

Monday 11th February

Nomads – neglected millions

Over 3,000 years ago God called a nomad and promised to bless all peoples through him (Gen 12). His name was Abram until God changed his name to Abraham, which means "father of a multitude" (Genesis 17:5). Jesus too was a nomad, moving from place to place to live out his ministry here on earth.



Nomads are among the least reached peoples in the world. Today there are 184 nomadic Muslim people groups, totalling 170 million people worldwide. Unfortunately the majority, 174 people groups, comprising 118,835,200 are still severely under-engaged. 35 of these groups have populations over 1 million.

They include the Bedouin Arab groups in the Middle East and Africa, the Fulani and Tuareg of the Sahel and Sahara in Africa and the Beja of Sudan and surrounding countries. In Asia, the Muslim Kazakh and other Central Asian Turkic

peoples are pastoralists or recently settled in cities.

The nomadic pastoralists' livelihood and culture is based on keeping domestic animals and seeking pasture for them. They are usually monetarily poor and move with their sheep, goats, cattle, camels and horses to find grazing in the arid regions of the world. Their lifestyle and world-view is bound to their animals. Other nomads are peripatetics. These are the travelling craftsmen, entertainers and traders. They habitually travel with a trade to earn their living, such as many Muslim Roma in Eastern Europe and the Gypsies of Central Asia, including those in Tajikistan.

Governments have looked on nomads with suspicion and have tried to make them settle, as it is easier to tax or provide services such as education when you know someone's address. Often nomads have resisted these changes or the changes have led to social breakdown. Tensions exist and sometimes marginalised groups resort to armed conflict, such as the current conflict in the southern Sahel involving some Tuaregs.

Nomads are often viewed with suspicion by society and by Christians and are seen as misfits. Their wandering lifestyle is seen as irresponsible and uncivilised. It is widely believed that if they ceased to be nomads and settled and adapted to a more accountable and acceptable lifestyle, then they could be accommodated and disciplined.

However, even when nomads settle for extended periods for economic or other reasons they still have the heartbeat of and think like a nomad. Kazakhs provided with accommodation in a block of flats will set up a traditional round yurt in the garden for watching television and socialising.

As nomadic identity is wrapped up in their lifestyle they must be given special consideration in order to reach them with the gospel. Nomads need gospel workers dedicated to living and adapting themselves to a totally unfamiliar society, often without basic comforts for a considerable period of time. This lifestyle of discomfort and upheaval discourages many from working with nomads.

- Father we ask you to give gospel workers creative ways to live out the community of faith and 'do church' in a nomadic way.

- Let's pray that nomadic people, so often shunned by society, will find acceptance in a relationship with the Good Shepherd.
- Let's ask for more labourers who are willing to go and understand the nomadic worldview and communicate the good news in a relevant way.

Tuesday 12th February

How do gospel workers reach nomads?

The Church, composed mainly of settled people, struggles to engage with nomads. Few nomads have embraced Christ and those that have met gospel workers or the wider Christian body, have often understood that Christianity is a religion for settled people. Talk of "the Sower" or being "fishers of men" is often alien and consequently not readily understood.

We cannot and should not expect nomads to take on values and practices bound up with a settled way of life - these are not part of the gospel! Does church for a nomad consist of meeting in a building or chatting and praying around a camp fire or water-hole about the Good Shepherd? One Somali nomad was heard to remark, "Show me how to put a Church on my camel before you talk to me of Jesus."

We can serve these neglected people, meeting needs such as healthcare for them and their animals, live alongside them for short or extended periods, but also we must communicate with nomadic peoples that following Jesus is compatible with their lifestyle.

In David Phillips' book, "Peoples on the move" he writes: "The nomads need us to live as Christians within the nomadic life, at their level as much as possible. The great Shepherd looks for committed disciples to befriend the world's nomads, to learn the nomads' languages and skills and, through the shared experience of their lives, to make Him known. His love needs to be shown in practical ways to enhance the people's nomadism, in education, community health, veterinary and medical help and land management. We need to understand their beliefs and unanswered fears and introduce the nomadic shepherd God of the Bible to them. We need to demonstrate by example that the great Shepherd is really at home in the nomads' tents."

Only with nomads will the Church of Christ be complete. Nomads are strategic partners that can spread the good news not only to other nomads but also to settled people whom they meet as they travel.

