

PRAY FOR HALF OF THE UNREACHED PEOPLE IN ONE MONTH WITH THIS NEW PRAYER GUIDE

One fourth of the world lives in reclusive Frontier People Groups (FPGs—less than 0.1% Christian of any kind). These FPGs perceive Christianity as a foreign influence threatening to tear apart their families and communities. Traditional church planting and witness to individuals within FPGs reinforces these fears. Thus FPGs are reached only through the blessing of God sweeping through the families of these peoples in Jesus movements, in fulfillment of God's promise to Abram (Gen 12) to bless all earth's families.

Half the population of all 4,700+ FPGs live in these 31 largest FPGs.

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Pray for the Central Asian Frontier People Groups



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Dear Praying Friends,

No matter what part of the world we pray for, no matter what religious affiliation they have, it all comes down to one thing: Where does Jesus Christ fit in their lives? I grew up as a Unitarian, where we could all decide for ourselves what was truth. Anything would do. But Jesus made it clear in Luke 6:48 that he alone is the firm foundation.

Finding the wrong foundation seems to be the case for all of mankind. Muslims look to the prophecies of Mohammed, Buddhists look to the teachings of Gautama Buddha, some Christian groups look to their traditions, and secularists look within.

Because it spells out so clearly that Christ is the sure foundation, our Bible portions this month and next will often feature verses from the upper room discourse found in Jn 14-17. These verses provide excellent prayer fuel to intercede that the unreached Muslim peoples will allow Jesus to become the right foundation of their lives.

In Christ,

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Pray For A Disciple-Making Movement Among Every Frontier People Group in Central Asia



GOD'S SURPRISES IN IRAN AND AFGHANISTAN



THE KHYBER PASS IN AFGHANISTAN

Imagine a world where the church is growing fastest in Iran and Afghanistan. That is the world of 2019! Before we pray for a complete harvest among the frontier people groups in these two countries and others in Central Asia, it would help to know how their history affected their spiritual lives.

How Central Asia Developed

Between 2000 B.C. and 1200 B.C. people from what is now Central Russia settled in Iran and Afghanistan. They were called Aryans. This people group would continue moving east and settle India. The Aryans created the Hindu religion. The people who settled Iran and Afghanistan were close cousins of those who settled India. They practiced an early form of Hinduism.

The Medes took control of Persia (now called Iran) around 700 BC. They later partnered with the Persians to form an even stronger empire. By 550 BC the Persians invaded Afghanistan. This was around the time a religious teacher named Zarathustra began teaching the tenants of Zoroastrianism. The Persians eagerly embraced this new religion.

For 200 years the Persians ruled Iran and Afghanistan until they were conquered by Alexander the Great in 330 BC. Seven years later Alexander



died and his empire was divided up by his generals. General Seleucus took control of Alexander's eastern territories. He became the founder of the Seleucid Empire.

In 305 BC King Chandragputa, the founder of the Maurya Empire, defeated King Seleucus I in battle. The peace treaty required the Seleucids to cede Afghanistan to the Maurya Empire.

The Maurya Empire was based in India, where Hinduism was strong. The Maurya conquest prevented Hinduism from being snuffed out in Afghanistan. That conquest also opened the door for Buddhism to take root in Afghanistan. The Mauryans didn't persecute the Zoroastrians, so that religion remained strong in Afghanistan. Greek paganism also flourished for a while in that land. That religion was brought to the region by Greek settlers who arrived after Alexander's conquest.

In 150 BC the Parthian Empire took control of Persia after the collapse of the Seleucid Empire. Some of the Apostles of Jesus Christ took the message of salvation to this land, but they remained a small minority in the Parthian Empire. Their work morphed into the controversial Nestorian form of Christianity, which became more popular in Persia during the era of Parthian rule. In 300 A.D. the Parthian Empire collapsed and the Sassanian Empire took its place. Up to this point Zoroastrianism was the majority religion of Persia, but they had the Nestorian Christians to contend with. The Nestorians were driven out in the 300s, and they started a missionary movement further east.

—BY WESLEY
KAWATO, GPD
WRITER

The Arrival of Islam in Central Asia

After 600 AD Islam began to take hold in Arabia. Mohammed sent missionaries to the Sassanid Empire and won converts. By 650 AD there was a small Muslim minority in Persia. Internal divisions made the Sassanid Empire vulnerable to Muslim Arab conquest. The seeds of destruction were planted by the Byzantine War of 620–628 AD. After losing that war, the sons of Sassanid King Khosrow removed their father from power. Then they squabbled over who would be the next king. In 633 AD Abu Bakir, the first caliph of Arabia, took advantage of the situation and invaded the Sassanid Empire. The Sassanids won a narrow victory, one that left the empire in bad shape. In 642 AD Caliph Umar, the second Muslim ruler of Arabia, invaded the Sassanids again. In 651 AD the Arabs conquered the Sassanid capital and forced King Yazdgerd to flee to the frontier province of Sistan.

The new Arab rulers of Iran allowed the Zoroastrian majority to practice their religion, but they had to pay the very heavy *jizya* tax. Many Zoroastrians converted to Islam to get out from under these crushing taxes. Yet it still took the Muslims centuries to snuff out the Zoroastrian faith.

Resistance in Afghanistan

After securing control of Iran, Caliph Umar sent his armies to crush Sistan in the mountains of Afghanistan. This province was the last Sassanid stronghold. King Yazdgerd lost the battle by a narrow margin. The peace treaty forced him to pay tribute to the caliphs of Arabia but allowed him to remain in power.

