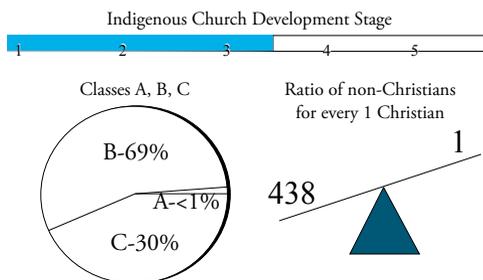


# Thai Buddhists



## Quick Facts

**Population:** 35,000,000  
 Thailand: 34,500,000  
 United States: 110,000  
 Taiwan: 100,000  
 Singapore: 40,000  
**Religion:** Theravada Buddhism  
**Believers:** 0.62%  
**Scriptures:** NT, OT  
**Ministry Tools:** JRGT  
**Church Status:** 3  
**Mission Status:** 2  
**MS Subgroups:** 7



Class A- Are members of a Culturally Relevant Church  
 Class B- Have close access to a CRC, but have not yet joined  
 Class C- Have no reasonable or close access to a CRC

**Identity:** The Thai people migrated from southern China in the first millennium B.C., displacing the Mon-Khmer peoples, and splitting off into the Lao, Shan and Tai tribes. They occupied the fertile farming lands of South East Asia and formed a strong empire that thrived for centuries. The Thai pride themselves on having never been colonized by a Western power.

**Lifestyle:** Thailand continues to transform itself from an agrarian based economy to an industrial hub of electronic and automobile manufacturing. Unfortunately, this rapid transition has brought millions into urban slums, and hundreds of thousands into tourist-driven prostitution. An estimated 2 million are now infected with the AIDS virus.

**Customs:** The Thai have a high regard for their culture, history and traditions, which they have endeavored to preserve despite modern influences. It

is illegal to insult the king, or even speak negatively against his decisions or ideas. The elderly are greatly honored, even to the extent of bowing to the ground at their feet to greet them. No important family decisions are made without the eldest patriarch or matriarch's consent.

**Religion:** Buddhism is intrinsic to the Thai identity. Traditionally, almost all young men go through Buddhist training, and today there are over 300,000 monks in the country. The Thai practice Theravada Buddhism which has a stronger emphasis on the priesthood. Laypeople gain merit for the next life by providing food and alms to the monks, who go out begging every morning. The monks in turn provide teaching on morality and perform rituals to protect people from evil spirits.

**Christian Outreach:** Other than the Tibetans, the Thai have been the most resistant Buddhist group to the Christian faith. The mixture of demon

worship with Buddhism has created a strong occultic stronghold that has never been challenged. Recently missionaries have begun to change their approach to evangelism, beginning with counseling and "freedom ministries." Many young people are now coming to faith in Christ through this strategy.

## How to Pray:

☞ Thailand means "land of the free." Ask God to open the eyes of the Thai so they may see their spiritual bondage to evil spirits and the occult.

☞ Only 20% of Thai churches have Thai leadership. Pray for wisdom among missionaries to train leaders, and for many Thai to hear God's call on their life for full-time ministry.

☞ Many Thai speaking Christians are from a Chinese background. Pray that God would enable them to reach out to their Thai Buddhist friends.

☞ Over 2 million Thai are trapped in the sex industry, many of whom are children. An estimated 1.5 million are infected with the AIDS virus. Pray for deliverance and healing, both physical and spiritual, for those set free.

**Every year 290,000 Thai Buddhists die without Christ.**