



PRAYERPOINTS

A PRAYING PEOPLE IMPACTING A LOST WORLD

Central Asia's Long Road to Church

IT'S THE DREAM IN FRONTIER MISSIONARY SETTINGS—LOCAL BELIEVERS WHO GATHER FOR WORSHIP AND COMMIT TO EACH OTHER AS THE BODY OF CHRIST. SOUNDS SIMPLE, RIGHT? NOT IN CENTRAL ASIA, WHERE THE WORK TO ESTABLISH THE FIRST CHURCH IS OFTEN SLOW, ARDUOUS, AND WROUGHT WITH HURDLES. AFTER DECADES OF FAITHFUL WITNESS, SOME WORKERS ARE STILL WAITING TO SEE A CHURCH ESTABLISHED. THE CHALLENGES ARE MANY, BUT NONE ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO THWART GOD'S POWER. CENTRAL ASIANS NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT TO AWAKEN THEIR HEARTS. WILL YOU PRAY?

Challenges on the Road to Establishing a Church in Central Asia

"It's like purple men came down from planet Blarg and want to wash your sin away with their magic glop." That's how one worker explained how bizarre the gospel sounds to Muslims who hear it for the first time. The same truths that churchgoers in the West accept as foundational are simply preposterous to Muslims who have never seen a Bible or heard that Jesus saves.

In Central Asian cultures, relationships are more important than facts. People often set aside or cover up the truth to keep peace in the community. Suspicion of new ideas coupled with deep religious and societal traditions challenge gospel work. Animism and fatalism also creep into their Islamic practice and cause many to believe lies.

No one wants to be the first to stray from their family beliefs. Those who



A seamstress works on traditional Kyrgyz patterns in Kyrgyzstan. Central Asian cultures value tradition, and many new believers face persecution for leaving their religious tradition.

seek Jesus face the fear of real persecution: loss of family, community acceptance, job, and even life itself. One Central Asian seeker couldn't reconcile the fear that his children could be beaten up and his wife shunned if he professed faith in Jesus. Family members pressure new believers to return to Islam, saying things like one young woman heard: "Your grandmother would get well, if only you would do your ritual [Islamic]

prayers." Many who profess faith find the sacrifice too great and turn back to Islam.

Riley Driver* has served for 20 years in a difficult place. "It really is a miracle every time we hear of a Muslim coming to faith," she said. "When someone really understands and believes, we feel it's a true miracle. And so, we pray for miracles."



1 CENTRAL ASIAN PEOPLES. Many gospel workers encounter suspicion and distrust within their communities. Pray that they will become acceptable members of their communities while being known as followers of Christ.

2 QIUBEI ZHUANG OF CHINA. The Qiubei Zhuang live in the mountainous area of Yunnan. Many fear the spirits they worship and try to manipulate them to leave them alone or help them. Ask that this unengaged people group will hear the gospel and find freedom from worshipping ancestral spirits.

3 SPARROW PEOPLE OF THE HORN OF AFRICA. The Sparrow People of the Horn of Africa identify as Muslim individually, as families, and as a people. If a Sparrow leaves Islam to follow Jesus, they risk suffering rejection by their family and community. Pray for more Sparrow to boldly seek and follow Jesus.

4 CENTRAL ASIAN PEOPLES. Many believers from Muslim backgrounds have testimonies that include a vision or dream about Jesus. Ask God to continue revealing Himself to Central Asians through dreams and visions. Pray that He will lead them to Scripture and to someone who can explain the gospel.

5 BRUNEI MALAY OF BRUNEI. Brunei has recently begun implementing sharia law. The Sultan desires to leave Islam as his legacy. The Brunei Malay now have little to no access to the gospel. Pray for Chinese, tribal, and immigrant Christians to share the Good News with the Brunei Malay.

6 CENTRAL ASIAN PEOPLES. Some who dream of Jesus search for years to find a New Testament. Some travel to neighboring cities, visiting bookstores to no avail. Shopkeepers have even run them out of their stores. Pray that Central Asians who want to learn will have access to the Word of God.

7 DEAF PEOPLES. Believers work diligently to film Bible stories for the Deaf around the world. James* in South Asia loves seeing the stories when the internet is working. Pray for good internet connection so Deaf can see the Bible stories. Pray for the gospel to continue to spread!

8 IMB MISSIONARIES. As missionaries go to share the gospel around the world, they often leave behind unsaved family and friends. Pray that their lost loved ones will profess faith in Jesus Christ. Ask God to give the missionaries peace about living far away.