This battle in 652 set the pattern for the future. Muslim armies would win narrow victories in Afghanistan, forcing pagan rulers to pay tribute but remain in power. The Afghans would only worship Allah until the conquering armies marched home. Then they would go back to worshiping their old gods. This pattern would continue for over 1,000 years. It wasn't until 1895 that a Muslim Afghan king conquered the last pockets of resistance to Islam in this land. Zoroastrianism had died out in Afghanistan centuries ago, but pockets of Hindu and Buddhist worship survived until 1895. In that year all non Muslims were forced to convert or die.

Central Asia Today

Today all of Central Asia is a Muslim stronghold. Christian missionaries



began making inroads in this region starting in the late 20th century when the 1979 Islamic Revolution showed Iranians how unholy their Shi'ite holy men could be. Many found solace in Jesus Christ. Today, the fastest growing church is in Iran, and you can read about it in Mark Bradley's book, *Too Many to Jail*. There may be as many as 300,000 followers of Jesus Christ in Iran.

By some estimates, Afghanistan has the second fastest growing church, but this is partly because there were almost no believers there before the turmoil that began with the Soviet Invasion. Ever since that time, many Afghans have been trying to find truth and righteousness. The few who have the chance to find it often embrace it, but there are few outlets for the gospel to penetrate that Muslim country.

Let's Pray!

- Ask God to open doors in both Iran and Afghanistan.
- Pray for peace in Afghanistan. Constant dangers keep the gospel from flowing from village to village.
- Pray that God would show himself powerful by shutting down the terrorist groups that spread death and destruction in Afghanistan.
- Pray for a desire for truth and righteousness to lead frontier peoples in Central Asia to find and embrace Jesus Christ.

ACTS 8:26, NLT

As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, "Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza."

Pray for the Lord to send a laborer who is willing to hear and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit.

HINDU KASHMIRI PANDITS

Stock/Asif Shafiq



Hindu pilgrims in Kashmir

When an unreached people group loses its identity, it loses its soul. Hindu Pandits have lost their souls. Many have been forced to

leave their homes and flee elsewhere in India, because Muslim extremists were determined to take over their homeland of Kashmir. These Muslims wanted to purge Kashmir of the Hindu minority.

Originally there were approximately 300,000 Hindu Pandits living in Kashmir; today there are an estimated three to four thousand. The past 30 years have healed many wounds, but there are still deep scars. Many Pandits who left Kashmir are afraid to return.

The Pandits are educated and fill medical, educational, business, law, and science positions both in Kashmir and the parts of India where they resettled. Those in Kashmir have limited options regarding who to marry. The lack of priests in Kashmir hinders death, marriage, and other Hindu rites.

Pray that God will lead Indian believers in other parts of India to reach out and share the gospel with the Pandits, and that they will return to Kashmir to teach Christ to Hindus. Pray that God will raise up a Bible-believing church planting movement among the Kashmiri Pandits that will influence other Hindu peoples. Pray that entire Pandit families will receive the Lord Jesus' payment for all their sins, and walk in obedience to him in newness of life.—KH

AIMAQ PEOPLE IN AFGHANISTAN

Warriors, herders and farmers; the Aimaq peoples have been there all. In arid locations, they live as nomads, traveling seasonally to graze decimated herds and working as farmers and carpet weavers in mud-brick villages. In more fertile areas they grow rice, cotton, grapes, wheat, melons, and raise sheep year-round.



A farm near the Afghan desert

They are Sunni Muslims, although tribal law remains stronger in their hearts than either Islamic or state laws. They also have some animistic practices. For example, they have their unmarried girls perform a dance to the rhythmic pounding of drums in an effort to have rain.

They are unique in that women have unusual privileges compared to other rural Afghan peoples. They meet with men and freely voice opinions, even with strangers present.

Women wear bright colors, decorated with sequins at home, but wear burkas in public. They are known for their high-quality woven rugs.

Pray for Christian resources to reach remote Aimaq settlements. Pray for grace and truth to expand into Aimaq tribal leadership and families. Pray that a "Book of Acts" type of movement will begin and flourish among all Aimaq tribes. Pray for the Aimaq people to understand and embrace that Lord Jesus wants to bless their families and cherish them forever.—KH

ACTS 8:27A, NLT

So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia.

Pray for the Lord to direct divine appointments with people who can influence entire people groups in Afghanistan.

HAZARA PEOPLE IN AFGHANISTAN

ACTS 8:27B-28, NLT

The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Pray for the Lord to send biblical resources to those who are hungry for spiritual truth.



Hazara man

Some people have to live under cover because they cannot allow their identity to be discovered. The Hazara people might wear the local clothing, but everyone can tell they are Hazara because of their Asian facial features. They are of Mongol descent, probably the descendants of soldiers left behind by Genghis Khan in the 13th century. Hazara people are also the only Shi'ite Muslim people in Afghanistan, a land of Sunni Muslims. They are set apart by religion, mixed ethnicity, and an independent nature.

Their traditional homeland lies in the rugged mountains and wild beauty of central Afghanistan. Some Hazara people live in arid regions of Afghanistan, where they deal with sustained droughts, malnutrition, and starvation. They love poetry, music, and beauty. Their women wear bright colors, beautifully embroidered tunics, and they are known for their intricately designed rugs.

Pray that the 2020s will be a time of true spiritual growth among this unreached, unengaged people group for whom Jesus Christ gave his life. Pray that Bible resources will find their way to Hazara communities. Pray for a chain reaction of Hazara families reaching families resulting in thousands of new believers sharing their faith with others, planting many new churches.—KH

SOUTHEASTERN PASHAYI PEOPLE IN AFGHANISTAN

What is your idea of the perfect man? Strong, handsome, obedient son, devoted husband, loving father? The Pashayi



people who live in the valleys of the Hindu Kush in northeastern Afghanistan value masculinity and honor more than anything. The ideal man is a proud warrior who is feared by his enemies. He is always prepared to fight because he never leaves home without his knife or a gun. Feuds are common and sometimes settled violently. This ideal man is also a musician who values songs and folklore which are passed down by oral tradition. Often the young men will travel to a neighboring village and sing songs they have composed.

