



The wise missionary will sense the high value God places on those few who truly seek Him.

Ralph D. Winter



Dear Reader,

Islam won't go away. However, Bush did not declare war on Islam, but against terrorists. Yet many people assume that we need to fight a war against the Muslim world.

Is all talk of "war" out of place? Is war against Islam out of place?

First let's revisit the whole matter of "war talk."

Heaven is a side issue — War is central

We must understand that getting people to heaven is merely a by-product of missions.

Missions does not boil down to persuading people that they ought to say certain things, and go through certain motions in order to make sure they will get to heaven.

Rather, missions consists, first of all, of introducing people to the Living God. The best way to do this is to enable them to meet His Son, Jesus Christ, in the scriptures, and for them to yield to Him as their Lord and Savior.

What happens then? Do they just get a ticket to heaven to stash away in their wallets and forget until the day comes? No. They now have a *permanent family relationship with God the Father*. They inherit His love and forgiveness and His purposes, His mission, His task, *His war*.

They have now enlisted in the army of the Kingdom of God and if faithful and obedient to their commander in chief are thrust into the same knock-down-drag-out battle in which Jesus, Stephen, and Paul were persecuted.



Ralph D. Winter is the Editor of Mission Frontiers and the General Director of the Frontier Mission Fellowship.

This battle is the same both before and after Christ, in which thousands of His faithful followers—due to their faith—have been "tortured ... faced jeers and flogging ... put in prison ... stoned ... sawed in two ... put to death by the sword ... went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them ... they wandered in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground ... we must therefore fix our eyes on Jesus ... who ... (similarly) endured the cross, scorning the shame (Heb 11: 36-38, 12:2)."

Oh, yes, of course, those people did (and they do) glorious things as well, and the defenses of hell will not be able to stand against them.

But the point here is that *missions is another label for a global conflict between the forces of God and glaring, rampant, unavoidable evil*.

Each of us is a warrior in that conflict, with Eternal Life as a precious permanent possession, but with hardship and struggle and suffering in the meantime.

Why then is our faith so often promoted merely as a means of wonder and prosperity? In this do we fail to understand the Bible? Yes.

What about Muslims?

This issue of *Mission Frontiers* focuses on what might be called "the black hole of Central Asia." But to call it that would be a serious mistake. It would be the same mistake Abraham made when he said to himself before entering the domain of Abimelech, "these people have no fear of God."

After the massive new interest in Islam following 9/11, we find most Americans make two major mistakes when they think about Muslims.

1. They think Muslims are spiritually unresponsive, when in fact many are true, humble seekers of God who already highly regard Jesus.

2. They think the cultural and political background of Islam is ignominious when in fact it was illustrious, for centuries outstripping Western Christendom. (See my later comments.)

1. True Seekers?

Our normal theology does not encourage us to weigh properly the important fact that there are some true seekers after God among Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Mormons, Muslims, etc. For that matter, we recognize that there are some true seekers after God among Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, etc.

Obviously, just to be a true seeker is not enough, although we tend to believe that if such a person is also a Presbyterian or Baptist he or she is probably going to heaven.

That is, we emphasize the intellectual, theological content of a Protestant denomination more highly, perhaps, than we do the value of a person being a true seeker after God.

The unwise missionary will not look especially for seekers, but will look for those he can get to assent to a set of intellectual doctrines.

The unwise missionary will not look especially for seekers, but for those he can get to assent to a set of intellectual doctrines.

The wise missionary will sense the high value God places on those few who truly seek Him, and will nourish those seeds of faith, expecting that effort to reproduce the Word of Good News.

2. Illustrious Muslim Background?

The bombshell of the Greek Bible influenced people in all directions. Thus resulted Greek believers, Latin believers, and Semitic believers. By Muhammed's day, however, the faith had been taken over and monopolized by the harsh, powerful, and hated Roman Empire.

So, Muhammed did for the Semitic peoples what Luther would later do (far more effectively) for the non-Latin European peoples. He initiated a Semitic and anti-Roman form of faith which immediately swept millions of Rome-shy, Rome-fearing and Rome-hating

From 700AD to 1200AD Islam led the world in power, order and extent of government, in refinement of manners, in standards of living, in humane legislation and religious toleration...

populations (many nominally Christian) into an alternate form of faith, theoretically Bible-based.

