

OBON

Prayer Guide



キリスト聖書学園
CHRIST BIBLE INSTITUTE

To equip Christians in Japan for
the work of gospel ministry

OBON

Prayer Guide

The Obon festival is
an annual Japanese holiday
which commemorates
and remembers deceased
ancestors.

Introduction

In the hustle and bustle of modern day secular life in Japan, it is easy to forget that there are powerful spiritual forces at work that interfere with people's receptivity to the Gospel. The Japanese holiday of Obon takes place in August, and is one of the most spiritually significant seasons in Japan. For Christians, Obon is an invitation to be united in prayer and cry out to the living God.

This prayer guide is designed to focus your intercession on the spiritual dynamics at play during Obon, both pleading for God to work in the lives of non-Christians and to strengthen Japanese Christians who face these challenges head-on. We long to see the day when the name of Jesus is cherished and proclaimed all across Japan.

To that end, we invite you to join for this focused season of prayer during the week of Obon.

DAY 1

| READ: **1 CORINTHIANS 8**

Christians make up **less than 2%** of the population in Japan. Christians who come to faith as teens or adults are likely the only Christian in their families.

Christians face a variety of pressures to conform in this group-oriented culture, making it difficult to stand up for their faith.

During Obon, many people will travel back to their home towns to spend time with family and participate in a variety of traditions, which may or may not still have spiritual meanings attached.

PRAY | 3 THINGS

Spiritual Protection for believers as they shine the light of Christ in dark places. **Courage** to obey what they believe the Lord is calling them to do. **Peace** to guard their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

REFLECT



Write in Japanese: **Obon**

お盆

DAY 2

| READ: **DANIEL 1:8-20**

Christians hoping to share the gospel with friends and family face a myriad of obstacles.

With so few Christians in Japan, most Japanese people have little to no exposure to the gospel. Christianity continues to be seen as a foreign religion.

Also, religion is considered a private matter. Religious zeal is often met with suspicion and fear. People are very wary of cults and religious fervor is associated with violence.

PRAY | 3 THINGS

Fertile Soil in the hearts of friends and family who do not yet know Jesus. **Boldness** to seek and seize opportunities to plant or water a gospel seed. **Hope** that the Holy Spirit will work in a mighty way.

REFLECT

Write in Japanese: **Gospel**

福音



DAY 3

| READ: MATTHEW 5:13-16

During Obon, usually on this first day, people will visit the graves of their ancestors for *Ohaka mairi* (お墓参り).

This tradition includes cleaning and weeding around the grave, purifying the gravestone with water, lighting incense, and praying.



PRAY | 3 THINGS

Wisdom as they navigate when and how to participate.
Confidence in God as Loving Ruler over all creation - seen and unseen. **Encouragement** as they feel isolated from their non-believing friends and family.

REFLECT



Write in Japanese: **Wisdom**

知恵

DAY 4

| READ: COLOSSIANS 4:2-6

During the second and third days of Obon, families following the tradition will invite a Buddhist priest to their homes (or visit a temple or shrine) to recite a sutra and perform a memorial service, which are called *hoyo* or *kuyo* in Japanese.

After the recital, they have lunch together, recalling old stories of their beloved deceased. The meal, called *shojin ryouri*, is purely vegetarian, and usually includes stewed beans, spinach with soy sauce and sesame, or pickled cucumbers.

PRAY | 3 THINGS

Dependence upon the Holy Spirit through continual prayer.
Winsomeness in their speech so the only offense is that of the gospel itself. **Clarity** of speech as they have opportunities to explain what they believe.

REFLECT



Write in Japanese: **Holy Spirit**

聖霊



DAY 5

| READ: ROMANS 8

The Obon dance tradition (*Bon Odori*- 盆踊り) is said to have started in the later years of the Muromachi period as a public entertainment. In the course of time, the original religious meaning has faded, and the dance has become associated with summer.

PRAY | 3 THINGS

Freedom from fear (in a culture that harbors much fear).
Infectious Joy as beloved children confident in their relationship with God.
Abounding Love that overflows to those around them.

REFLECT

Write in Japanese: Freedom

自由



DAY 6

| READ: II COR 10:3-4; EPH 6:10-20

Okuribi (送り火, roughly "send-off fire") marks the end of Obon festivities and is meant to send the souls of the dead back to the spirit world. It varies widely in scale from a paper lantern hung in the garden to the famous *Daimonji* of Kyoto.



Image from Core of Culture

PRAY | 3 THINGS

Toppling of the spiritual strongholds in Japan that oppose the gospel. **Eagerness** of believers in Japan to "go forth and make disciples". **Perseverance** of believers in prayer, in faith, and in mission.

REFLECT



Write in Japanese: **Courage**

勇氣

DAY 7

| READ: MATTHEW 13:3-9, 18-23

As people return to the city and their normal routines, they exchange one set of idols for another. Japan is an exceptionally hard-working culture. There is a sense that working hard, together, they can accomplish almost anything. People spend long hours at work, with some spouses only seeing each other one day a week.



PRAY | 3 THINGS

Gardeners that continue to water and cultivate seeds planted or nurtured this week. **Deep Roots** to withstand both distractions and afflictions. **Refreshing** for believers as they continue to seek the Lord in faith.

