer Points:

 Pray for those who have a focus ministry with the elderly.

- Pray for older generations to have teachable hearts that receive the gospel with joy.
- Pray for bridges to be built between the Christian community and the people of tradition.
- Pray for old people who are on fire for Jesus to use their influence to lead their whole extended families to Jesus

Grandma Nu was already 82 years old. Still she woke up early every morning to work in the small garden in front of her house. She harvested vegetables and brought them to the market. At the market, she sold them and earned 2-3 USD per day. From the profit, she bought food to prepare dinner for her grandchildren, who she watched every afternoon.

Living all in one house, the elderly in Thailand often stay by themselves during the day as their children go off to work. It is common for grandchildren to be left under the care of the elderly while the parents find work. Grandma and

Grandpa might pitter patter around the house and make use of their time doing small jobs that benefit the whole family. Some of the elderly have little to no education and are unable to read or write, yet they are brimming with wisdom, reciting proverbs and telling stories to pass down what they can. The older generations, though firm in traditions, are not too late to discover the truth of Jesus and commit their lives to the Kingdom! They are highly honored in Thai society and have the potential to reflect great change unto their own families and villages.



Prayer Points

- Pray for Bible translations that can be easily and correctly understood by Buddhists.
- Pray for believers to do the hard work of learning Buddhist terminology and concepts.
- Pray for more believers to see and appreciate the areas where Jesus's and Buddha's teachings agree with one another while also recognizing the important and fundamental differences between the two.

For more information on this topic, please see the credits page (p. 37).

The Barriers of Miscommunication and Misunderstanding

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Most of us would say that this verse represents the good news in a nutshell. Yet to a Thai Buddhist, there are so many parts of this verse that sound like the opposite of what Christians think it means. To a person with a Thai Buddhist worldview, this Scripture says that this cruel Western God lusts after the world so much that He commits a sin by sacrificing His only Son so that we will be caught in the wheel of suffering, death and rebirth forever and never go to heaven.

The message Christians are so enthusiastically pushing toward Buddhists is often incomprehensible, unattractive and irrelevant. This is because we have not realized that the differences in worldviews will naturally lead to miscommunication.

With these differences, it is not surprising that Buddhists misunderstand the message and find it incomprehensible and irrelevant to their lives. Understanding their perspective reveals that Christians have failed to communicate. Only through trying to understand Buddhists can Christians effectively communicate Christ to them.

Unless we find better terms to communicate the significance of what Jesus did on the cross in a way that is meaningful and relevant to Buddhists, we will continue to experience very little response for many more decades to come. But if we communicate the message of the cross with cultural sensitivity, in terms to which the Buddhist audience can relate and be transformed, it will significantly impact evangelization and disciple-making.

Storytelling ${ m IVI}$ any times when we are giving out Bibles or

Prayer Points:

 Pray for contextual and Biblically accurate story sets for Thai Buddhists to be completed.

- · Pray that unreached Thai Buddhists would be engaged through the stories and see God's transformation in their lives, their villages and their country.
- · Pray for teams, churches and missionaries to use the storytelling approach so that the message of Jesus will be understood easily and will spread rapidly in Thailand.

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meeting together as a church, we come across a very common problem. People either can't read, don't like to read or, because they are an oral people, they cannot engage in a written cultural practice. How do we engage the 70% of the world who identifies themselves as an oral culture? One way is through storytelling. When one group first started meeting together, they read from a paper Bible. The atmosphere was very forced and heavy, with a sense of boredom. During the discussion, no one was willing to speak up or participate without coercion. The next time they met together, the leader tried using a different method. He asked everyone to share a story about a storm or great time of fear in their lives. Then the leader told the story of Jesus calming the storm. After finishing the story, the leader then led a discussion using questions such as the following:

- 1. What did you like or dislike from the story?
- 2. What did you learn about God from the story?
- 3. What did you learn about Man from the story?
- 4. How do you want to apply what you learned from this story in your daily life?

