

Monday 7th January

The Caucasus, a Mountain range of languages

Covering an 18,000-foot high mountain range between Europe and Asia, this beautiful area between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea is home to the Caucasus region which includes the countries of



Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia and the southernmost parts of the Russian Federation including the republic of Dagestan. Its peoples may live in Russia but they are not Russian. They are fiercely independent and proud. After all, they have survived centuries of occupation by foreign empires. This pride has led to fear of losing their honour. This is one reason for the frequency of conflict and violence seen in the Caucasian culture.

More languages are spoken there than almost anywhere else in the world. Of the 45 languages in this region, many have been categorised as some of the most difficult in the world. This adds to the challenge of reaching the dozens of Muslim people groups here that are completely unengaged by the gospel.

Because of this diversity, people in one hilltop village often can't speak with those in a village just an hour away. It is like German is to Italian is to French.

From another distant hilltop, Jesus instructed His disciples, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

The Caucasus Region has seen little significant gospel work in recent history. New workers are desperately needed to go and make disciples among the Muslim people groups that still have no one telling them about Jesus Christ. The region welcomes students, business people and especially English teachers.

- With more languages spoken here than anywhere else in the world, pray for more labourers for the Caucasus region who are prepared to learn the complex languages needed in this linguistically diverse region.
- Pray for labourers with a heart to come and live in this difficult-to-access region.
- Pray for the ongoing translation and distribution of the Word of God in the Circassian languages. Praise God that the translation of the book of Ecclesiastes in this language has been checked and approved.

Tuesday 8th January

Barriers to the gospel in the Caucasus culture

Apart from the language barrier, there are a number of other significant obstacles to workers and to the Word of God being received in the Caucasus culture.

1. Inaccessible geography - in many Caucasus mountain village regions, the first roads for motor vehicles were only built in the 1950's; and for significant periods each year even now these roads are semi-impassable due to muddy quagmires, overflowing rivers, or landslides. The roads and ease of access in the foothills and valleys are not much better, resulting in many difficulties.
 2. Intense Muslim traditions – many regions in the Caucasus have been under Muslim control since the end of the 7th century; other regions since the 10th or 14th-15th centuries. In this past decade, mosques have been rebuilt in almost every village. Most notably, there is a strong defence in society of both Islamic tradition and identity.
 3. Resistance to change - if someone attempts to introduce a new concept or a new way of doing things, these steps are generally met with huge opposition. Caucasus people mistrust all strangers.
 4. Corruption and bribes - in every area of life bribes are demanded; for government documents, job positions, pensions, customs, taxes, small business registration, education, medicine, the courts, police work, tourism, bus and car travel and so the list goes on.
 5. Spiritual strongholds – the spiritual powers of oppression in this region cannot be seen, but are felt; as one Christian in the region said: “There is often ‘intense pressure’ or ‘deep stresses’ in known and unknown ways on a daily basis.”
 6. Fear of evil spirits and dependence on the occult– Caucasians are afraid of being cursed by other people or haunted by djinns (spiritual beings). To keep spirits from finding the entrance to their homes, they hang a teapot upside down over their front door. It is common practice to visit fortune-tellers.
- Let’s call out to God to break down every obstacle and every barrier that prevents the people living there from receiving the message of eternal life.
 - Pray for opportunities for these communities to be introduced to the teachings of Jesus.
 - Jesus came to set us free. Pray for Caucasians to be set free from every fear and every obstacle that sets itself up against the knowledge of Jesus.
“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” 2 Cor 10:5

Source of some material: 30 Days of Prayer

Wednesday 9th January

The following story is from a Frontiers worker in the Caucasus region:

There is frustration with the corruption that pervades every aspect of life. We all see how corruption infects society here. People ask for doctors who trained in communist times, as they are less likely to have bought their qualifications. And the same is true for many of the other technical professions, such as engineering etc.

Unfortunately many of these Soviet-trained professionals are approaching their retirement, and those who have qualified in the 30 years since communism fell will be left holding their countries together. Corruption will slowly bring poverty and inequality and it is one of the things that the Old Testament prophets constantly rail against. All of us who work here see the daily damage that it does, from the appalling road safety, to the failing education systems and the struggling hospitals.

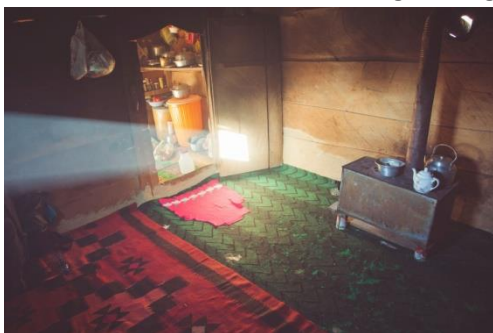
- Please join with us in praying for the countries that we call home. All suffer the blight of corruption to greater and lesser extents. Through the prophet Malachi, God says: *“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”*
- Pray that God will pour out a spirit of restorative justice here, one that causes people to take responsibility for the poverty and brokenness they see around them, and to address the needs of others, rather than living simply for themselves and their own wealth.
- Pray God will sweep through the countries of the Caucasus, restoring life and bringing justice.