- Pray for gospel workers who are prepared to forgo many comforts to learn to share the gospel with nomads.
- Pray for the nomads who have come to know Jesus, to take the gospel not only to other nomads, but to millions of settled people around.
- Pray for followers of Christ who are willing to reach nomadic Muslim people groups, no matter what it takes or what the cost.

"May nomads have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ." (Eph 3:18).

Wednesday 13th February

A trip among nomads in Central Asia - from a Frontiers worker

“Malcolm Hunter, founder of the Nomadic Peoples Network, saw the need among the millions of unengaged nomads as an injustice and cried out to God. Malcolm’s dream was to train and mobilise more workers for these nomadic peoples. Malcolm shared his vision for a mobile workshop to initiate new workers at the Nomadic Peoples Network conference in 2015. Last year, a consortium of agencies ran a truck adventure trekking from one nomadic group to another – crossing Central Asia from Tbilisi, Georgia to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan and back again.

The truck venture was the culmination of Malcolm’s dream.

A number of organisations like Frontiers were involved, providing the logistical support and recruiting the participants.

The truck venture was an experiment to expose potential new workers to nomads and their lifestyles, and train them on how to reach nomads.

At the same time we mobilisers, including Frontiers, wrestled with the question of how to recruit and equip the right people to effectively engage nomads. Our goals were to attract adventurous, Jesus-following learners with a pioneering spirit; to expose them to challenges to test whether they’re cross-culturally adept, persistent in prayer, cohesive team players, and able to endure hardship. We also aimed to train them to recognise and appreciate nomadic cultures, thrive on the move, learn from nomadic culture, and minister to them appropriately. We sought to help them see the spiritual dynamics of the good news for nomads in community relationships rather than in buildings and institutions. We helped them consider how their gifts and occupational interests might be used in such settings, and we prayed for each of the countries and peoples we encountered.

Nomads are even more likely than other Muslim peoples to have no one engaging with them. That’s probably because they present unique challenges. One national believer who’s seeking to work among Southeast Asian nomads asked me, “How can you plant a church when the people don’t stay put?”

Our trip across Central Asia sought to expose potential candidates to such quandaries of working among nomads.”

- Father we thank you for Malcolm Hunter and his passion and heart for nomadic peoples. We ask you to bless, encourage and equip him for the ministry you have given him.
- We thank you for Malcolm’s vision to train and mobilise more workers to reach nomadic peoples. We pray for much fruit from this trip.
- Pray for the different agencies involved in this trip, that they will catch the vision in even greater measure and take the task of reaching nomads to a greater audience.

Thursday 14th February

A trip among nomads in Central Asia - from a Frontiers worker (continued)

“Eighteen young people spent five weeks trekking across barren deserts and high mountain pastures on this five week trip.



A total of nineteen mentors (including three Central Asian Muslim background believers) dropped into the teams for a few weeks each.

On one memorable day in Kyrgyzstan, a Kyrgyz pastor invited six trekkers and four mentors to his sister’s village home. As we arrived, our hosts seated us in order of our age and served a grand spread of tea, dates, apples, plums, dried apricots, prunes, biscuits, varieties of flaky pastries, and berry sauces to spoon in to the tea.

Afterwards, as they gave us a tour of the compound, we noticed a sheep grazing near the kitchen building. After some introductory explanations, two men laid the sheep down, cut the sheep’s throat, and drained its blood. One of the students commented on how silently the sheep approached its slaughter.

Some men began skinning and gutting the sheep and the women took internal organs away to clean. As the butchers and cooks carried on with their messy work, our hosts explained the significance their culture gives to the way the sheep is cut into parts and how and why it would be divided among certain families in the community.

Several hours later, they ushered us to the dining area, then seated us (in age order again, of course) for a great feast of lamb. A pitcher of water, a large bowl, and a towel were brought in. Water was poured over each person’s hands while we rubbed and then carefully squeezed water off our hands without shaking or splattering just as the pastor demonstrated. Portions from the fat tail were served to the oldest man, the oldest woman, and the youngest among us. The final dish was finely chopped meat with noodles, and it was all washed down with a fermented mare’s milk or a greasy broth.

After we had expressed our appreciation for very full bellies, we were ushered into another room for yet more tea and snacks!

Experiences like this gave our truck trekkers a taste of life among Central Asian nomads – helping them learn to think like a nomad so that they can learn to “put the church on the back of a camel.”