The Pashayi are mostly illiterate, so most of their learning is by oral means. Since they are a tribal people, they are usually led by a village council which makes decisions affecting the entire village. They are Sunni Muslim but still engage in pre-Islamic practices. They are mostly farmers. Afghanistan does not permit Christian mission agencies to enter their country, only relief agencies. Herein lies the opportunity to reach the Pashayi for Christ. Their humanitarian needs are great!

Pray for God to send Holy Spirit anointed medical teams and humanitarian workers to the Pashayi people. Pray that they will demonstrate such love that the Pashayi will be transformed from warriors to blessed peacemakers.—JS

ACTS 8:29A-30, NIV

The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot . . ." Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.

Pray for God's ambassadors to be bold and loving as they approach people in Afghanistan.

SOUTHERN PASHTUNS IN AFGHANISTAN

ACTS 8:31, NLT

The man replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?” And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.

Pray for people to give clear instruction, and for the recipient to understand it well. Pray for spiritual teachability among the Pashtun peoples.



The mighty Soviet Union was forced to withdraw from Afghanistan, largely because of the indomitable spirit of the rural Afghani fighters, who were mostly from the Southern Pashtun people. The Pashtun people are passionate, said to love or hate with equal intensity. American and Western fighters in Afghanistan have

also met the strong intensity of Pashtun fighters who are experts in surviving in their harsh environment. The Pashtuns are Afghanistan’s largest people group, and their fighting spirit is summed up in an old proverb: “He is not Pashtun who does not give a blow for a punch.” Feuds are common and can last for generations.

The Pashtun’s unwritten “code of ethics” includes extending hospitality and protection to all, a very important element in such a harsh environment. They will provide refuge to a fugitive, even if the person was fleeing because of their own wrongdoing. They have a strong sense of family honor and loyalty, especially regarding protection of female relatives. Unfortunately, because of the violent nature of Pashtun culture, a woman dare not go out without a male escort and she must be veiled while in public. The Pashtuns are Muslim, and anyone who put their lives in Christ’s hands would be banned from their community or worse.

Pray for the Lord to send ambassadors to the Pashtuns who have the right balance of tough love and good judgment.—JS

TURKMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

A Turkmen legend describes the environment where most Turkmen live: “When God created the world and distributed the land, Turkmen were the first to receive abundant sunshine and the last to receive water.” They are often called “children of the desert.” Their lives are mainly rural, often nomadic, raising and using their animals’ fine wool to weave the exquisite carpets that they are so famous for. These carpets have traditionally been important to these nomadic herder people who used them on the floors of their tents and as flaps for doors. They could easily be rolled up when the family moved to another spot.



A Turkmen rug salesman

Turkmen are composed of seven tribes that are best known for the nation of Turkmenistan, but Turkmen also live in Afghanistan. Today we will pray for them in Afghanistan, and on day 23 for those in Turkmenistan. Until recently, those living in Afghanistan have had to study in Dari, the official language of Afghanistan. However, now a project is underway to provide textbooks written in Turkmen to help prepare the young people to be more informed as Turkmen living in Afghanistan.

Pray for educational efforts to be successful in helping Turkmen children to contribute to their society in Afghanistan. Pray, too, that they will have the opportunity to read about Jesus Christ, and begin a church planting movement on both sides of the border.—JS

ACTS 8:36-38 NLT

As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look! There’s some water! Why can’t I be baptized?” He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

Pray for new believers in Afghanistan to make a public display of their faith through baptism.

SOUTHERN UZBEKS IN AFGHANISTAN

ACTS 26:17B-18A, NLT

I am sending you to the Gentiles to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light...

Pray the Lord sends prepared laborers to Afghanistan's Southern Uzbeks to sow God's word and open blind eyes. Pray that Uzbek leaders and families may see Jesus as God's Son and their savior.

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Uzbeks

renowned carpets. Over three million Southern Uzbeks live in northern Afghanistan where they first settled in the 16th century. Many Uzbeks also moved into Afghanistan from Russia in the 1920s and 1930s due to Russian persecution.

Most Southern Uzbeks live in small villages located in mountainous regions. As high plains farmers, they grow grain and vegetable crops. Their herdsmen breed the desirable Turkman horse and karakul sheep. The Uzbeks gain additional income through trade in local markets. In urban areas, Uzbeks work as businessmen and craftsmen. The Uzbek people have remained cohesive, with the extended family at the core of their society.

The vast majority of Southern Uzbeks adhere to Sunni Islam, though today this is mainly a cultural identity. They speak their own Turkish dialect called Southern Uzbek. The New Testament, audio Bible recordings, and the JESUS Film are available in Southern Uzbek.

Pray the JESUS Film and radio broadcasts powerfully impacts families and leads them to begin a church planting movement. Ask for softened Uzbek hearts to receive Christ, bringing great blessing to Southern Uzbek communities.—CR

Southern Uzbeks have strongly influenced Afghan culture in various ways, including music and textiles. They play unique instruments such as the Uzbek two-stringed fretted lute; their women make

BAKHTIARI PEOPLE IN IRAN

(This story illustrates truths about this people group.)

Screaming with joy the Bakhtiari children were running and waving at the pilot of an Iranian government plane that was dropping grass seed onto the barren land close to their tent homes. Soon they were joined by the older people of their clan shouting, "Praise Allah!" The rains had been good, and this grass seed meant that they would soon have more of the valuable grass they needed for their livestock.

The 1,220,000 Bakhtiari speaking people are divided up into 80 clans that live mainly in the Zagros Mountain area of southwestern Iran. Many maintain their lives as nomadic shepherds living in goat hair tents while other have become farmers. A few have small businesses in towns. They speak enough Farsi so they can maintain business relationships with other people.

