



15 DAYS OF PRAYER

FOR THE BUDDHIST WORLD

JAN 28 - FEB 11, 2021



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A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to 15 Days of Prayer for the Buddhist World

Once again, believers around the world are picking up this guide to pray in faith for Buddhist people. We are trusting in the Holy Spirit to do the work of the Kingdom of God in the lives of Buddhists around the world.

In most nations where there is a Buddhist majority, there is, at best, a very small Christian presence. However, Jesus said in Matthew 17:20 that, "... if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move." As you pray through this guide, you are adding your seed of faith to that of Christian workers and local fellowships around the world who are bringing the light of Christ to their Buddhist neighbours.

You can pray through this guide at any time during the year, but we encourage as many as possible to use it from January 28-February 11, 2021, which is just before the start of the Chinese New Year on February 12. Chinese New Year is recognized and celebrated in many Buddhists cultures.

Buddhism is a complex and diverse system of beliefs, practices, and cultures. This guide does not attempt to provide a complete explanation of its varied expressions. The aim of this guide is to give you a glimpse into the lives of Buddhist people in different contexts around the world, to inspire you to pray for them and receive more of God's heart for them.



*"Walking with
God down the
avenue of prayer we
acquire something
of His likeness, and
unconsciously we
become witnesses to
others of His beauty
and His grace."*

- E.M. BOUNDS

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INTRODUCTION

Questions About Buddhism

How Did Buddhism Begin?

Prince Gautama was born in 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 an 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 became aware of 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), Gautama 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".

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The Buddha found his original companions in the search for enlightenment and preached his first sermon to them, where he outlined the "Four Noble Truths":

1. *Life is full of suffering and dissatisfaction.*
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".*

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Suffering, according to the Buddha, comes from our desire for things that are not permanent. This desire keeps us caught in an ongoing process of death and rebirth where everything, even one's very self, is an illusion. The only way to get out of the endless cycle of rebirths is to walk the "Noble Eightfold Path", avoiding extremes and living with right understanding, right thought, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and finally right concentration.

The end of the path is not eternal communion with God, but rather—like the flame of a candle being extinguished—a state where craving is ended. This comes about through self-effort, and there is no belief in a supreme creator God as spoken of in the Bible.

What Kinds of Buddhism Exist?

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

Theravada Buddhism (which means "the way of the elders") emerged from Sri Lanka, where the Buddha's sermons and teachings were first written down as three great canons of Scripture known as the Tripitaka. It focuses on the attainment of enlightenment through personal meditation and good deeds. Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos follow in this tradition.

Mahayana Buddhism emerged in later texts attributed to Buddha, which taught that bodhisattvas, or enlightened beings, choose to delay entering nirvana (the ultimate spiritual goal of liberation) to deliver other living beings from their karmic suffering (based on a person's past actions). This stream of Buddhism spread north from India along the silk route and was adopted in China, Japan, Vietnam, and the Korean peninsula.

Tibetan Buddhism (also sometimes known as Vajrayana) developed in the 6th century and incorporated traditional Tibetan and Nepali animistic and

shamanistic traditions with Buddhist spiritual beliefs. These focused on attaining enlightenment from tantric practices such as visualization of bodhisattvas and sacred symbols and chanting mantras to release power. The Dalai Lama is head of this tradition and the monks are known as lamas.

In recent years, Westerners have adopted various forms of Buddhism that focus primarily on a quest for inner peace, sometimes following traditional Buddhist teachers or following a form that mixes Asian traditions with Western notions of Buddhism.

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Praying for Buddhist People

Scripture is often interpreted by Christians through a Christian lens that is heavily influenced by western culture. But the Good News is intended to be good news for all, and Christian workers in Buddhist communities understand the importance of communicating the message of Jesus in ways that are relevant and meaningful.

As you pray through this guide, keep in mind some of the ways Buddhist cultures understand spirituality.

Buddhists do not believe in a creator God but do believe in various spirits and gods. They do venerate bodhisattvas or spiritual teachers who are worthy of respect.

Folk Buddhists believe there are good and evil spirits, including spirits of dead ancestors, but all these spiritual beings are caught up in the endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

Buddhism is not about belief alone but about doing. Achieving merit through almsgiving to monks and donations to temples is an important, traditional Buddhist practice.

Buddhists are not seeking eternal life – they already believe they exist in an endless cycle of death and rebirth. They desire liberation from endless life and suffering.

HOW CAN WE PRAY?

Many Buddhists are more likely to be impacted by the stories of Jesus' supernatural power and His free offer of salvation. Pray for miraculous healings and the revelation of grace. **(JOHN 1:14)**

Pray that Christians would listen to the Buddhist people around them. Pray that they will learn from them and from the Holy Spirit how to love those around them, even when faced with rejection or persecution. **(JOHN 14:15-21)**

Pray that God will help you to know how to pray for Christians who live among Buddhists, so they know how to share the Good News. **(1 COR 1:18-25)**