9 CENTRAL ASIAN PEOPLES. Ask God to cause fruit to bear from gospel efforts online. Pray that those looking for truth will search the internet and find the audio or written Scripture. Pray that God will open blind eyes as people encounter the truth about Jesus for the first time.

10 CONAKRY, GUINEA. At church in Conakry, Guinea, Cathy* slowly walked forward to give her testimony. The congregation listened attentively: "I want to thank the Lord for working in my daughters' hearts." Pray for the church to be strengthened through these testimonies.

11 CENTRAL ASIAN PEOPLES. Ask God to protect Central Asians who come to faith. Pray for their physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional health. Pray that God will allow them to remain in their families, communities, and gainful employment. Pray that God will shield them from evil.

12 HUNGARIANS OF FRANCE. Approximately 150,000 Hungarians live in France. Many have tried to assimilate into French culture and accept atheism, but there is now a resurgence of interest in Hungarian cultural heritage. Pray for Christian outreach to begin in their communities.

13 CENTRAL ASIAN PEOPLES. Pray for local believers to trust each other and accept the new family they have in the church. Ask that they will not be easily offended by each other. Pray that they will learn to love each other as the body of Christ.



14 PEOPLES OF THE BAJIO OF MEXICO. The peoples of the Bajio of Mexico are heavily influenced by devotees of three virgins and are suspicious of non-Catholics. Pray for the gospel to reach people in this area that has such a strong need for the gospel, yet also has a strong resistance to it.

15 HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM. Thi* and her friends started hanging out with new friends who follow Jesus Christ. Now everyone in the group is talking about Jesus. Thi is considering following Him, but she's scared. Pray that these women will follow Jesus, become disciples, and share the gospel.

16 CENTRAL ASIAN PEOPLES. Pray that God will send more workers to labor in hard places of Central Asia. Some communities in Central Asia are closed to American presence. Ask God to send Christian workers from nearby countries who are more accepted because of similar culture or language.

17 SOUTH ASIAN PEOPLES. Only 2 percent of Pakistan's population are Christians. Pray for local believers to fearlessly share the gospel with all who will listen so that every Pakistani man, woman, and child will have the opportunity to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ and come to Him.

18 IMB MISSIONARIES. Missionaries share the gospel with those around them, including their children. Pray for the children who do not know Jesus yet. Ask God to call them to Himself. Pray that they will turn to Him, be satisfied in Jesus, and find their place in ministry with their parents.

19 SEMNANI OF IRAN. The Semnani of Iran speak Farsi, yet many of the 150,000 people also know their ancient Semnani language. Ask God to give wisdom to gospel-media producers as they seek to develop effective resources. Pray that Iranian believers will bring the gospel to Semnani families.

20 CENTRAL ASIAN PEOPLES. Ask God to draw Central Asian women to Himself. Even those with believing husbands rarely hear the truth. Pray that believing husbands will share with their wives. Pray that stories like the "Woman at the Well" or the "Bleeding Woman" will show them the truth of Jesus.

21 ARHUACO OF COLOMBIA. Colombian believers recently completed training to share the gospel cross-culturally. Pray that they will grow in their love for their Arhuaco neighbors and be intentional to develop relationships with them. Ask the Lord to give them boldness to share their faith.

22 KOLKATA, INDIA. In Kali's temple of Kolkata, India, devotees offer strings of marigolds and animal sacrifices. Hindus openly worship the goddess to show the depth of their submission. Pray for Hindus to hear the truth of Jesus' complete and only necessary sacrifice.

23 JEWS OF LONDON. England hosts the second-largest Jewish population in Europe. They have thrived in London, but sentiment against them is growing. The population varies greatly in their orthodoxy. Ask God to show believers how to effectively reach Jewish communities with the gospel.

24 SOUTH AFRICA. Before Covid-19 lockdowns, a missionary in South Africa trained church members how to use a simple gospel presentation. Soon after, they shared the gospel with neighbors, friends, and co-workers, and 58 received Christ! Pray for more bold witnessing in South Africa.

25 CENTRAL ASIAN PEOPLES. Asal* is the second wife of a poor man who is often away from home. She has decided that the gospel is true. She is the first woman to profess faith within her community. Pray that God will grow her faith and that her roots will go down deep.

26 FULAKUNDA OF SENEGAL. The nearly 2 million Fulakunda people are Muslim, holding steadfast to their beliefs and traditions. They also enjoy sharing a local tea with visitors. The tea ceremony symbolizes relationships. Pray that the Fulakunda will find God's word sweet.



27 ILONGGOS OF THE PHILIPPINES. In a province of the Philippines, many Filipinos have confessed faith in Jesus, but haven't grouped into churches yet. Pray that a Filipino church planter will wisely lead these believers to form churches. Ask that the believers will grow in their faith and share it.