The Iranian government has attempted to help them through programs that provide medical and some educational assistance. The greatest help has been the "grass seed" aerial dropping. Living in remote areas of a country resistant to Christian witness, these Shi'ite Muslims have been very difficult to reach with God's word.

Pray that God will provide a way for more of his word to be translated and given through short-wave radio Bible programs. Pray these broadcasts will lead to Bakhtiari families coming together to serve and praise the Lord of lords.—PD



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JN 17:26, NLT

I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them.

Pray that the abundant love of the Father and the Son will reach the Bakhtiari people.

WESTERN BALOCH IN IRAN AND PAKISTAN

JN 14:16-17A, NLT

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth.

Pray that the Holy Spirit leads the Western Baloch people into truth.



to Balochistan!" The rough looking Iranian Baloch, Amir, approached two foreign geologists who just arrived to conduct studies of some of his country's mineral reserves. It had taken months for these foreigners to be given permission to visit this region. They hoped that their suggestions would inspire the Iranian government to allow refineries to be built in this undeveloped region.

The area is home to over two million Baloch people. The majority live below the poverty line and the infant mortality rate is one of the highest in the world. The Sunni Muslim Baloch of Iran are a minority in a Shi'ite country. Much like in Pakistani-controlled Balochistan, Iran has not allowed the Baloch people in their country to prosper from the rich deposits of gas, gold, copper, oil, and uranium that can be mined in their homeland.

Pray for God to make a way for the Baloch people to enjoy the fruits of their own labor. Pray that God will open a way for them to find hope, peace, and joy in Jesus Christ. Pray for the Baloch people in Iran and Pakistan to seek and find the Lord, and that they will begin an unstoppable disciple making movement.—PD

(This story illustrates truths about this people group)

“Welcome to Iran and welcome

GILAKIS IN IRAN

(This story illustrates truths about this people group.)

“Nikki the colors of your Gilaki dress are spectacular! Everyone will love seeing you perform in the New York Nowrouz (Persian New Year) Parade.” “Thank you, Joanne. I have distant relatives still living in a beautiful area of the Alborz Mountains. I bought this dress from a lady who spun the silk to make it. While I was setting up my *haftseen* (New Year's Table) for my family, I was thinking of my Gilaki family knowing they would be doing the same thing back home.”

Joanne asked, “What are the meanings of the items on the table?” “Each of the seven item begins with the letter sin (s), and each item is a symbol of spring and renewal. The apple signifies beauty; garlic is good health; vinegar is patience; *hyacinth* stands for spring; pudding implies fertility; sprouts are rebirth, and coins indicate prosperity.”

There are over three million Gilaki people living in northern Iran, though some, like Nikki, have migrated to the cities. In rural Iran they herd their animals, farm, fish and the women produce colorful silk cloth for their needs and for tourists.

Pray for believers in Iran to help the Gilaki people begin their own church planting movement. Pray that remote Gilaki families will experience the Lord's blessings, and that they will respond by coming together to worship him.—PD



JN 14:8-10, NLT

Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus replied, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me.”

Pray for the Gilaki people to know both Jesus and the Father.

MK 4:28-29, NLT

The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come.

Pray that when Khorasani Turks reap their next harvest, that they will be grateful to the God who made it possible. Pray for them to seek and find their Lord!

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Iran's Khorasan Province, a once vastly sprawling territory reduced over the centuries by frequent raids and invasions. As this is a very fertile region, the Khorasani Turks are farmers, growing wheat, barley, rice, cotton, beets, potatoes, alfalfa, melons, and caraway among other crops. In addition to farming, the Khorasani Turks also raise livestock and are known as skillful craftsmen, especially in the art of carpet-weaving.

Education was hard to come by for the Khorasani Turks in times past. A single village leader would serve as educator for basic reading, writing, and arithmetic. Now, traditional schools are becoming available, but women and girls maintain a low literacy rate.

The Khorasani Turks are Shi'ite Muslim. It will be difficult to get gospel materials to these remote people who live in a closed country. Few resources are available, though there are technologies available that could help get the good news.

Pray for increased educational opportunities, especially for girls and women. Pray for doors and hearts to open to Jesus Christ, so that there will be a great harvest of Khorasani people for the Kingdom of God.—BK

KHORASANI TURKS IN IRAN

SOUTHERN KURDS IN IRAN

A people without acceptance—this is a good description of the Kurdish groups worldwide. Though they vary by location, they are closely related in history, language, and culture. No matter where they are found, they are looked upon with suspicion because of their desire for their own homeland. Though the Southern Kurds in Iran are almost exclusively Sunnis, they are living in a Shi'ite Muslim land. To make matters more confusing, some belong to unpopular sects.



A Kurdish man

The Southern Kurds suffer from many problems. Water is scarce, which is a difficulty for farmers and those who raise cattle and goats. Diseases such as trachoma, tuberculosis, and malaria are common. The children must learn Farsi in school instead of their own language. The Southern Kurds of Iran are generally better off than their northern brethren in Turkey, since they have gained the right to own land. Nearly one third are now first-generation landowners, which is a step forward for them. (See days 27 and 28 to pray for Kurds in Turkey.)

Pray that the Southern Kurds of Iran will be accepted and included by Iranian decision makers. Pray for educational opportunities and for improved medical services in the Kurdish homeland. Pray for Iranian believers to boldly go to these Kurds and help them establish a disciple making movement that will result in God's blessings for their families.—BK

JN 14:27, NLT

I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.

Pray that in the midst of their troubles that the Lord will give the Southern Kurds in Iran peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

LAK PEOPLE IN IRAN

JN 14:21, NLT

Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.

Pray for the Lord to raise up a loving, obedient church among the Lak people in Iran.

