

Monday 23rd November

Tajikistan Pop: approximately 9.5 million Islam: 94%

Prayercast have produced an interesting 4-minute video about this country:

<https://vimeo.com/81011815>

Tajikistan is a beautiful country in Central Asia but is remote owing to its challenging mountainous terrain. It has hot summers and freezing winters and a vast variety of landscapes, ranging from glaciers, to mountains, to lush valleys. Amid this spectacular beauty, 84% of its people live in poverty and Tajikistan ranks as the poorest nation in Central Asia.



Once a Soviet Republic, Tajikistan gained independence in 1991. Following this was a costly five-year civil war, leading to the death of up to 50,000 people, as well as the emigration of one-tenth of the population. Tajikistan's economic infrastructure has never fully recovered. Corruption, weak governance, power shortages and debt have left it a fragile nation. It has also been hard-hit by the coronavirus pandemic. The economy is predicted to contract by over 6.5% this year. Over one million men are currently working outside the country, mostly in Russia, but many have lost their jobs in this year's crisis. Many

people are dependent on money from relatives abroad. If the migrant workers returned, this would cause even greater economic and political instability.

Border security remains a crucial issue, as Tajikistan is one of the first stops on the drug route from Afghanistan. Crime and corruption are increasing, as well as continued issue of domestic violence against women. Although human rights are guaranteed in the constitution, many prisoners, elderly, widows and orphans suffer much injustice.

With over 94% following Islam, few have had the opportunity to hear the gospel. Fear of radical Islam has led to many religious restrictions. According to Pray4Eurasia, over 58% of the people remain unreached. Despite these setbacks, the Tajik church is growing. The Bible has been translated into Tajik, and the Jesus film is available in most local languages. Economic hardship has led many to look for religious answers, providing greater opportunities for the gospel message.

- Pray for the gospel to spread and bring spiritual change in this country.
- With money from Russia drying up, people are in desperate need. Pray for them to have more dreams and visions about Jesus and for many people to come to faith.
- Let's pray for President Rahmon who has very recently been re-elected, and for Tajik governmental leaders. Pray that God will open their hearts to the gospel. It has been reported that the President is positive about the Bible as he said it shows people how to live better lives. Praise God for the signs of a turnaround taking place in high places in government.

Source of most material: <https://prayercast.com/tajikistan.html> and <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/12/tajikistan-leader-rakhmon-wins-election-with-over-90-percent>

Tuesday 24th November

Praying for locals

Workers have asked for prayer for some local people they had been discipling. Let's join them in asking for breakthroughs in the lives of those they love and serve:

- Pray for a young mother who is a follower of Jesus. Ask that she would remain steadfast in her faith, seek God daily in His Word and share the treasure she has found in Christ with others. Pray for God to give her patience and love towards her difficult mother-in-law and for her marriage to withstand the strain of her husband working away in Russia. Let's pray her unbelieving husband finds Jesus while he is far from home.
- Kayla has heard a lot about Jesus through the years. She works hard to support her family and takes pride in her status as a teacher. But her heart remains like the soil that has too many weeds for the seed to grow strong. Pray that the Holy Spirit will uproot the lies that keep her from growing in the truth. Pray that she will meet Jesus in a powerful way.
- A student called Alex become a strong believer in Islam a few years ago and is very proud of his faith but is still seeking. Pray for a radical conversion to Jesus, the only one his heart is truly seeking.
- Pray for a divorced woman who has a child with cerebral palsy and lives near her former in-laws. She has heard stories from the Bible. Pray for her heart to be open to understand the truth in God's Word, that she would find encouragement from God as she struggles each day to make ends meet, and for healing in the relationships around her.
- Pray for a group of gypsies who recently heard a story about eternity from the Bible from a local believer, that they will seek out more truth from God's word.

Wednesday 25th November

Gypsies in Tajikistan

Gypsies are a largely unreached Muslim people group, who face discrimination and are widely despised, much like the Samaritans in Jesus' day.

They mostly live in villages. Few ever marry outside their group. They can also be found close to major towns and cities. Begging and peddling is their way of life. Women sit with babies at the roadside begging, children knock on doors collecting crusts of old bread and men buy scraps of old metal. Some have normal jobs but always menial and low paid. Many travel to Russia for work. Most girls don't go to school. Children who do attend often leave early, so that illiteracy is increasing.

A field worker who has recently returned from this country shared her thoughts on her time there reaching out to these people, both with the love of Christ and with practical medical help. She described the privilege of bringing the message of Jesus to those who had never heard of him. She saw how the Holy Spirit opened people's hearts to the truth. She prayed for people and saw them healed – and they knew it was Jesus who had healed them.

She saw herself as a bridge between local believers and the Gypsy people. Now she has left, a local pastor has taken on the work of meeting with them; it is good to see a local believer reaching out to these people.

This Muslim people group are turning to Jesus in increasing numbers. When revival has reached them, they want to read the Scriptures and so make great efforts to become literate. Let's pray for a great move of the Spirit among these people.

- Pray that revival breaks out among the Gypsies in Tajikistan. As their villages are close to others, if revival starts in one place it can quickly spread via family networks to other gypsy villages and beyond.
- Pray that Gypsies will take the good news to other people groups they live near and in the towns and villages they go to.
- Let's pray for the local pastor as he works among the Gypsies, that he will be the hands and feet of Jesus and will be filled with a great love and compassion for them.
- Pray for scripture and films to be available in everyday Gypsy language.