Copying hugely from the Christians, he was greatly limited by the fact that the only Christians he knew had only parts of the Bible and drastically misunderstood the Trinity, a view which Muhammed (rightly) rejected. Every word of the traditional Muslim liturgy in mosques was borrowed from Christian, Samaritan and Jewish sources. He prayed to Allah, as had Arabic Christians for 500 years before him.

Like Joseph Smith and the Mormons, Muhammed and the Muslims developed an additional "book," that is, they developed, respectively, the Book of Mormon and the Qur'an. The word "Allah" as represented in the Christians' Bible was fine but when embedded in the Qur'an took on a new twist. Today 30 million Christians still pray to Allah and read that word for God in their Bibles. But those who know only the Qur'an think of Allah differently.

The Qur'an is confusing. Muslims

who read only a few pages of the Gospels are powerfully surprised and attracted to the Bible. That's what they need! Truly seeking Muslims are usually eager to know more about Jesus.

But today the stress and irritation, the despair and fury of the Muslims is their lost empire, their lost greatness. It is something Christians long envied. Now the situation is (to Muslims) puzzlingly the reverse.

How about a scholarly assessment written prior to 9/11?

For five centuries, from 700 to 1200, Islam led the world in power, order, and extent of government, in refinement of manners, in standards of living, in humane legislation and religious toleration, in literature, scholarship, science, medicine, and philosophy. ... Muslim medicine led the world for half a millennium ... Only at the peaks of history has a society produced, in an equal period, so many illustrious men—in government, education, literature, philology, geography, history, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, philosophy, and medicine. (Will Durant, *The Age of Faith*, pp. 341-343)

But then, weakened by the Crusades, ravaged by the Mongols, outdone by the Christians' printing of the Bible, they went from a number equal to the number of Christians in Luther's day to half the number of Christians today.

The Bible plus Gutenberg made the difference. Muslims could not make mass copies of the Koran with movable type, due to the way they wrote their letters. Massive reproductions of the Koran would not have done them much good anyway.

The Christians mass-produced the Bible. This powerful new factor slowly but surely elevated relatively primitive forest Christians into scholars and scientists and insights equal or greater than the Mediterranean civilization. Four hundred years thrust Christians way ahead—Muslims for the most part having no way to catch up.

Can we freely recognize how much we learned from them in the past? Can we share our Bible with them? Millions of them are waiting for this. ☉

Do Spanish-Speakers Deserve Operation World?

An Appeal and Invitation from the USCWM

Yes!



Millions of praying Spanish-speakers would be blessed (and would extend that blessing) if they could read the acclaimed *Operation World* prayer handbook in their language. Therefore, we have been working with other ministries to see *Operation World* translated and printed in Spanish, hopefully to become available in early 2005.

However ... a make-or-break question is whether we can assure sales of enough copies through pre-publication orders. Such orders must be in case lots — an estimated 16 books per case, and an estimated \$6 per book, and therefore a projected cost per case of \$96 (shipping included).

Are you (or others you know) interested in a pre-publication purchase (one or more cases) of the Spanish edition of *Operation World*? We need to know no later than October 31 (but the sooner, the better). To place your pre-publication order or to make inquiries, write to spanishOW@uscwm.org. Thank you!

P.S. Let me clarify that the USCWM is not making any money on this project; in fact, we will receive no funds. Instead, we are contributing staff time and out-of-pocket expenses to promote the common good. If you are interested in helping financially to get this book to people who can use it, please e-mail us at spanishOW@uscwm.org.

Greg Parsons
General Director,
U.S. Center for World Mission



Greg Parsons



Dear Mission Frontiers,

Mission Frontiers (July-August 2004) accomplished an important service of ... counseling students and mission agencies about student debt [incurred] while preparing for ministry. I would have also liked to have seen a prophetic word about the ethics of over-charging students for ministerial training.

Jesus did not charge his disciples for their three-year training; they were all supported by a group of "donors." A careful reading of the Gospels shows that sick that were healed and the oppressed who were liberated were not charged for being served. Obviously costs have to be covered, but why does the North American model put such a heavy financial load on the back of the students?

I think student tuition-driven ministerial training institutions is primarily a post-WWII North American para-church phenomenon that has been exported worldwide via the mission movement. I prefer the original denominational and also faith mission model where professors and local institutions raise their own support to cover basic costs and student fees are limited to payable amounts. No financial debt needs to be incurred in ministerial training (Romans 13:8). Hurray for some of the denominational and para-church institutions who are offering ministerial training at low costs....

