

10 DAYS OF PRAYER

FOR THE TAI YUAN PEOPLE



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INTRODUCTION TO THE TAI YUAN

Thank you for joining us as we intercede on behalf of the Tai Yuan people. You will receive a daily Tai Yuan story with prayer points from April 1st to 10th.

But who are the Tai Yuan people that you will be praying for?

The Tai Yuan are part of the larger Tai ethnic people group family with related languages, that are located in Northern Thailand, Eastern Myanmar, Northern Laos and the southeasterly Yunnan province in China. In Thailand, where they number over six million, they are commonly known as the “Northern Thai”, or as the “Khon Mueang” as they call themselves. They are mainly Buddhist with underlying animistic beliefs and practices, and have been resistant to the Gospel for many generations.



Despite the Tai Yuan church beginning over 150 years ago, less than 1% of the Tai Yuan are Christian today. This is due in part to decades of separation between Christian and Buddhist Tai Yuan. Today the Tai Yuan church struggles to reach their own people due to the lack of open doors into Buddhist communities.

The Tai Yuan team has found that a fruitful way to minister is for foreign Christians and local believers to establish Christian groups in their communities that influence the Buddhist society.



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YOUNG PROFESSIONALS | DAY 1

North Thailand has seen over 150 years of missionary work, but still only 0.4 percent of the population are Christians. This causes us to review our strategies and rethink how the Church is doing. Many Tai Yuan churches are caught in cycles of traditions that hinder them from effectively speaking to the rapidly changing society around them. The largest demographic in Thai society belongs to the age group between 30-44 years old. In the 1970s, the support of an aged person was able to provide for eleven working adults. The prediction for the 2030s is that the support for an aged person will need to be carried by two working adults. The pressure on working professional to support an aging society will only increase. Coupled with the growth of urbanization in Thailand, it is hard not to expect the influence of modernization on the Thai worldview. We have thus identified a growing unengaged segment amongst the Tai Yuan on which to focus our attention. They are the modernized Tai Yuan young professionals who are highly pressured to succeed in life, and to be the breadwinners for their families and society. They are asking questions that most Tai Yuan churches are not equipped to answer: What do God and religion have to do with my pursuits of success? But they also have the potential to be movers and shakers for God if they are disciplined to see Christ's power in all of life.

PRAY

- **Pray** that young professionals would find believers able to engage them in the questions they are asking, and discover how the Living God is interested in them and how they live their lives.
- **Pray** for young professionals to come to living faith in Jesus.
- **Pray** that young professionals would be disciplined to integrate their faith in all of life.



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KEPT FROM HEARING | DAY 2

“Teacher! I have to leave now! My brother just had an accident!” And with that, the person and three of her friends left urgently from the gathering.

It was a Christmas outreach party hosted by a church plant geared towards young professionals. This particular young woman was a lab technician and a new English student at a language school whose vision is to use teaching language as a platform to reach Tai Yuan young professionals. Up until that point in the party, the student and her three friends were having a delightful time! They were eating, laughing, chatting and participating in group games. It was their first meaningful contact with the church and with other Christians. But exactly at the time when the party transitioned into the Christmas story, the student received the phone call. What is more, because the student and her friends carpooled to the church, all the students missed the chance of hearing the Good News that night.

PRAY

- **Pray** against spiritual forces that use all sorts of tactics to stop the Tai Yuan people from hearing the Gospel.
- **Pray** for God’s protection, wisdom and creativity over those who are seeking to reach the Tai Yuan young professionals.
- **Pray** for open hearts, as young professionals are easily side-tracked by the busyness of work, social media and pleasure seeking.

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FRIENDSHIP DISCIPLESHP | DAY 3

"You know, I feel I don't really have a religion at this point." My friend and I were sitting down with delicious cups of coffee between the two of us. My friend is a Tai Yuan young professional. For the past few months we had been meeting regularly, usually over a cup of coffee or lunch to talk about life and help each other out with our respective foreign languages. As time went on, we became more open with each other when it came to talking about religion. That day, I shared with him my story of how I came to follow Christ. The vast majority of Tai Yuan people are Buddhist, and most have not yet heard the gospel. But his response did not necessarily surprise me. Many of the younger generation of Tai Yuan are becoming more secular and nominal in their Buddhist faith. I am learning that, while many Tai Yuan people do not seem very serious in practicing Buddhism everyday, it still affects their behavior and worldview immensely.



