

Monday 18th January

Turkey today

Pop: 85 million

Muslim: 99%

Turkey is often described as being at a crossroads - between Europe and Asia, between West and East, between developed and developing. It is a land with a rich Christian heritage. The apostle Paul



was born in Tarsus in Turkey. Originally known by his Jewish name, Saul, he persecuted Christians before becoming the great evangelist Paul, who travelled extensively preaching the gospel. Today, most of the population follow Islam, although more than 75% of the people are not devout followers. Turkish President Erdoğan has been attempting to create a revival in Islamic identity. In recent years, Kurds and Christians

have spoken about feeling more oppressed under his regime. Society is polarised as never before. Political, religious and ethnic identities are causing strife and deep-seated anger. There is a hopelessness that can be seen in peoples' eyes.

Some Turkish areas are experiencing economic prosperity and growth. Yet by far the majority of people are poor and struggling to provide a viable future for their children. The price of many basic products is rising and people are finding it harder to make ends meet. Half of the population is made up of young people who are dissatisfied with the situation in their country. The Turkish lira has been devalued and there are economic and social pressures because of the coronavirus pandemic. At the time of writing, there are more cases of the coronavirus being reported than at the height of the outbreak in the Spring. Weekend lockdowns are looking increasingly likely with a lot of shutdowns already happening.

On October 31st last year, a 7.0 earthquake hit Turkey, with Izmir on the west coast suffering the worst of the damage. At least 91 people died and over 900 were injured and thousands were left homeless. Many were shocked at the magnitude of the earthquake, which was the highest the country has ever recorded.

With all that has happened to the country both this year and in recent years, together with war and other trials, Turkish people have become more open to the gospel message. There are a multitude of new believers as a result of the Covid crisis. Praise God for how he turns challenging situations into opportunities for good!

- Pray for the recent trials to cause even more and more people to be open to the way of Jesus and for His kingdom to come to this nation.
- Pray for the raising up of effective labourers who can see groups started among Muslim communities.

- Pray that the rulers in Turkey would be wise and honest and for righteousness to grow in their hearts. Pray they would peacefully navigate tensions between nationalists, radical Islamists and different people groups.
- Praise the Lord for 80 groups of believers that have started in the last 3 years. There are a few second generation groups and even a third generation group. Pray that these groups would grow and mature and become a movement for His glory!

Sources of some material: <https://www.prayercast.com/turkey.html>;
<https://www.mnnonline.org/news/turkey-still-reeling-after-7-0-magnitude-earthquake/> and
<https://2414now.net/>

Tuesday 19th January

Obeying God's call to take the gospel to all nations

Yesterday we prayed for the raising up of more labourers to go to Turkey. The following account is from a lady who has recently joined Frontiers and is planning to go to Turkey soon. She has a love for Muslims and a longing for them to know the good news and the hope we have in Jesus. This is her story:

“My love for Muslim people began when I lived among them as part of a short-term trip to West Africa. I found my heart touched by the people, their eagerness to know God more, to please him and their reverence for God that we sometimes forget. At the same time, I saw how hard they were trying to please God with no hope at the end. This broke my heart. I wanted to share with them the hope that is found in the true God. I wanted to give them an opportunity to see beyond what they've always known, as I shared everyday life with them.

Now God is leading me to the unreached Muslim people in Turkey. He has led me through lots of little miracles – such as how I connected with a team that shares the same vision God had placed on my heart and how I was able to visit just before all the lockdown travel bans started. Turkey has amazing art, culture and history where I can use my gifts and interests to connect and relate to the local community.

Reaching those who have never heard about Jesus has been on my heart for many years. The verse that I always turn to and ask myself if I am living this out, is from Romans 10:14 “*How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?*” God is sovereign, but He has also given us the task of bringing His good news to those who have never had the opportunity to hear about Him.

My next steps will be hard and scary, as I learn a new language, adapt to living in a new culture, leave friends and family behind, not all of whom fully understand what I'm doing.”

Please pray for me:

- As I prepare to leave for Turkey and say goodbye to my family and friends. Farewells are never easy and much more complicated with all the current restrictions.

- For the practicalities of moving to a new country in the middle of a pandemic. God can make it happen and I pray for all the details to be taken care of and for His perfect timing.
- For God to prepare the hearts of the community and the people I will be living and working amongst. Without the Holy Spirit there is nothing I can do. Please pray for a fresh anointing and infilling as I prepare to go.

Wednesday 20th January

The Alevis

Of Turkey's total population of approximately 85 million people, there are only about 6,500 believers and 160 churches. This translates into 1 church for every 531,000 people and 1 believer for every 12,666 people! Of the 81 provinces that make up this nation, half have no church or any believers living there. Of the 6,500 believers, more than half are Alevis.

The Alevis live mainly in the south and east of Turkey and estimates put their numbers anywhere between 15 -20 million; about 15-20% of the total country's population. They are still classified as unreached and are the second largest people group in Turkey. It is very difficult for foreign workers to live amongst them, because the government is against foreign workers living in this part of the country, so it is hard to get visas. Foreigners are often viewed with suspicion.

To effectively reach the Alevis, they need Muslim-background believers to go to them. There are Alevis living in Istanbul who can more easily be discipled. It is hoped they would catch the vision and take the good news back to their own people.

The Alevis are open-minded and willing to engage in conversations, hence movements to Christ are more likely among this people group. However, long-term workers have found the ground very hard spiritually. Some have laboured for 30 years to see the good news come amongst the Alevis. They are easy going and many see little need for the good news. Yet they are very musical and enjoy singing and dancing, so singing Psalms with them has led to open conversations about Jesus.