Ministerial training institutions have the responsibility of providing the church with debt-free servants. When the Church and Christian institutions model such responsibility, its members will not only benefit but extend such ethics worldwide.

Dr. Neal Hegeman
Academic Dean,
Miami International
Seminary

Dear Mission Frontiers,

I read with interest your latest issue of *Mission Frontiers* (July-August 2004); specifically, Dr. Sells' article on "Student Debt: A Hurdle Too High for 'Impact' Missionaries." I'm the missions director at Derwood Bible Church, in the DC metropolitan area, and we have been struggling with this issue for the past several years.

We are very active in global outreach, but we seem to have a paucity of young people from our church that would even consider a career in missions. I'm sure this is for a variety of issues, but student debt has to be among the reasons. Last year I introduced the idea of "Project Infinite Return" at our church to help resolve this issue. Dr. Sells comments on Project MedSend's program to repay student debt for medical students desiring to go on the mission field. In short, "Project Infinite Return" seeks to do the same with pre-college/college students in our body. We are exploring opportunities to pay for mission-minded students' tuition or even consider re-paying their debt for a return of their service on the mission field.

Patrick Melder
Director, Global Outreach
Derwood Bible Church
Derwood, MD

Dear Mission Frontiers,

Another alternative to saving money, and a benefit to getting into a good college, is to take community-college classes while you are in high school, either in the summer of your junior year, your senior year (I took two cc courses the second semester of my senior year), and also/or your senior-year summer.

...[These courses] count for college credit and provide your college application with the benefit of an added GPA, as college

courses taken in high school get an "honors point" — an A in a community college course taken in high school counts as a 5.0 instead of a 4.0.

... The community-college classes are cheap, [and] they can help you get into a better college or possibly get a scholarship [to] a 4-year college because of your [distinction from] your peers. [Also,] your earning potential as a high school student is lower than as a college student. Working in an internship while in college can get you anywhere from \$12 -24/hour. While in high school, most likely the student wouldn't be able to earn much more than minimum wage. Taking community college courses while in high school instead of working [then] helps a lot. ...

Edward Tsai

Dear Mission Frontiers,

... My wife and I have been missionaries in Botswana, Africa for just over 16 years now, and I was interested in your articles on debt and the mission field. I believe that this issue is one of the reasons that the future of the sending force of missionaries in the world will not come from the USA. The USA-based church and mission organizations have adopted a view of debt that I believe does not find its roots in Scripture.... We personally were a part of it all, and came to the field with a debt from college which we paid off in the first year, but I wish there had been someone there to give us the godly advice to not sign for it.

Bob Genheimer 🌐

OVERLOOKED NO MORE: Peoples and Partnerships of the Caucasus

Helen Bruce

Five million people make the Russian Northern Caucasus mountain region their home. The Kavkaz (Caucasus) mountains rise majestically between the Caspian and Black seas, crossing eight oblasts on Russia's most southern border: Krasnodar, Adygheya, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Ossetia, Ingushetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan.

Imagine 40 language groups squished into a landmass the size of Great Britain, then add some very tall, steep mountains.

The ethnic and linguistic diversity of these original Caucasian peoples is astonishing! The "Papua New Guinea" of Central Asia is home to 40 ethnic groups speaking 70 distinct languages and dialects.

Though traditional Protestant and Orthodox churches base from the major cities, these culturally Muslim peoples have little regular witness to Jesus in relevant culture or language forms. Perhaps you've tasted Adyghe cheese, or seen beautiful Balkar sweaters, Tabassaran slippers, or Dagestani rugs? Certainly you've heard of the complex situation between Chechnya and Russia.

The Rumor: When the Great Horseman dispersed languages at the creation of the world, he came to the Caucasus Mountains, the horse stumbled, and many languages spilled out.

The Reality: the same mountains that contain such diversity still separate these peoples from clear gospel witness. Many of these nations, though only 1000 miles from Bethlehem, have waited 2000 years for the Good News of Redemption in Jesus Christ.

Is two years for every gospel mile the best the Church can do?

