

Trade and Islam beat a path through the Silk Roads of Central Asia, much of which could not be changed by 70 years of Soviet rule. Most of the languages here have been Turkish-based since the early days of Turkey's Ottoman Empire. Most other languages in this region are based on Farsi, the tongue of Persia, Central Asia's other traditional world power. The marginally Muslim peoples of the Turkish World are looking for a new identity. Will they make their identity in Christ, or in something much lower?



This is a story as told by a man from Central Asia.

My name is Yerkin and I was born into a Muslim family in Western Kazakhstan. In 1994, I began a spiritual journey I wish to share with you. At that time I was married, with two children and was a successful alcohol salesman. Over a period of time I had three vivid dreams in which I was confronted with the power of darkness like I had never known before. In the first two dreams I saw a man, who I now know was Jesus, emanating a light and a peace that was indescribable. Not long after my last dream, I became seriously ill with bronchial asthma. As it worsened, I turned to the customs in which I was raised. I went to the mosque. I read the Koran. I prayed five times a day. I went to Muslim "spiritual healers." All was in vain. My wife Sveta and I were on the verge of divorce and she had become seriously depressed by the recent deaths of her father and brother.

One day in 1996, I was visiting my mother and I saw a small booklet entitled, "God Wants to Heal Everyone." My sister acquired the booklet with hopes my brother, Zhaloman (D), would read it because his situation was almost as bad as mine. He was drinking excessively and had spent time in jail. On that day I sat and read that book, devouring each word. I immediately understood that Jesus had died for my sins and sickness. On the way home I prayed to Jesus asking Him to prove himself to me by taking away the sickness. If He would remove the sickness I would believe in Him and serve Him. There was an immediate change in my body. I was completely healed. I told no one of my healing. For the next month I prayed to both Jesus and Allah. As a new Christian, I did not know what to do. Was I to become Russian Orthodox and light candles? I didn't know, but I quit going to the mosque.

A month later, we noticed the address of the church printed on the back of the booklet and decided to go there. When we arrived we were greeted by a young man and woman. We sat and visited with them while my wife and sister asked many questions. My question was, "How do I become a Christian?" I saw in the eyes of these Christians the faith and love like the people in my dreams. I felt the same peace I had in my dreams. I had found the truth. We were invited to come back for the Sunday morning service where we could repent of our sins and accept Jesus as savior. I could hardly wait until Sunday. When the day came we found only seven or eight people there besides our family. We found the singing and prayer a bit strange, but we sat there until it was time to go forward. I was first to walk forward with my wife and sister close behind. I immediately understood that I was now a "follower of Jesus." It took my wife a week to realize she was no longer a Muslim, but a Christian.

We shared our new faith with everyone. I quit my business of selling alcohol. No one told me to do this, but somehow I knew it did not glorify God. We took taxis to other villages where we shared our faith with relatives. We had no money to pay the taxis so we shared the gospel with the drivers and they too prayed and were so grateful they offered to help us.

Today, eleven years since my conversion, 77 of our relatives know the Lord. My wife Sveta and I have been pastors for six years. The church we pastor has 500 members and is one of the largest Kazakh Churches. My brother Zhaloman and his wife as well as several other family members are also pastors.

The Kazak, a Turkic people, are the second largest Muslim group of Central Asia. In the past, they were perhaps the most influential of the various Central Asian ethnic groups. While most of the Kazak now live in Kazakhstan, they make up only about 40% of that country's population. During the 19th century, Russians acquired Kazakhstan and tragically, half the entire population was killed during the Russian Civil War of the 1920's and 1930's. At this time, many fled to China and Mongolia where large communities are still found, as well as in 16 other nations, with the total number being 12,058,000. Since the collapse of Soviet communism, the Kazak have been searching for their identity. Traditionally, they were nomadic shepherds, however, under Soviet rule, much of their land was seized and used for collective farming and their economy and culture became dependent on Russians. Today there is a widespread movement to re-develop their own cultural identity. They embraced Sunni Islam (E) during the 16th century and still consider themselves Muslim today, although they also practice animism, ancestor worship and consult shamans.

Let's pray for Yerkin, for the Kazaks, as well as for all the other 854 Least-Reached Peoples living in Central Asia:

DREAMS & VISIONS

That God would speak to individuals through dreams and visions as he did with Yerkin so that their hearts are prepared and receptive to the Gospel

GOSPEL LITERATURE

That literature presenting the Truth of Jesus in the heart language and in a way that can be understood would become available to every one of the 854 Least-Reached Peoples in Central Asia.

HEALING FROM PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL ILLNESSES

That God would confirm His Word with signs and wonders following, delivering seekers from addictions, depression and emotional and physical sicknesses as a demonstration that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

GOD OF ALL PEOPLES

For God to change the idea that to become a Christian means I lose my cultural identity and to reveal that He has come to us as Emmanuel, God with Us, so that He even speaks our language and answers our hearts' cries.

PRAYER EVANGELISM

That God draws every new believer into intimate relationship with Himself, teaching them to pray and intercede for the others around them who do not yet know Him - even as Yerkin's wife did - so that they also come to know Jesus.

Link to profile on the Kazaks:

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=104791&rog3=KZ>

Contact for further details and filming: Eunice Danielson, edaninca@capn.info

www.ethne.net