After the trip as we debriefed, tears, anxious facial expressions, frustrations and fears poured out. The students admitted that the trip was very hard – “at times too hard.”

But joy and hope poured out, too. Participants emphatically said that it changed them for the better and they were very glad they came.

Six are now praying seriously about how God might use them among nomads in the future. All participants said they were at least considering long-term service or will advocate on behalf of nomads in their churches at home.

Praise God, just in the past few days we’ve heard from one of the participants, an existing Frontiers member, who has started working among nomads in Northeast Africa.

As a result of all this, I and others have committed to another trip in the future, this time across the Sahel of Africa.”

- Let’s pray for all the young people who went on this trip, that they will see how God is using this experience in their lives for the cause of reaching nomads.
- Pray for the six young people who are seriously seeking God about the path He has mapped out for them regarding nomads. May they know his leading and guidance.
- Let’s pray for the Frontiers worker who has started working among nomads in Northeast Africa, that he will know God’s protection, favour and blessing in his ministry.
- Let’s pray for the planned trip across the Sahel of Africa, that God will go before it and prepare the way.

Friday 15th February

Turkmen Pop: 7.8 million

The majority of Turkmen, 4.8 million, live in Turkmenistan, which is located in south Central Asia along the Caspian Sea. Many others live in the surrounding Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Iran, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.

Their culture has been strongly influenced in the past by both the Turkic conquerors, who imposed their language on them, and the Arabs, who forced them to convert to Islam. Long ago, they developed a strong ethnic identity as ‘children of the desert’ because they would plunder rich caravans of Persian traders.

In the 17th century, the Turkmen, or Trukhmens as they were called in Russia, migrated into the Caucasus in Central Asia.



For centuries the Turkmen lived as nomadic herdsmen. However, seventy years of Soviet rule virtually eliminated their nomadic lifestyle. The socialisation of farmland has changed their traditional settlement patterns, and movement into the cities has naturally weakened their customs and traditions.

Nomadic Turkmen are known as charwa. They raise sheep and goats for sale in town markets. When the pasture dries up during the summer and autumn they stay in camps near the permanent water sources. When it rains they move short distances to use the growing grass. During the summer when shepherding is less intensive, the flocks are left in the hands of the younger men, while other family members engage in limited cultivation. They also grow cotton and then weave and sell perhaps the finest carpets in Central Asia.

The Turkmen are a proud people who have never really been loved by anyone, have suffered much and have had very little Christian witness. A gospel witness to Turkmen will be most effective coming

from other Turkmen who are culturally sensitive. Turkmen pastors face great hardship and persecution. Some have been fined, beaten and put in jail.

- Ask the Lord to call people who are willing to live among the Turkmen and share with them the love of Christ.
- Pray for a gospel witness among every Turkmen tribe, clan and family.
- Ask God to strengthen, encourage and protect the small number of Turkmen believers and ask that they will have courage, joy and opportunities to share the gospel with their own people.

Source of some material: https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/15654/TX
David Phillips book "People on the move"

Saturday 16th February

The Uzbeks Pop: 28.5 million

The Uzbeks are a Turkic people group located primarily in Central Asia. The majority, over 25 million, live in their homeland which is present-day Uzbekistan. There they live in a desert land dotted with oases, near the Aral Sea.

There are also large Uzbek communities in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.



In the mid-1800s, most of the Uzbeks had been conquered by the Russians. They lived under czarist rule until the Bolshevik Revolution brought the Communists to power in 1917. Traditionally, most Uzbeks were semi-nomadic shepherds. In winter they stayed within 1 or 2 miles of their villages, but in the summer they went to the nearest hills. The new socialist government forced many of the Uzbek nomads to live on collective farms.

The rural Uzbeks generally live in one of three major types of dwellings: mud brick houses; long, rectangular houses with individual rooms opening onto a front porch; or Central Asian yurts, which are circular, portable tents, often made out of animal hair. Many nomadic groups live in yurts when migrating with their herds to better pastures or while moving to highland fields during harvest season.

The Uzbeks are the largest people group in Central Asia and are the most resistant to the gospel.

- Ask the Lord to send long term workers to live among the Uzbek nomads and share the love of Christ with them.
- As the livelihood of the nomadic Uzbeks is increasingly threatened, let's pray they will find refuge in the One who loves and understands them.

Source: https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/14039/GG