PRAY

- **Pray** for young Tai Yuan professionals like my friend, who are becoming more interested in Christ, but need people to walk with them through the process of getting to know Jesus.

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FOLK BUDDHISM | DAY 4

The Tai Yuan are mainly Thai folk Buddhists, a religion with a veneer of Buddhist philosophy undergirded by animistic beliefs and practices expressed through Brahmin-influenced rituals. Simply put, they are folk Buddhists because it provides them a very practical form of religion that readily accommodates the concept of personal spirits and deities. To the Tai Yuan, religion and spirituality are not only concerned with the afterlife, but actually speak to the realities of daily living. The Tai Yuan are most concerned with practicing what they believe to work for them in accordance to their experience of living out life. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the Gospel is not only preached in words but lived out as an expression of Christ's power in all of life. Because of this, intentional relationship building, radical hospitality and living incarnationally amongst the Tai Yuan go a long way in drawing them closer to recognizing that Christ is Lord of all. The invitation to the Tai Yuan to start praying to Jesus for their everyday needs can also be a powerful tool to soften their hearts and give them practical personal experiences of the reality of Christ's power.



PRAY

- **Pray** for eyes to be opened to see that Jesus is Lord of all.
- **Pray** for believers to live out the truth and love of Jesus vibrantly.
- **Pray** for seekers to experience the reality of Jesus' power in answered prayer.

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PRAY

- **Pray** for God to reveal to the Tai Yuan that He has already provided all the merit that they need in Jesus Christ.
- **Pray** for the light of the Gospel to draw the Tai Yuan out of the dominion of darkness, and into the kingdom of the Son of light.

MAKING MERIT | DAY 5

One of the restaurants I frequent is run by an auntie in her fifties. She came to the city recently and opened a restaurant. It has been a lonely and difficult transition for her. As a result, she began going to the temple more often, in search of peace, blessing and a better life. Before long, her business picked up, and she became too busy to go to the temple regularly. In order to continue earning merit, she decided to put up a “money tree” in her restaurant for customers to stick bank notes into, to support the temple financially. In this way she could continue to receive blessing and merit even though she could not consistently make it to the temple.

When asked how much merit she needed to make to be okay, she could only answer that she had no idea. She said that she would just have to keep doing these good works for the rest of her life to make sure that she is doing enough.



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FROM NUN TO CHRISTIAN | DAY 6

One of my friends is a 65 year old Tai Yuan lady with 2 daughters and a son. Some time after she had raised her children, she shaved her head and joined the temple to be a nun in order to flee from a difficult family situation. She spent twenty years in the temple looking for redemption. Every day, she participated in the religious life of the temple, chanting and meditating, until one day, her son was arrested. She was deeply disappointed by the fruit of her spiritual practice. Why was her labor of twenty years unable to bless her child? She decided to leave the temple and return to society. She relocated to help her son through difficult times. As her son's situation gradually improved, she returned to her hometown to work in a massage shop. The store next to the massage shop was owned by a Christian. My friend liked the owner of this store very much, she thought he was kind and different from everyone else in the village. He invited her to come to church. When she heard the Gospel there, she decided to follow Jesus. She knew she had encountered true life and had finally found the way of redemption. We might think monks and nuns are the hardest to reach, but God is Almighty and can use all of their experiences to bring them to Himself.

PRAY

- **Pray** that Tai Yuan people seek truth and that they will be found by the heavenly Father. Matthew 7:7 says, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."
- **Pray** for Tai Yuan believers to have boldness to tell their neighbors that they are children of God. "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven," in Matthew 10:32.

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- **Pray** for local believers to persevere in their witness, in the face of misunderstanding and isolation.
- **Pray** for Christians to have wisdom to know how to honour their parents in the context of different beliefs.
- **Pray** for the truth of God's goodness and power to be understood more fully by believers as well as their family and friends.