The atmosphere that day was completely different. Everyone was more engaged, the spirit was lighter and they were able to study God's Word together and think about how to apply it in their own lives. Everyone's story was personal and open which allowed the group to grow together, pray together and support each other. They didn't need to rely on one person leading or preaching but realized that they all had something to offer. Using a storystyle meeting also allows a group to meet in any context and location, opening more opportunities for Thais to engage in God's Word.





Prayer Points:

- · Pray that Thai believers would have wisdom and boldness to share with their Buddhist friends and neighbors.
- · Ask God to inspire the hearts of Thai believers to move from parts of the country where the gospel is more known to the places where most of the people have never heard.
- · Ask God to reveal ways that churches can multiply quickly to reach as many people as possible with the good news.

The Thai Church

 $oxed{1}$ he Church in Thailand is growing. More and more people come to know Jesus every day. This is exciting, and we rejoice in knowing that we have new brothers and sisters coming to faith. Yet, there are two main statistics that we hope will change soon.

The first is related to the location of Thailand's Christians, Nearly half (around 51%) of the believers live in just three of Thailand's 77 provinces!

The second is related to the ethnicity of Thailand's Christians. It is estimated that around 80% of the believers in Thailand belong to a hill tribe or are ethnically Chinese. The "hill tribes" are people groups that have come to Thailand due to economic pressure or persecution of some kind. Most of them come from neighboring Myanmar (Burma). One missiologist went so far as to say that the number one factor in church growth in Thailand in the last 100 years is war in Burma!

To see a major increase in the number of believers in Thailand, the gospel must spread from the North to the Central, South and Northeast regions. And there must be a renewed focus on bringing the good news to ethnic Thai people. This would include needed breakthroughs among the Northern Thai, Central Thai, Isaan (Northeast Thailand), and Southern Thai people groups. Christianity among these ethnic Thai people groups is estimated as low as 0.2%.



- Pray for thousands of Thai Muslims to experience Jesus through dreams and visions...
- Pray for more Christian workers to go to Muslim communities in Thailand.
- Pray for gentleness and wisdom to know how to communicate the good news effectively within the local cultural context (Matthew 4:18-20).
- Pray that the Thai church would grow in their faith and desire to tell their Muslim neighbors and co-workers about Jesus.

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On a hot afternoon Fatima adjusted her headscarf as she walked out of her small apartment building. The alley was already crowded with people. As the neighborhood kids crowded around Fatima, she passed out milk and chatted with them. Looking into the face of a young girl, Fatima imagined the face of her own daughter. Her daughter would have been around the same age, had she lived past her 1st birthday.

Every week, Fatima makes merit for her daughter by passing out milk to the street children. Her daughter did not live long enough to gain favor before God. So, with deep longing, Fatima prays that her own good deeds will make a difference for her daughter.

In a nation known for its Buddhist culture,
Muslims like Fatima are an often overlooked
minority. Yet they number anywhere from 4 to 7
million (numbers vary depending on the source).
Besides the more visible Muslim communities
in the South of Thailand, there are large Muslim
communities in Bangkok, in the North (especially
along the borders) and smaller communities
spread throughout Thailand's provincial capitals.

Today, very few Thai Muslims are followers of Jesus. Yet there are encouraging signs from around the country, as small pockets of new believers (from Muslim communities) meet together to worship Jesus and grow as disciples.

together to worship occus and grow as also

Visit www.muslimsofthailand.org to learn more about the Pattani and other Muslim peoples in Thailand.

The Muslims of Thailand



#### Prayer Points:

- Pray for those who have a special focus on outreach to students.
- Pray for discipleship programs to raise new believers to be firm in their faith and to continue growing.
- Pray for new believers to be able to remain in their communities and not to separate from them.

It is important for Thais to have a sense of belonging to community. One way that can happen is simply by having a job or going to school. Most occupations in Thailand require uniforms, which in and of itself gives that sense of belonging. Students are not only seeking community, but identity and purpose as well.