Thursday 26th November

Pray for Field Workers

Today let's praise and worship before the throne of God and lift the needs of workers living in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and across Central Asia. We have heard of workers who have recently had to leave the country.

You may want to listen to 10,000 reasons by Matt Redman:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdgfRn7D-Y4>

"Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."" Neh 8:10

- Pray for the joy of the Lord to be the strength of all workers as they labour during these difficult times.
- Pray for those workers who have suddenly had to leave Tajikistan. Ask for God's comfort and joy at this difficult time as they grieve for the local friends and homes they have left behind and try to understand their next step in God's plan for their lives.

- Pray for those workers who have businesses to employ local people and provide income for themselves, that God will sustain them and give them wisdom on how best to handle the challenging circumstances they face.
- Pray for wisdom as workers set up a community development and outreach project, that they will be part of bringing the good news to transform a city and nation. Ask God to carve out a road before them and for others to work and serve and to use what they learn to multiply into other neighbourhoods as well.

Friday 27th November

Kyrgyzstan

Pop: Approximately 6.5 million

Muslim: 75%

Kyrgyzstan was a republic of the former Soviet Union until it gained independence in 1991. The new government of this post-Soviet state was characterised by corruption and heavy-handedness. This led to the first president being ousted from power in 2005 and the second president in 2010. Now a third has been forced to resign following parliamentary elections on the 4th of October which many



claimed were rigged. Demonstrators took to the streets and stormed government buildings demanding President Jeenbekov's resignation. More than 1,200 people were injured and one person killed in street clashes when protests began. The country was placed under a state of emergency. On October 10th Sadyr Japarov was appointed as Prime Minister but people are disillusioned with the government.

Corruption, ethnic divisions, border security concerns, and the threat of terrorism continue to hinder positive and lasting change. High unemployment and widespread poverty have forced hundreds of thousands to seek work in Russia and Kazakhstan. Many rural citizens have moved to Kyrgyzstan's cities in search of better economic opportunities, which has created a growing population of slum-dwellers. High rates of alcoholism, drug trafficking, gambling and prostitution have only magnified the nation's suffering.

Children left behind are often looked after by grandparents or other relatives; some are even sent to orphanages so their parents can go to work. Though their everyday needs are provided for, many children grow up with the feeling of being abandoned and unloved because of separation from their families.

Although a primarily Muslim nation, today Kyrgyz believers make up a significant proportion of the church. The first Kyrgyz house groups and churches were planted in the 1990's and began teaching Christian principles for family life and of love and service to one another. However, it is very difficult for believers to profess their faith within traditionally close family structures - they often face hostility and are ostracised by their family and friends.

But, praise God, the church is growing and maturing in this nation, as well as the number of local believers.

- Let's pray that, at this critical moment in Kyrgyzstan's history, there will be an open door for the peace, justice and love of Christ to transform a nation.
- Let's cry out for women and children who feel abandoned and unloved, that they will know the One who loves them and cherishes them and whose love endures forever.
- Pray for the economic situation to improve so that families don't have to choose between living together and providing financially.
- Let's pray for Christian families to challenge cultural expectations and demonstrate family relationships characterised by love and serving one another.

Sources of material: <https://www.pray30days.org/2017/pray-for-kyrgyzstan/>; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-54534474> and <https://prayercast.com/kyrgyzstan.html>

Saturday 28th November

Mirlan's testimony

The Kyrgyz were first introduced to Islam during the seventeenth century. Within 200 years, the majority had been completely converted to Islam. The present wave of Islamisation in Kyrgyzstan is one of the most intense that the country has ever experienced. People who were only Muslim by name are now learning many of the more intricate practices, creeds and doctrines.

A Kyrgyz who becomes a Christian is seen as betraying his identity and family unity. Nevertheless, some brave Kyrgyz Muslims are choosing to follow Jesus. This is Mirlan's testimony:

Mirlan was brought up by his Muslim grandparents even though his parents were still alive. He was rebellious growing up and was eventually thrown into prison for six years. When he was released, he learned that his mother had become a Christian. Full of disbelief, he went to see her and asked her if this was true. Learning that it was, he began to bully some of the boys who went to church but found out they were praying for him. His life became worse and worse, including his problem with drugs, until he believed he was going to die. In desperation, he decided to go with his mother to church.

After the service someone began to share about Jesus with him, but he wasn't interested and decided to leave. The pastor stopped him on his way out and told him he could talk to God as he would his own father. That night as he remembered the pastor's words, he cried and poured out all his troubles to God. He said, "either Mohammed or Jesus, please come into my life."

Then he saw a bright light and Jesus standing in it. Jesus said to come and follow him. Mirlan wrestled with what had happened and told his mother about it. She advised him to talk to the pastor. He went to church and during worship everyone began to pray for him. He accepted Jesus into his life. That was thirteen years ago. He was delivered from his drug addiction and is now married with two children. He serves God as a pastor in Kyrgyzstan.

To hear Mirlan's full testimony, you may like to watch this Prayercast video:

<https://prayercast.com/mirlan.html>

- Let's thank God for how He has worked in Mirlan's life and brought beauty from ashes. Pray for millions more Muslims in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia to put their trust in Jesus and find the One who brings transformation and freedom.
- Let's pray for Kyrgyz Muslim-background believers to stand strong in their faith and to find fellowship and encouragement with other believers.
- Let's take a moment to thank God for the church in Kyrgyzstan. Ask Him to raise up strong local churches among the Kyrgyz population, which proclaims the gospel message clearly and boldly and reaches out in practical loving ways to their local communities.

Source of material: <https://prayercast.com/mirlan.html>