SPIRIT DOCTOR VS GOD | DAY 7

"I find it so challenging to know how to honour my mother when she insists on going to the spirit doctor on my behalf. I keep telling her that Jesus is the highest God and that He will look after me now, so she doesn't need to keep going to the spirit doctor for me. But whenever I have trouble in my life, she still goes! The last time she went, the spirit doctor sent a spirit to help me all the way across many provinces. When that spirit returned to them, it reported that there was nothing it could do to help me, but that they should not worry because my house and property were surrounded by light and were under the care of a very powerful, good Spirit! That is what I keep telling my mother: that Jesus will look after me now, but she still feels burdened to help me in the only way she knows how, by going to the spirit doctor. This makes it so hard for me to be a good daughter and honour her."

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SOCIAL JUSTICE | DAY 8

"\$1 per shirt! You're going to earn \$1 per shirt?!" I exclaimed in horrified shock. "Yeah, isn't it great?" my friend said happily. "Much better than the \$0.75 per shirt that I often earn." "How long does it take you to sew one shirt?" I asked. "About an hour, especially if it has a collar and cuffs and a pocket." I stood in dumbfounded silence, before remarking weakly that that was even less than the minimum wage that local factory workers earned. "How much will the shirt be sold for?" I asked. "They sell for about \$20," replied my friend. "But you're only getting a fraction of that and you're the one doing all the work!" I exclaimed hotly. "I know," came the matter-of-fact reply. "Well, can't you demand a higher wage?" I continued, still grasping after a solution. "You are a skilled seamstress whose work is sought after." "No, they will just get someone else to do it for a cheaper wage and I need the work to supplement my income," she replied.

The lower working class often live a hand-to-mouth existence, desperate for income to meet their basic needs and often find themselves without a voice in the systems of local industry.



PRAY

- **Pray** for righteousness to pervade all levels of society, especially in industry.
- **Pray** for creative solutions for those who daily struggle in essential poverty.
- **Pray** for the hope and transformation available in Jesus to reach people in all levels of society.



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HURTING MEN | DAY 9

"My mother is in the final stage of cancer and she is very scared."

"My father died from a car accident when I was young."

"My brother died from an overdose of drugs."

It was the first meeting between a Northern Thai man and a missionary new to the field. Yet, here was the man talking about family details that people "back home" would not normally talk about, much less on their first meeting. Later that day, the new missionary asked his leader if this was normal for a Tai Yuan man to share so much on the first meeting. The team leader replied, "Many Northern Thai men are very lonely, and they have no one to talk to. That's why many of them like to get drunk, so they can freely talk about all the things in their hearts."

Because the missionary was new to the field, his language was limited. He longed to share with the man the peace that only comes from Christ and the hope of the resurrection. He was sad that he could not pray with this man who shared his heart.

PRAY

- **Pray** that Tai Yuan men will not have to turn to alcohol in order to share their burdens.
- **Pray** that Tai Yuan men will find the God who not only created their hearts but also understands their hearts.
- **Pray** for the missionaries, to have wisdom and the words to share the comfort and peace of Christ to many hurting and burdened Tai Yuan people.



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PRAY

- **Pray** for God to remove the blinders covering the eyes and hearts of the Tai Yuan people.
- **Pray** that when the Tai Yuan see the light of the Gospel in Christians, it would shine in their hearts and they would know it is truth.
- **Pray** that the false sense of stability that the Tai Yuan have would not keep them from coming to know Jesus.

THE LURE OF COMFORTS | DAY 10

Whether talking to other missionaries, to minorities who live among the Tai Yuan, or even to the Tai Yuan themselves, there seems to be a general consensus that seeing a mature church established among the Tai Yuan is just too hard; impossible, really. Surrounding the Tai Yuan are many hill tribe minorities, many of whom have a significant number of Christians. But they are in a very different situation from the Tai Yuan. Seen from the outside, the Tai Yuan are very put-together people – they have lovely houses, cars and children, and they genuinely seem to enjoy their lives. Perhaps because of this stability, or maybe in spite of it, there seems to be a very thick, very tall wall keeping the Tai Yuan from coming to Christ. There are likely many factors: cultural, societal, and spiritual. The barriers are very real, and only through prayer will we see God begin to take those walls down.

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PRAYING ON

Thank you for your faithful prayer for the Tai Yuan people for the last 10 days. If you want to pray for the Tai Yuan on a regular basis, please join our “Faithful 500” prayer group. When you sign up, you will receive weekly prayer points for the Tai Yuan. Also if you have any feedback or ideas to make things even better next time, please be in touch!

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