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The Zagros Mountains in Iran

occupying a large portion of the northern Luristan Province, and regions of Kermanshah and Ilam provinces. Possibly related to the Kurds, there has been much debate over their ethnic origins and identity. They seem to have some connection to the warlike Zand Dynasty of the eighteenth century which ruled some of southwest Iran.

The Lak were once a nomadic people, relying mostly on their herds of sheep and goats, with limited agricultural activity. However, like many of the nomadic groups in Iran, most have left their nomadic ways. Those who live in the cities engage in all economic activities; some even have their own economic niches.

The Lak follow a mix of Shi'ite Islam and a traditional religion called Ahl-E-Haqq. There are, at this time, no known inroads of the gospel into the Lak community.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to make these inroads, and to thrust out workers to show the Lak people the way of the cross. Pray for Lak family leaders to have dreams and visions of Christ that will lead to them learning his ways, and teaching them to others until there is a movement to the Savior.—BK

Unofficially called “Lakestan,” the primary land of the Lak people is spread over a larger area of the Zagros Mountains,

NORTHERN LURI PEOPLE IN IRAN

The time is late spring in western Iran. Soon Northern Luri families would take their flocks and herds

of animals up to the high passes of the Zagros Mountains. The hot temperatures and aridity of the lowlands would soon kill the grass and greenery, but they could find green grass and cooler weather in the higher elevations, so this yearly migration has been repeated for hundreds of years. Many of the Northern Luris are leaving their migratory and pastoral lives to become farmers. Wheat, barely, almonds, walnuts, and vegetables thrive in the foothills and valleys of the Zagros.

The Iranian government forbids Christian missionary activity. The gospel of Christ will have to come to the Northern Luris through radio, satellite TV, literature, and by word of mouth from Iranian believers.

Ask God to create an openness to Christ within the hearts of Northern Luris, especially their leaders. Pray for Northern Luri cultural “gatekeepers” to understand that Jesus came to provide them with abundant life, so it is worth allowing their people to embrace his ways. Pray that God will raise up dedicated laborers who understand the Northern Luri culture. Pray that God will provide contacts, strategies, and wisdom for believers trying to reach the Northern Luri people.—DK



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PHIL 3:8, NLT

Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ

Pray the Northern Luri people discover the unsearchable spiritual riches found only in Jesus Christ.

SOUTHERN LURI PEOPLE IN IRAN

2 COR 5:18-19, NLT

And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.

Pray that the Southern Luri of Iran would be reconciled to God through Christ.



Disillusionment with the Islamic Revolution is very strong among the Southern Luri people of southwestern Iran.

The central government wants the Luris to change their nomadic ways and to establish permanent dwellings. The Luris enjoyed hundreds of years of semi-autonomy until the 20th century when they were conquered by the forces of Reza Khan Shah Pahlavi and his son Mohammed. When oil was discovered in their territory, none of the wealth was given to the Luri people; instead it went to the central government. The Islamic Republic has continued this unfair policy.

Many Southern Luris live in their traditional practice of moving from place to place, finding forage for their herds and flocks. More have settled into an agricultural life. Illiteracy remains a large problem for the Southern Luri. Nearly half of the population is unable to read and write. Some have attended primary and secondary schools but only a very small number have graduated from university. The policy of the Iranian authorities has been to restrict college to only those considered loyal to the regime.

Pray for Iranian believers to reach out and share the gospel with the Southern Luri people. Pray for a movement to Christ among the Southern Luri people. Pray that the Holy Spirit will bring about a new hunger for spiritual truth among the Southern Luris.—DK

QASHQAI (KASHKAIS) IN IRAN

Would you believe that there is a group of a million Muslim people in Iran who do not believe in praying five times a day facing Mecca and do not practice the monthly fast of Ramadan? These people are called the Qashqai. They consider themselves Muslims but do not follow the basic tenets of Islam. The Qashqai are more political and cultural Muslims than religious ones.



Inside a Qashqai tent

The Iranian government has tried for decades to get them to become incorporated into the majority Farsi-speaking people. The Qashqai do speak Farsi and they have stubbornly resisted becoming Persian. The government has discouraged their traditional semi-nomadic lifestyle and has put pressure on them to live in permanent homes. Some Qashqai now dwell in houses in villages while others cling to their old ways of living in tents moving with their herds and flocks.

Since mission work is illegal in Iran, the Lord will have to use other methods to start a Bible believing church among the Qashqai. Bible portions and the JESUS Film are available in their heart language of Kashkai.

Pray that radio programs would become available in the Kashkai language and that the people would be led to tune in to those programs and use them as a starting point for a church planting movement. Pray that Qashqai children would learn to read and that Christian literature would reach both adults and children.—DK

2 COR 4:4, NLT

Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the good news. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

Pray that the Lord opens the spiritual eyes of the Qashqai so that they see the light of Christ.

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DOMARI SPEAKING ROMANI PEOPLE IN IRAN

IS 53:3A, NLT

He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.

Pray that the misunderstood, ill-treated Domari Romani of Iran experience God's love and mercy to lead them to Jesus, so they find true identity and security. Ask for disciple-making movements to begin among Iran's Domari Romani in Iran.

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Romani people

Iran's Domari Romani people originally came as minstrels from India, where they had been low caste singers and dancers. They suffered discrimination in India and were excluded from Hindu temples. Also known as Gypsies, this people group of 1,376,000 in Iran typically have dark skin and dark eyes. Their lifestyle has been considered mystical by outsiders, which causes them to be distrusted and feared. However, the Romani people are usually dignified as well as courteous and friendly.

Some reside in villages and cities; others are nomadic, traveling in caravans of carts or wagons, or riding on horses, donkeys or camels. In addition to their ability with music, song and dance, they often have two or more specialized trades, which has allowed them to adapt when moving from one location to another.

