

# CALL TO PRAYER

MAY 2022



## A HARD CHOICE

“If I become a Christian, can I still go to the temple?” This was the question that Takahashi asked me and my teammate at our last Zoom session as we were wrapping up our study on John 1:1–18.

It’s a question that many Japanese have. It’s a simple one, but not an easy one. Nuance is key, but the basic answer is: “Yes, to visit—but not to worship.”

This difficult question led to an intense, hour-and-a-half-long discussion, by the end of which Takahashi was visibly angry.

There was a lot that bothered him, but the main issue was this—the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the only God that exists and ought to be worshiped, and therefore all other gods are false. How can the Bible (and Christians) say that all other gods are false? Takahashi felt judged and disrespected and that his identity as a Japanese was being attacked. As a result, he stopped attending worship and no longer studies the Bible with us.

Sadly, what we experienced with Takahashi is common. Those of us who have ministered in Japan know it all too well. Religious, cultural, and national identity are all inextricably intertwined. To be

Japanese means to be a Shinto, a Buddhist, and to practice ancestor worship. To become Christian does not simply mean to forsake Shintoism, Buddhism, and ancestor worship but to forsake one’s fundamental identity as a Japanese. This conception is a major obstacle. It’s a real barrier—one that can be overcome only by the deep work of the Holy Spirit in people’s hearts.

I’m still meeting with Takahashi one-on-one to continue to probe and ask questions. He does not want to give up his identity and Japanese heritage—since that is what he feels he would be doing if he became a Christian—and that is becoming clearer in his mind. It has been disappointing and heartbreaking, but I feel led to continue to love on him, be his friend, and walk along with him on his faith journey.

Would you pray for Takahashi—that the Lord will do a deep work in his heart, remind him of why he wanted to become a Christian in the first place, and continue to draw him to Christ?

| by an Alliance worker serving in Japan

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## BECAUSE YOU PRAY

How many people does it take to walk with someone in the journey of deliverance and healing?

It takes all of us.

It takes supporters holding the ropes of intercession and financial support.

It takes family members and friends doing the unending tasks of life.

It takes team members in many different ministries.

It takes a willingness to step into the role in which Jesus is leading us today.

This past Saturday, walking with a woman on her journey of deliverance looked like many moving parts. It looked like Timbrel and two of our teammates meeting with two sisters at the C&MA church in the heart of the city. It looked like other colleagues preparing the church ministries for Sunday and other gatherings. It looked like Jimbo making food, providing vital prayer support, and revealing strongholds and a specific word for this specific woman's life. It took our kids spending most of Saturday without mommy. It took all the energy our family had that day. It took the resources many of you have sacrificially given for us to live here. It took the shield of prayer that you have faithfully held over us day after day, week after week.

And because of all of that, a woman who has walked bent over emotionally for many years was lifted in Jesus' arms and set free from many burdens and evil spirits that had been pressing her down. Thank you for the role you play

in stories like hers through your faithful intercession! We couldn't do this work without you.

| by Jimmie and Timbrel Hull, serving in Uruguay

## CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS OFFER HOPE TO DISPLACED CHILDREN

2 Timothy 2:21 tells us to be prepared for every good work. A few years ago, security issues began to increase in our West African ministry location. We asked God to direct our efforts so that our church would be equipped to face the challenges of displaced people. One of those efforts has been to partner with churches in Christian schools and those focusing on young women. This year has seen a large increase in enrollment at our schools due to displaced students. Some, like Sidoni, have had the added trauma of seeing their school destroyed and all their books, paperwork, and backpacks left behind when they fled from terrorists.

Sidoni has an aunt who is part of our ministry team, and she asked if there was a place for Sidoni at the girls' school. Sidoni cannot continue her education in a regular school because all proof of her grade level was destroyed. We are thankful that she has joined this school. Pray that the positive atmosphere there will restore her heart. Pray for the many displaced people, most of whom are children, and that the Lord will make a way for them as well.

| by an Alliance international worker serving in Europe

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