Thursday 10th January

The following story is also from a Frontiers worker:

Natasha was born into a Muslim home in a formerly Soviet country in the Caucasus region. She came to faith in Jesus as a young woman. As a result, her father plotted to murder her. However, on the very day she was to be killed, the Almighty miraculously provided a way of escape. Eventually, she married Sergei, a fellow believer, and they now have four small children.

Natasha’s background gave her a clear understanding that even when evil is rampant, God is still Lord of all. Recently, a local pastor enlisted her help. He’d been trying to help Anja, a 14-year-old girl who exhibited the bizarre and frightening behaviours described in the Bible as demonisation. Irina,



her mother, who openly practised the occult, raised her on her own. Whenever Anja went into fits and demon-induced ‘sickness,’ no one could help her, not even the pastor, and he’d grown demoralised in trying.

Natasha knew the Word of God. When the disciples could not help occult victims, Jesus said, “This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.” Before ministering to Anja, she and Sergei enlisted prayer and fasting support from Frontiers workers. “Pray for Anja,”

they entreated. “And pray for her mum Irina, too! Pray that Irina’s eyes will be opened to see good and evil and to choose Jesus.”

The next day, when Natasha and Sergei arrived at Anja’s house, her extended family and friends were all there too, waiting to see if God would show up. Only the pastor was absent – too defeated to come. “It was a heart-breaking scene,” Natasha reported later. “They all looked so hopeless and worried.”

Irina declared loudly, "If praying to Jesus does not work, I'll take my daughter to the local fortune-tellers – the best in town! If Jesus does not heal her, they will."

God directed them to focus on praying with Irina first. Instead of treating her like an enemy, they sat with her quietly and asked her sympathetic questions. Her hostile demeanour softened. They listened as she poured out her heart, describing the cruelties of her life as a single mother raising five children in an oppressive Muslim culture.

As they talked, Irina realised that by continually choosing the occult, she'd invited evil spirits to torment her children. She was completely broken. She cried and cried in repentance. Bowing her head, she asked Jesus to be her Saviour. Looking up through tears, she proclaimed, "I place my entire household under the ownership of the Lord!"

Her family and friends were astonished.

Natasha and Sergei invited Anja to live with them for a short time. That way they could pray with her daily, equip her with spiritual truths and teach her how to gain release from the bondage of evil and live in the freedom of Jesus.

Miraculously, the whole time she lived in their home, she did not suffer a single attack!

Anja and Irina began to share the story with others, of how God helped them triumph over unseen spiritual forces. Anja and her mother grow stronger in the Lord each day. However, there is still much work to do to help Muslims in this country live in the freedom of Christ.

- We thank God for setting the captives free. Let's pray that Irina and Anja's testimony changes hearts and minds amongst their friends and neighbours.
- We thank God for local Muslim-background believers who fearlessly reach out with the gospel message. Let's ask God to strengthen them and add to their numbers.
- We also thank God for Frontiers workers who stand with and support local believers. Let's pray for protection for them and that God would add to their numbers too.

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." 1 John 4:18

Friday 11th January

This article from the Global Prayer Digest is by a writer working in the Caucasus:

"Solomon, his mother and brother were standing at our door. He had invested thousands of pounds in a business deal with a man for whom he had also done months of work. The business deal fell through and the same man refused to pay him for his work.

This conflict drove them to a fortune-teller. They hoped the spiritualist would tell them the outcome of the conflict and would cast curses upon the man who had stolen from them. They had spent large sums of money on similar fortune-tellers in the past. Rather than finding greater freedom, Solomon and his family moved into greater bondage with each visit to the fortune-teller. They saw the clear

results of the bondage in their lives. Years of discouraging events in Solomon's life drove him to hopelessness, believing that his life is beyond repair.

Many steps of 'providence' connected our family with Solomon's. We have shared with them about the freedom and victory that only Jesus can give, not only with Solomon, but also with several of his relatives. They are listening to the Scriptures recorded in their language. We take every opportunity to open up God's salvation plan."

- Pray that this family and so many others in bondage to the occult will embrace the freedom that can only be found in Jesus.

"Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." 1 Timothy 6:6-7

- Pray for open doors for current workers to study God's Word with Muslims from even the most spiritually resistant clans.

Source: <http://www.globalprayerdigest.org/issue/day/azerbaijanis-in-the-caucasus-mountain-region/>

Saturday 12th January

Prayer for the Caucasus people

A beautiful worship song called No Longer a Slave to Fear can be heard here:
<https://vimeo.com/187500818>

The words of this song are very relevant to the people living in the Caucasus, where fear dominates their culture. Let the words of this song form our prayer today as we petition God to bring freedom to all Muslims in this region. Let's pray that this will be their song:

We've been liberated from our bondage.
We're the sons and the daughters.
Let us sing our freedom.

I'm no longer a slave to fear,
I am a child of God.

I am surrounded by the arms of the Father.
I am surrounded by songs of deliverance.

We've been liberated from our bondage.
We're the sons and the daughters.
Let us sing our freedom.
I am a child of God, full of faith.

Yes, I am a child of God.
Amen.