They don't go to the mosque, preferring to worship in assembly houses called 'cemevi'. The government has said these are not places of worship but centres for cultural activities, claiming Muslims should have only one place of worship, the mosque. Alevis claim they have been subject to intolerant Sunni nationalism that has been unwilling to recognise their uniqueness.

For a wealth of information about the Alevis, you may want to visit this website:

<http://www.munzurvalley.com/alevism#alevism9>

Let's pray that this will be the year of a breakthrough and a great harvest.

- Pray for movements to Christ amongst this people group as new believers in cities are stirred to go back to their towns and villages with the message of the gospel.

- Let's cry out to God on behalf of our workers who have stayed faithful over so many years, determined to finish the race marked out for them. Pray for fruit as they long to see Alevis have the hope of eternal life and a relationship with Jesus.
- Pray that God would call workers to these people who have largely been forgotten. With their deep love of music, pray that God would send musicians and through them turn a nation to Himself.

Thursday 21st January

The Good Father or the God of the Exam?

The following story is from a long-term worker in Turkey:

"You can tell a lot about people from their eyes.

Life is in some ways like an exam. As the Imams say, we all get dealt a different set of cards and the art of life is learning to deal with your 'hand of cards' in the most righteous manner. But is God the kind of God who would set the exam for us and smugly walk off whilst we're left grappling with life's difficulties? Is God the kind of God who leaves us alone to cope? Is he simply the 'examiner' and 'grade-giver' at the end of this veil of tears or...

...maybe He's with us, side by side with us, in the dirt, the tears, the tragedy and heartache. Maybe God is good, maybe He's loving, maybe He's like a good father, maybe He knows and weeps with us and comforts us and helps us??

In the dirt and grime of a dusty workshop I pondered these matters with my Muslim friend. It was powerful to have him read the words of Jesus which tells us not to fear, not to be anxious and to trust in our Father God. It was powerful to read the words of life in such a down-to-earth place, with down-to-earth people facing hardship and struggle.

Back to the eyes... One could see in my friend's eyes the spiritual struggle as the 'God of the exam!' jostled for position with the 'God who looks like Jesus'.

Please pray for revelation to dawn in this place."

- Let's take a moment to thank God for our workers and ask for His blessing and refreshing upon each one.
- Pray for revelation to dawn in the heart of this man and all Turkish people so that they will recognise and understand that God loves them with an everlasting love and is right beside them in the hardships and the struggles.
- Pray that people will clearly recognise what is false and what is true when it is shared with them. Pray that the truth would set them free!

Friday 22nd January

Ali's testimony

This testimony is from Prayercast.

Ali grew up in a Muslim family in Turkey. He wanted to understand who God was and what was required of him before he committed himself fully to Islam. The time came for him to go to college in Istanbul where he met a lady who took him to her church. There he got to know some Muslim background believers. They all shared that they had met Jesus through dreams and visions. This led to Ali having more questions. He wanted to meet Jesus too.

He was invited to a conference where the speaker prayed over him. Ali had a peace and joy he had never known before. Still, he longed to hear Jesus for himself. He went back to the conference the next day and a group of people prayed for him. He found himself falling down and felt the presence of someone with power and authority. He heard an inner voice telling him that He loved Ali and was the One he had been searching for. Ali said, "are you Jesus and what should I do?" He felt an inner voice saying that Ali was to be His disciple and was to follow Him. Ali was so touched by God's love that he made the decision to give his life to Christ.

Ali shared what had happened with his family. His brother and then his sister came to faith and then his parents! That was over 23 years ago! He continues to share his faith with his friends telling them that Jesus will love and care for them and give them eternal life.

You might like to listen to Ali's full testimony here: <https://prayercast.com/ali-turk.html>. It is very inspiring!

- Praise God for how He is still revealing Himself to Muslims every day! Pray that new believers will swiftly grab hold of the Word of God and pass it on to their families, friends and neighbours.
- Pray that God would show Himself to millions more Turkish Muslims!
- Pray that this year, thousands of people will be engaged in spiritual conversations where they hear the truth.
- Pray for seekers to boldly accept the Word as truth and Jesus as their Lord and Saviour

Saturday 23rd January

Praise and prayer for Turkey

“Then, after doing all those things, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on servants—men and women alike.” Joel 2:28-29

Let's end our week of prayer for Turkey, praying God's word over this nation and its people and worshipping Him for what He wants to do there. As you sing this song, Spirit Move by Kalley Heiligenthal, ask for a greater measure of His Spirit to be poured out in Turkey! May his Spirit blow through this land, awakening hearts to him.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbdSQ8MLnYs&feature=emb_logo

For more prayer resources, you may want to visit Pray4Turkey's website:

<https://www.pray4turkey.net/about>



Pray4Turkey is made up of followers of Jesus from around the world who desire to see churches and disciples multiply in Turkey. Their goal is to mobilise strategic prayer for disciple making movements in this nation. Here are a couple of their recent prayer points:

- Pray that God would transform Turkey's Sauls into Pauls; its persecutors into apostles; its shepherds into kings; its old men into liberators! *“Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again.” Acts 9:18*
- Pray for a revival of prayer in the local church. Pray that believers would come together and lift up honest cries to God on behalf of their families, neighbours, friends, and country. Pray that prayer would become a unifying factor among local churches in Turkey. *“I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people.” 1 Timothy 2:1*
- Pray for those in Turkey who are finding themselves in a place of darkness and despair. Pray this Scripture over them, declaring that the people of Turkey will see a great light! *“Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever... The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.” Isaiah 9:1-2*