28 CENTRAL ASIAN PEOPLES. Yasir* is a Muslim religious leader who warns the community not to have anything to do with the Bible or workers. Pray that he will encounter the living Christ in a Damascus Road experience. Pray that he will be transformed and use the same fervor to proclaim Christ.

29 DEAF PEOPLES. Wayne,* a Deaf Muslim, had dreams about Jesus telling him that a foreigner would come and help him find the answers and meaning that were missing in his life. Eventually, he met a worker who signed the gospel for him. And Wayne believed! Pray for those still waiting.

30 GEORGIANS OF RUSSIA. Eastern Orthodox traditions are strong among Georgians in Russia, and there are Muslim and Jewish segments as well. Ask the Lord to provide workers among these people so that the Georgians of Russia may soon know Him as Lord and Savior.

After 10 Years, a Church Starts to Form in Central Asia

Gary and Cathy Vinson* say it takes years before people in Central Asian cultures accept newcomers as members of the community and listen to what they have to say. In the past year, a small group of Central Asian believers began gathering for worship in the Vinson's town. It's the beginning of a church, and it's the fruit of 10 years of work.



Young Iranians hang out outside a mosque. New believers must discover a new identity as members of the body of Christ.

The believers embrace their new identity as Jesus followers and want to share their faith. But within the group, distrust toward the foreigner is now directed toward each other. The idea of church as their new family hasn't been tested, and they're hesitant. The Vinsons hope that a young man will eventually pastor the group, but he is easily offended and still gets into fights. As it took time to get to this point, it will take time to form a healthy church.

Elsewhere in Central Asia, Jonathan and Cheri Jackson* are still dreaming. They walk through their village and pray: "Maybe this home is where there will be a group of 20-30 people gathering. We pray for that to happen."

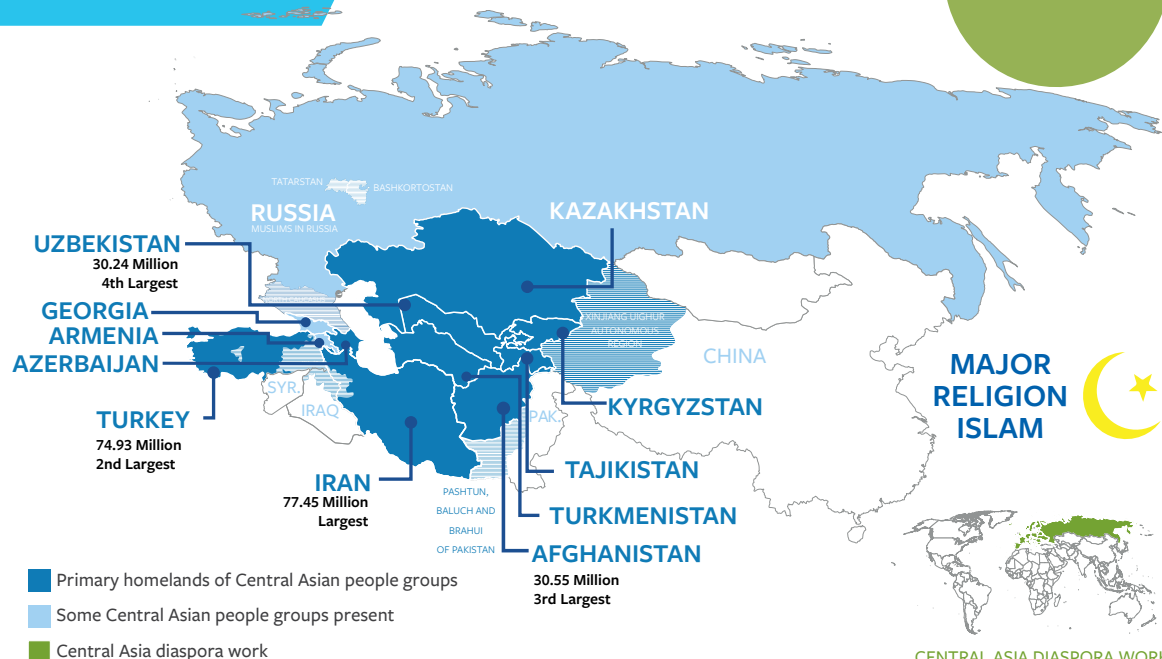
CENTRAL ASIAN PEOPLES

44% OF CA PEOPLE GROUPS DO NOT HAVE CHURCH PLANTING EFFORTS.

44%

275
MILLION
PEOPLE

383
PEOPLE
GROUPS



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*Names changed CG 16.5M 7/20 P7422-9