

Sri Lanka

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Jan 16

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

Matthew 19:26 (NIV Version)

Buddhism arrived on the shores of Sri Lanka in the third century BC, when emperor Ashoka of India converted to Buddhism and started sending missionaries. Sinhalese speakers, who adopted the new religion, were the first to record Buddha’s teachings in 25 BC.

Over the centuries, when Buddhist practice ebbed significantly, Sinhalese kings would send envoys to Burma and Thailand request help to reignite the Buddhist flame.

During the British colonial era, the Sinhalese Buddhist majority and the Tamil Hindu minority united against foreign rule. Unfortunately, following independence in 1948, a law was passed in 1956 recognizing Sinhala as the official language of the nation. This set the stage for conflict with the country’s Tamil Hindu population (who speak Tamil) that escalated into a 25-years war in which tens of thousands were displaced and/or killed.

The end of the war in 2009 coincided with a rising movement associating Buddhism with national culture and persecuting religious minorities, including Christians.

Today, Sinhalese Buddhists make up 70 percent of Sri Lanka’s 22 million people. To these Buddhists, turning to Jesus is equated with a return to Western cultural imperialism and loss of social identity.



Ways To Pray:

- Pray that Christians will share the gospel using appropriate Sri Lankan cultural patterns that break imperialistic stereotypes.
- Ask for a spirit of humility to sweep through Sinhalese Buddhist communities, resulting in hearts that seek spiritual truth and families that respond to the love the Father through Jesus.

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