Almost all of Iran's Domari Romani follow Shi'ite Islam. Only six of every 10,000 are considered Christian. Their language, Domari, contains Bible portions, audio Bible teaching, and the JESUS Film. However, their nomadic lifestyle makes it difficult for missionaries to reach them.

Pray for Domari language radio broadcasts and more scriptures to be made available to them. Pray for whole families to come to Christ, and for great spiritual blessings upon Domari Romani communities throughout Iran.—CR

UZBEK PEOPLE IN KAZAKHSTAN

(The following fictional account is intended to portray the spiritual situation of this people group.)

When the Uzbek

boy burst through the front door, he was out of breath and in a panic: "Mother!" "What's the matter, Akbar?" she asked. Leaving her laundry, she rushed over to him. "Are you hurt?" He looked up at her through tears that were now streaming down his cheeks. "They say we are aliens. They say this is not our home." "Who says this?" "The other boys. They say we should go back to where we came from." He paused and wiped at his cheeks with his palms. His mother sighed and didn't say anything. "It is our home, isn't it?" the boy pleaded. "It is our home, but it isn't where we are from."

The Uzbeks living in southern Kazakhstan now make up about one-fifth of the population. More and more are immigrating across the border from Uzbekistan. Outside of their homeland, away from their extended families, they lean heavily on their Islamic practices and belief in shamanism in their pursuit of prosperity and meaning.

Pray for the Uzbeks in Kazakhstan to have the opportunity to hear and respond to the good news. Pray for Lord to raise up church planters who will take the message of hope to these Muslims.—CL



An Uzbek mother

iStock/Ozbalci

JN 16:31-33, NLT

Jesus asked, "Do you finally believe? But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

Pray that these rejected Uzbek people will find acceptance in the one who overcame the world.

BLACK HAT KARAKALPAK PEOPLE

JN 17:1-2, NLT

After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him."

Pray for the Karakalpak people to soon accept Jesus' authority over their personal lives and over their families.

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The Karakalpaks even have their own flag!

(This story illustrates truths about this people group.)

"We have everything already," the old man assured the visitor. "We do

not need you or your religion." "It isn't religion I'm talking about," the young man said. "You represent Isa (Jesus), correct?" The young man nodded. The old man waved his hand at him, dismissively. "We have no need of Isa. We have our families. We have our clans. We have our own republic – our own land. We have Islam. We are Karakalpak – black hats. Your Isa is not for us."

Like many Muslims, the Karakalpak see no need for a savior. They do not realize that they have a broken relationship with the God of all creation. They continue to live quiet, rural lives in fear and bondage to the father of lies.

The Jesus Film, the Bible, and other resources are available in the Karakalpak language. Yet most of the Karakalpak have never heard the truth of God's word. The few who have heard have not responded.

Pray for the Lord to soften the hearts of the Karakalpak in Uzbekistan. Ask him to show them their need and give them a hunger for the gospel message. Pray for them to experience the forgiveness, salvation, joy, and eternal life promised in Christ.—CL

TAJIK PEOPLE IN UZBEKISTAN

The Tajiks are known for being one of the largest people groups in Central Asia. Missiologists also know



Urban Tajik women

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them as one of the least reached with the gospel. There are several reasons why this particular people group continues to be a challenge to those seeking to fulfill the Great Commission. Among them are location and lifestyle. Uzbekistan (and Central Asia in general) is difficult to access, especially for foreign missionaries. Tajiks have also traditionally been migratory, moving to feed their animals and meet farming needs, depending on the season. Physically reaching them is difficult and being accepted into their culture has been nearly impossible.

But things have been changing in recent years. More and more Tajiks are heading to cities to find work. Their new migratory pattern tends to be farming in summer, city jobs in winter.

As it has with other people groups, increasing urbanization among the Tajik people has increased opportunities for them to encounter the gospel. It might also provide a more stable environment for the Church to be established and grow among them.

Pray for the Tajiks to see their sin, realize the severe, eternal implications of their disobedience, and to accept God's lavish offer of relationship through the savior. Pray for the Lord to use the changes in the lives of the Tajik people to draw them to himself and allow for a church planting movement.—CL

JN 14:1, NLT

Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me.

Pray for the gift of faith to come to every Tajik family in Uzbekistan.

DAGESTANI AVARS IN RUSSIA

JN 17:13, NLT

Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy.

Pray that when the Avar people hear God's word that they will be filled with joy and a willingness to heed his voice.



economic power along with the Dargins, Chechens, and many other ethnic groups.

Life is hard in the mountains where the Avar farmers contend with poor rocky soil. Their culture has given them an intense sense of honor but an absence of grace, forgiveness, and tolerance. The resultant violence has squelched trade, tourism, and economic well-being. Most Avar belong to different feuding Muslim factions. There are a few followers of Christ among them.

The Avar speak Avarian and five related languages. Even though they hate Russian domination, they speak Russian as a second language. Portions of the Bible have been translated into Avarian and audio and video Christian teachings are available.

Pray for the Avar people to find these resources and for receptive, spiritually hungry hearts. Pray for entire Avar families turning to Jesus for life's answers and reaping his blessings and benefits as a result. Pray that the Avars will find spiritual peace that only comes through Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Pray for a church planting movement among the Avar people in the 2020s.—AHS

The Republic of Dagestan, part of the Russian Federation, is held together by a frail unity of several competing ethnic groups. It's the most violent and corrupt region in the Federation and an epicenter of Muslim terrorism. The 760,000 Avars struggle for political and

NOHCHI CHECHENS IN RUSSIA

Have you ever ruined an ant-hill? Chechen culture would consider that action extremely sinful. They



One of the flags of Chechnya

have a sense of affection for nature. Their code of honor emphasizes ethical behavior, generosity, and the will to safeguard the honor of women. A traditional Chechen saying implies they are "free and equal like wolves." A common Chechen greeting is "enter in freedom." Unfortunately, they are not politically free from Russia and have a history of fighting for that freedom. The isolated terrain of the Caucasus Mountains between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea has contributed much to the fiercely independent character.