REFLECT



Write in Japanese: **To be rooted**

根ざす

KANJI GUIDE

お盆 (おぼん) Obon
福音 (ふくいん) gospel
知恵 (ちえ) wisdom
聖霊 (せいれい) Holy Spirit
自由 (じゆう) freedom
勇気 (ゆうぎ) courage
根ざす (ねざす) to be rooted

MATERIAL ADOPTED FROM

Obon overview:

The Obon Festival in JAPAN: <https://tinyurl.com/34ndk8aj>

Ohaka mairi:

Ohaka Mairi: <https://tinyurl.com/h4pn3hm6>

お墓参り: Ohaka Mairi: <http://paintmechic.blogspot.com/2011/08/ohaka-mairi.html>

お盆のお墓参りはいつ行く？マナーや作法は？ - 仏壇のあるリビング | 現代的でモダンな祈りのインテリア | 八木研: <https://tinyurl.com/yrf3yc5h>

お墓参りの流れと作法を解説。必要な物は？ 守るべきマナーは？: <https://tinyurl.com/z3kzbexr>

Bon odori

Bon (festival): <https://tinyurl.com/4y324bcy>
Nagoya Castle Summer Festival (Nagoya-jo Natsu Matsuri): <https://tinyurl.com/yeeyk3tk3>

Okuribi

送り火: <https://tinyurl.com/dnw4f7h2>

お盆・初盆の、迎え火と送り火に関する豆知識！手順もわかりやすく解説: <https://tinyurl.com/829vhaem>

Gozan no Okuribi: <https://tinyurl.com/dp83dt8r>

Festivals of Japan: Daimonji Yaki in Kyoto: <https://tinyurl.com/yc5jjnj>

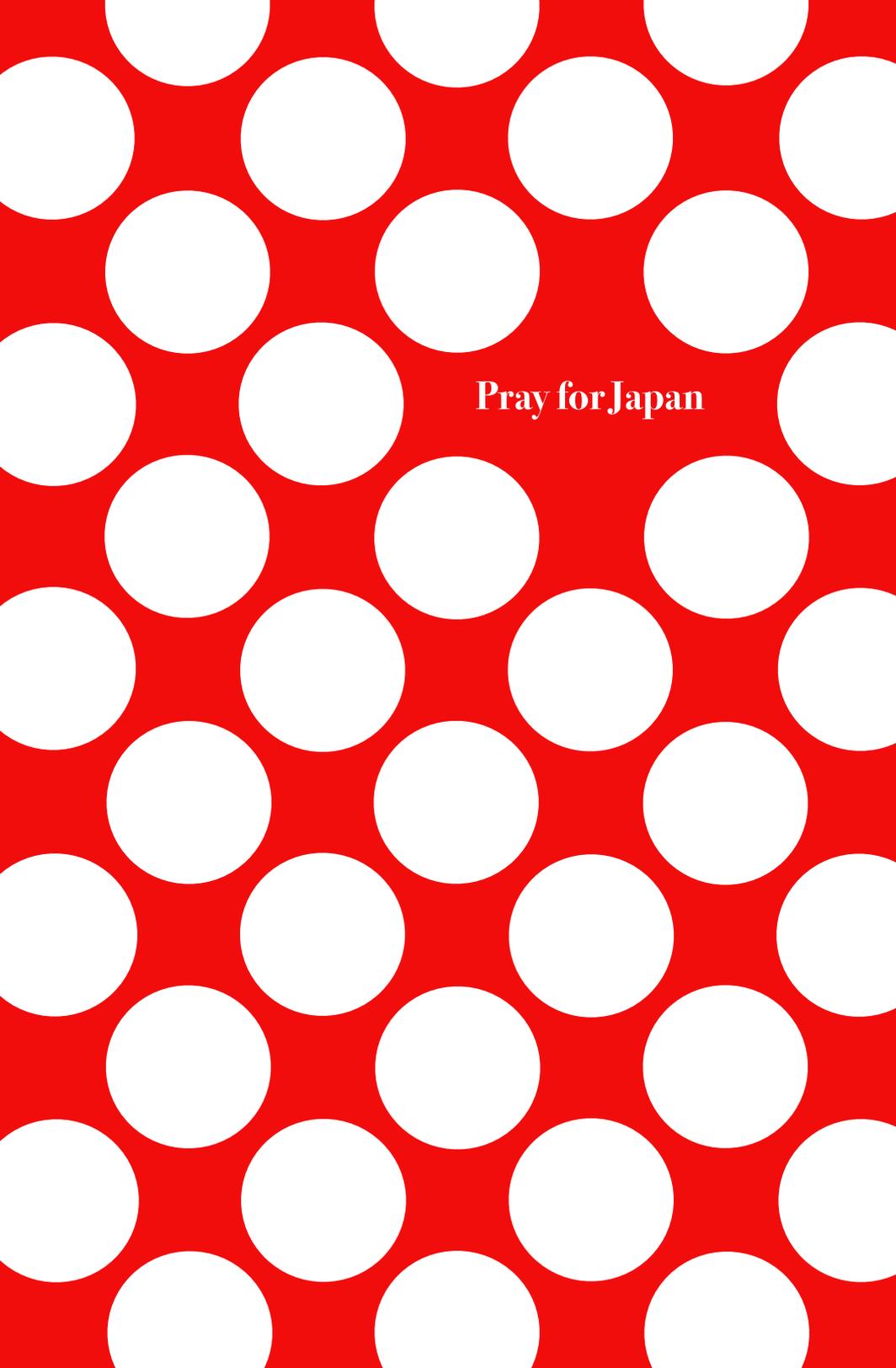


キリスト聖書学園
CHRIST BIBLE INSTITUTE

Christ Bible Institute (CBI) is based in Nagoya, Japan.
Since 2004, CBI has been working to equip Christians in Japan for the work of gospel ministry.



To learn more,
please visit the CBI website <https://cbijapan.org/en/>

The image features a solid red background with a repeating pattern of white circles of uniform size, arranged in a grid-like fashion. The circles are evenly spaced and cover the entire area.

Pray for Japan