Some kids come from families that cannot afford to send them to school, relying on government or foreign aid to sustain their education. Others leave school after grade 9 to work and earn extra income for the family.

hopes and dreams meet filial piety and different social pressures resulting in an often stressful season of testing in their lives. In addition, college and university students tend to be quite impressionable and are open and vulnerable.

A substantial amount of Thai Christians have told of being born into the Faith during their post-secondary education as a result of some form of outreach to students. Having a Christian community available for new believers is important in seeing these types of results since, as mentioned above, Thais place a high importance on belonging to a community.



· Pray that Thai children will hear early on about God and that they will hunger for Him and search for truth (Psalm 78:4).

- will touch their hearts deeply
- · Pray that believers will be able to maintain their following Christ.

m While walking to the restroom, Supanee was thinking about what her teacher had said that morning. The teacher had explained the first rule in the kindergarten: "Be a good Buddhist." Supanee wondered what it meant to be a good Buddhist. Every morning before class, Supanee and her schoolmates listened to the recording of monks chanting prayers. She liked it because it was a good way to start the day. Last weekend her whole family had gone to the temple to make merit. After showing respect to the Buddha by kneeling in front of the statue, she had offered her gift of flowers and money. Then her mom took a picture of her in the temple, and she felt very proud. Supanee really wanted to be a good person. Her teachers, her parents and everyone else agreed: it's very important to be a good Buddhist! She was looking forward to the next visit to the temple. This for sure would help her to be a good Buddhist. She was grateful for all the people who were helping her to be a good Buddhist. Because at the end of the day, the most important thing is to be a good Buddhist

From early childhood on, Thai children are taught the importance of being a good Buddhis by following Buddhist tradition. Because they



are continually indoctrinated by Buddhist teaching and practice, it's no surprise that they intertwine their national identity with their religious identity. For them, to be Thai really is to be Buddhist. That's what they are taught from the very beginning. Therefore, turning away from Buddhism is often seen as a betrayal of the national identity, which often results in social exclusion. That is the reason why many Thai Christians lose contact with their families and friends.

#### **Prayer Points:**

- Pray that Aod's physical health will be completely restored and that the rest of his extended family will acknowledge that the miracle is from Jesus and put their faith in Him.
- · Pray that those who have been healed by Jesus will grow in faith, know the will of God and boldly share their testimony with others.
- · Pray for a greater release of more supernatural signs (healings, miracles, etc.) in



Despite being a heavy smoker, Aod, who was in his early 60s, was a strong farmer. However, due to lung problems, Aod was admitted into the hospital on March 15, 2018, with the following conditions: chronic obstructive lung disease, uncontrollable bowel movements, kidney failure, splenomegaly, pulmonary edema and an enlarged heart. Despite this bleak prognosis, his daughter, who follows Jesus, and a few other relatives began to pray

fervently for him. In the afternoon, a report from another daughter, a non-believer, said that the doctor had given up on his case, stopped the medication and told them to prepare for the worst. This report led them to pray even more intensely for Aod's healing.

The next morning, a different doctor observed Aod and sent him to the x-ray room. Without having taken any medication for almost 24 hours, Aod was able to get up at noon that day for the first time in 3 days. The doctor allowed him to eat liquid food. His Christian relatives walked into his room that afternoon to gratefully and joyfully see And smile at them. And's daughter took the opportunity to share the good news with him. He believed it was Jesus who had helped him. And gave his life to Jesus. He confessed that he knew he would be dead without Jesus. It's a miracle that Aod is now able to get up again and is back at his home. And and his wife separated many years ago. During those years of separation, his wife and daughter came to follow Jesus. While Aod is still weak and in the process of complete healing, his wife is taking care of him. God has healed the bitterness in her heart toward her husband

- · Pray that they will have meaningful encounters with God, such as dreams. visions and healings, which
- social relationships while

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 Ask God to change Chiang Mai into the "New City" that He desires for it to be.

- Ask God to send believers from Chiang Mai into the rest of the country to bring the gospel to those who have never heard.
- Ask God to bless the ministries and congregations located in Chiang Mai and make them a blessing to nonbelievers all around them.