Most Chechens live in the Chechen Republic, a subdivision of the Russian Federation. Their society is organized around many autonomous local clans. They speak Chechen and Ingush, a related language. A declining number speak Russian. Chechens adhere to Sunni Islam. There are also unknown numbers who are either Christian or atheists. Chechens strongly resist the good news about Jesus.

Pray that Chechens may soon find spiritual peace and freedom in surrender to God. Ask the Lord to soften their hearts to listen and embrace the good news, available in their languages in printed, audio, and video form. Pray that these materials will help them to begin a strong church planting movement.—AHS

JN 17:17, NIV

Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth.

Pray that the Lord's truthful words will soon penetrate the hearts and minds of the Chechen people.

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TURKMEN PEOPLE IN TURKMENISTAN

JN 17:20, NLT

I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message.

Pray for unity of purpose for the Turkmen church. Pray that their purpose will be to serve Christ and to make him known.



Turkmen women

Turkmen people are tri-cultural! Traditionally they were influenced by both Turkic and Arab cultures, but as a former part of the USSR, they are also influenced by Russia. Traditionally they were nomadic herdsman, but today they are either settled farmers or city dwellers. Turkmen are organized by tribe and clan structures.

In the fourth century AD, many converted to Christianity until it was later replaced by Islam. Today, almost all Turkmen are Sunni Muslim. Turkmenistan's constitution promises religious freedom, but only Orthodox Christians and Sunni Muslims are allowed to worship freely. The Turkmen Bible was published in 2017. There is an abundance of Christian resources available for those willing to seek the Living Lord. However, the workers are few in Turkmenistan and other countries of Central Asia. Believers from surrounding nations who have entered Turkmenistan to share Christ have faced persecution. There were no followers of Jesus Christ among this people group for over 1,000 years. In recent years some Turkmen have become followers of Jesus Christ, but there are far too few to have a self-sustaining church planting movement.

Pray for global workers who are willing to live among the Turkmen and help them begin their own church planting movement. Pray that this coming decade will bring about a spiritual breakthrough among the Turkmen and other key people groups in Central Asia.—AHS

ALAWITES IN TURKEY

(This fictional episode illustrates the beliefs of the Alawites.)

The teacher caught the attention of his Alawite pupils by saying he was going to tell them a story. "A long time ago, stars filled the sky—many, many more than you can see today. These stars winked and blinked every night. Their job was to beautify the heavens. One night, some of the stars decided they didn't want to do this job any more. So they went to Prince Ali and spoke rebelliously to him. Poof! He turned them into people!"

At this, the children started squirming. One boy noted, "It's not so bad being a person." "Ah," nodded the teacher knowingly, "But the ones who were really bad became Christians! Those people need to be reincarnated over and over until they are pure enough to return to the stars where Ali rules as prince."

The Alawite people are of unknown origin, but many of the ones living in Turkey came from neighboring Syria. The al-Assad family, which has ruled Syria since Hafez al-Assad became president in 1971, is also Alawite, a minority sect. Alawites, considered Muslim, are very secretive about their unusual beliefs, and many are not even sure what they believe.

Pray that Jesus, who created all the stars, will reveal himself to Alawite families, and that they will respond by dedicating their lives to him.—CMW



An Alawite mosque

JN 15:12 NLT

This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.

Pray for the Lord to raise up a loving church among the Alawites that will draw others to the Savior.

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AZERI TURKS (AZERBAIJANIS) IN TURKEY

JN 16:8, NLT

And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment.

Pray that this people group will be convicted of sin and of God's righteousness and realize that they must repent before him or face his judgment.

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Azeri women

A significant minority group of Azerbaijanis live in Turkey. The first wave of them came in the 1800s following the Russo-Persian War. After Russia became communist in 1917,

Azerbaijanis fled Azerbaijan fearing persecution by the communist Bolsheviks. They sought shelter in Istanbul, Turkey.

More recently—in the 1990s—tens of thousands of immigrants from newly-independent Azerbaijan moved to Turkey in search of financial stability. Even today, according to *JAMnews*, some 15,000 Azerbaijani students live in Turkey. They report that the quality of education is better than back at home. After getting their education, many stay in Turkey because of more job opportunities and higher income.

The Azerbaijanis are more or less linguistically and culturally assimilated into Turkish life. They speak Azerbaijani and Turkish, which are actually close enough to be mutually comprehensible. A list of notable Turkish Azerbaijanis shows people in all walks of life—politicians, athletes, artists, musicians, scientists, engineers, journalists, and even a chess master!

The main difference between Azerbaijanis and Turkish people comes in the area of religion. Whereas Turks believe in Sunni Islam, Azerbaijanis embrace Shi'ite Islam, a very different religion.

Pray that God will give the Azerbaijanis a hunger for true holiness, found only in Jesus Christ. Pray that entire Azerbaijani families will seek, find, and worship the Savior.—CMW

KABARDIAN PEOPLE

Have you ever seen men dance on their toes? Not on the ball of the foot, but on the “knuckles” of the toes! Ouch! Kabardians have a tradition of doing such dance moves. Men and women dress in floor-length or calf-length garments. The most unusual feature (for their dance costumes) is the sleeves—they reach down to the dancers' knees! The performers circle their arms, waving their sleeves like scarves. The dancer's back is held completely straight, and the men add a few inches to their frame by pacing majestically across the stage in their version of “pointe.”



Tortuous toes!

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Kabardians are descended from the Circassian people. In the 1860s, many Circassians left Russia. Many of them died en route to their new lands. The diaspora extended to Turkey, where they are a small minority. They have assimilated to their surroundings, and one consequence of this is that the Kabardian language is endangered, especially in communities where circumstances are difficult. The Kabardian are Muslim, but there are about 100 known believers.

Pray for believers to shine as lights among the Kabardians. May they boldly and lovingly share the gospel with their friends and relatives. The Kabardian New Testament was published in 2011; ask God to send his word to many. Some Old Testament books have been translated; pray for the completion of the entire Bible in Kabardian in the next decade.—CMW

JN 13:34-35, NLT

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give Kabardian believers such love for one another that they will draw others to God's unshakable Kingdom.

KURMANJI SPEAKING KURDS IN TURKEY

JN 16:2-3, NLT

For you will be expelled from the synagogues, and the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing a holy service for God. This is because they have never known the Father or me.

Pray that the Kurdish people, who understand what it is to be rejected, will be used by God to take Christ to a savior-rejecting world.

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Cute Kurdish girls

Nine million Kurmanji speaking Kurds live in Turkey and have been there for decades. Until a decade ago, they have been forbidden from using Kurdish languages like Kurmanji and Sorani in the public arena. Students from several Turkish universities who petitioned to have classes taught in Kurmanji were jailed. Parents were forbidden to give their children Kurdish names.

In 2001, the Turkish parliament passed a reform bill that reversed several long-standing policies; among these were the legalization of Kurdish-language private schools, television, and radio broadcasts. Up till the early 2000s, children grew up reading and writing Turkish in schools; some of those young people are now in universities and some want to reclaim their linguistic heritage. Ironically, they must take Kurmanji literature classes in Turkish because they can't read Kurmanji!

Kurds are Muslim and they live in the south-eastern quadrant of Turkey, bordered by Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Armenia. The complete Bible is available in Kurmanji and Turkish.

Pray that the Kurds will avail themselves of the hope that is in God's word—in whichever language they understand best!—CMW

TURKISH SPEAKING KURDS IN TURKEY

What is the largest, stateless ethnic group in the world? Could it be the descendants of the magi, who brought Jesus gold, frankincense, and myrrh? No one can be sure, but many believe the magi were the ancestors of today's Kurds. It is said that if the Middle East map were to be redrawn to give the Kurds their own boundaries, Kurdistan would be as large as France! Although they have lived in the same general area for 2,500 years, this area spans across six countries. Today we pray for the Turkish-speaking Kurds in Turkey.



The Kurdish homeland is widespread

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More than 6,120,000 Kurds live in Turkey – about a fifth of the population. For decades, Kurds were mainly farmers whose identity and language was suppressed by the Turkish state. Kurdish separatists who accuse the Turkish government of trying to destroy their culture have resisted violently through guerilla warfare. More recently, some Kurds have tried to achieve their goals through political organizations. Turkey's Kurdish minority made history in 2015 when the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party crossed the 10 percent threshold to enter Turkey's parliament for the first time. While Kurds have felt oppressed, it has been during President Recep Erdogan's reign that Kurds began to experience more cultural rights. Most of Turkey's Kurds are Sunni Muslim.

Pray that Turkish speaking Kurds in Turkey will have the freedom to respond to Jesus' call.—LR

JN 17:18-19, NLT

Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

Make this your prayer for the Turkish speaking Kurds in Turkey.

JN 14:13-14, NLT

You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

Ask the Lord to take the Zaza-Dimli people into his holy family.

ZAZA-DIMLI PEOPLE IN TURKEY

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Are the Zaza-Dimli Kurdish? They think so. The people and culture that surrounds the

Zaza-Dimli are Kurdish. They even share many of the same customs and rituals. However, the Zaza heritage traces back differently than the Kurds, their language is not the same and, in some cases, their religion differs. The Kurds are Sunni Muslims and so are the Zaza-Dimli, but there is a Zaza group that is Alevi Shi'ite Muslim. For this reason, Kurds lump all Zaza people as non-Kurdish outsiders with a different religion. Sometimes the Kurds persecute them.

The Zaza-Dimli number around 1,690,000 and are known as fierce warriors. They live as nomads in the mountains, herding their livestock. Sometimes they live in towns, forming their own communities in the slums. They are an illiterate oral culture. Without a Bible, and with perhaps only a few believers, they are left with almost no knowledge of Jesus.

Pray that the Zaza-Dimli will come to know Jesus in their dreams. Pray that the Zaza-Dimli will hear his voice as they see his creation. Ask the Lord to send witnessing angels, and to move in the hearts of workers to go to them. Pray that the 2020s will be the decade where a disciple making movement flourishes among this people group.—LR

TURKS IN GERMANY

(This story illustrates truths about this people group.)

The young Turk quickly made *doners* as her father shaved the mutton off the large stick. A line formed on the busy sidewalk of Cologne, Germany where the scent of delicious Turkish cuisine wafted, beckoning more customers. They'd lived in Germany long enough to feel at home, but the Germans saw their Turkish dress, and with their demeanors, reminded the Turks that home was far away.



A Turkish woman

Nearly 3,000,000 Turks live in Germany. Germany hosts more Turks than any other European country and has had a 70-year-old policy of welcoming them as refugees or immigrants. Turks tend to stick together, though, and not always because they don't want to assimilate. Whether because of their Muslim religion, their appearance, their accent, or their culture, Turks just don't seem to fit in with the Germans. Some reach out for Western friends by meeting others at social media gatherings like couchsurfing.com, but others have simply given up trying. Some don't even care to learn the German language anymore.

Pray that German churches will adopt local Turkish communities as friends and neighbors and be used by Christ to help establish a Turkish church planting movement. Pray for a vibrant Turkish church that will take Christ to the Muslim world.—LR

JN 14:12-13, NLT

"I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father."

Pray for Turks in Germany to bring glory to God by taking Christ's name to the Muslim nations.

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