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Chiang Mai is the second largest city in Thailand. It is surrounded by mountains on every side. It was the capital of the Lanna Kingdom hundreds of years ago, and remnants of walls and moats remain from that time period. Even now, it maintains a legacy as a cultural and religious center with historical significance.

It is believed that the first established Church and Christian hospital in Chiang Mai are located on the east bank of the Ping River due to an ordinance that prevented any Christian presence in what was considered to be part of the city at that time. There are over 300 Buddhist temples in Chiang Mai, a very high concentration compared to its population. Though its Christian population (6%) may

not sound high, it represents a significant foundation in a vastly unreached country.

Its name means "new city," and God has been doing many new things in Chiang Mai. The province is home to nearly one-fourth of all Christians in Thailand and to nearly half of those who have come to faith in Jesus in the past ten years. It is home to dozens of ministries focused on Thailand, as well as many who are focused on reaching surrounding nations.

Many people feel that God will use Chiang Mai in a key way to reach other parts of Thailand. As believers from the North go into the rest of the nation, a new breakthrough awaits for the movement of the gospel in Thailand.

Prayer Points:

- Ask God to show
   missionaries new ways to
   share His truth with those
   who were raised in Buddhist
   families and culture.
- Ask God to bring encouragement to missionaries during times when they feel alone or unsuccessful. Ask that they would be filled with hope and not give up.
- Ask God to raise up many more Thai believers to join with foreigners in taking the gospel to every sub-district and village that do not yet have any followers of Jesus.

I 've never heard of any of this before, but it makes sense to me." To the group working on a gospel presentation to share Bible stories with Buddhists, this statement brought a new sense of enthusiasm.

The first missionaries to Thailand arrived hundreds of years ago. Catholics first came to Ayutthaya in the 1500s. In the early 1800s, Protestants came, and there are now believers from a wide variety of denominations throughout the country.

Missionaries today are faced with the challenge of discerning the reasons why the gospel has spread so much more effectively among various tribal groups who have immigrated to Thailand than among the native people of the land. Even with the faithful witness of those who sacrificed their lives throughout history,

the size of the Church remains a very small percentage of the overall population.

Issues such as whether to use royal or common language in gospel presentations, how to talk about ideas of God and sin with people who have no concept of them and whether or not Buddhist concepts of spirituality can be used to relate the message of Jesus sometimes seem to be never-ending discussions. As missionaries seek to share the love of God, they need much wisdom, boldness and faith. More Thai workers are needed who can naturally share about what Jesus has done for them.

May many more Thai Buddhists feel that the message they are hearing for the first time is understandable and not foreign to their ears and hearts.

## Join a Team Working in Thailand

Thank you so much for praying for the unreached people in Thailand. We hope that through this prayer experience God has given you not only a better understanding of their lives, language and religion, but also a heart for reaching the Thai Buddhists.

If you have any questions or want to join a church-planting team in Thailand through financial giving, going or specialized prayer focus, please contact:

www.pray4thailand.org

This prayer guide was produced by the CIM Network. The CIM Network is an alliance of missionaries all over Thailand who are dedicated to working together to see movements toward Christ among Thai Buddhists.

Here is another resource available from the CIM network.



"หนังสือแห่งความหวัง" - The Book of Hope contains over 100 Bible stories from Genesis to Acts in contextualized and easy-to-understand Thai language and artwork. The stories are available as audio recordings on YouTube as well.

To order copies, please contact: info@pray4thailand.org

### Credits

M any people all over Thailand from different mission agencies have helped in the production of **Praying for Thai Buddhists** and I am grateful to each of them for the part they have played. A big thank you goes to **Myra De Ford** who spent many hours designing the layout of this prayer guide and making it beautiful.

#### Manuel Becker

Editor

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#### The article on Day 22 was adapted from:

http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/bridging-buddhist-christian-worldviews

#### For more on this topic:

Vecteezy.com

https://chrisandmariebauer.wordpress.com/2015/08/31/flipped-communication-illustrated/

p.3, p.4, p.7, p.20, p.27, p.36