Yet ... did you know? God is blessing His Name and His Church as some from the Caucasus peoples repent and follow Jesus. In 1996 there were six North American mission agencies with 12 workers committed to the Caucasus (along with a handful of European missionaries). Today, there are hundreds of workers, from 60 diverse agencies, mission societies, churches or groups, from 25 different countries. Over half the workers are from Russia and Central Asian countries! This is Great News!

So who are the Caucasus peoples? They are indigenous peoples who have linguistic and ethnic histories thousands of years old. They are highly literate, educated, proud, clan-oriented, rurally-rooted peoples who have suffered and resisted migrations and intense efforts by Russians to purge or "integrate" them ("Russify" would be the pejorative) within the Russian Federation. In Chechnya, the term "Studebaker" is a swear word because Stalin used American Studebakers, donated during WWII, to relocate and disperse Chechens in his attempt to divide and conquer minority groups within the Former Soviet Union. Caucasian peoples have a long memory.

The complexity of the Caucasus increases when you add in geography and ethnicity, covered with a veneer of Sufism and folk Islam and peppered with Wahhabism (extreme Islamic theology originating from Saudi Arabia). Imagine 40 language groups squished into a landmass the size of Great Britain, and then add some very tall, steep mountains that can require six hours to travel ten miles to the next village! Add languages and dialects which have 74 consonants! Add the difficulty for foreigners to hold long-term visas in Russia! It's little wonder



that God's global Church hasn't made a dent among the rural clans of these peoples.

Why would these peoples remain unreached for so long? They are mountain peoples. (The same reason applies to the Pushtun of Afghanistan and the historical Picts of Scotland.) It's taken generations for God's love to break through. In this context, perhaps short-term mission needs to be redefined to mean 100 years, rather than 10 months. But the more important question is: How is God asking our generation to bless peoples who have yet to hear of Him?

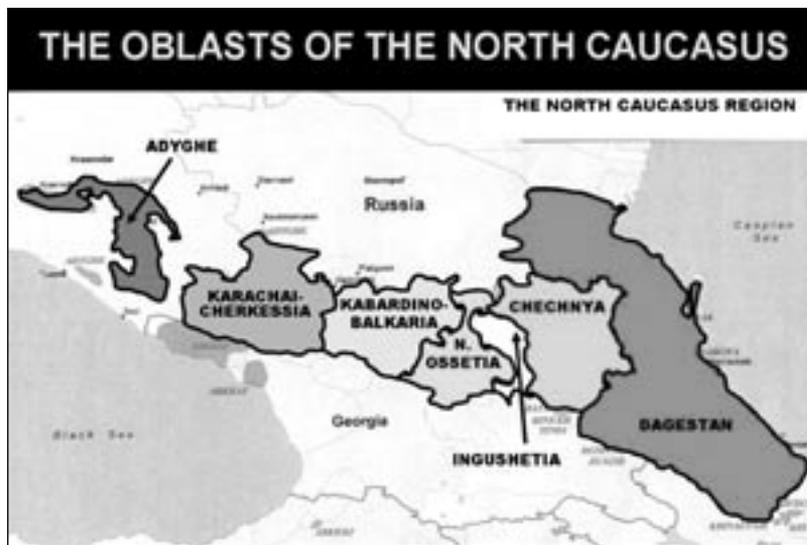
Romans 10: 14-15 is a screaming reality for this part of God's earth...."And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent?" (NLT)

Getting sent to the Caucasus is a challenge in its own right. Few agencies know the region, few have experience with a non-Arab Muslim focus within Russia and former Soviet countries, and few are willing to allow workers to be subjected to the risks of the region. Getting to stay and live there is another unsolved challenge. Succinctly: few agencies and potential missionaries have the will to spend their lives on this part of the world.

Today's fruit results from years of Christ-followers persevering in the crucible of the Caucasus. A handful of workers have given 10-30 years of their lives towards loving these peoples. It would be no exaggeration to compare them to the families of Hudson Taylor, William Carey, or Adoniram Judson—who served God to cross into new cultures in spite of global and civil wars, kidnappings, and beheadings. Though not extraordinary individuals, husbands, wives or families, they were extraordinary in their submission to Christ and held strong beliefs in eternal reward which helped them

persevere through depression, disease, death and despair.

It's *not* the superheroes who make it in the Caucasus. It's



not the ones who set out to be like Hudson Taylor or any of the others. In fact, it's probably just the opposite. It's the men and women who set out to fully submit to Christ and become fully themselves. They set out to be God-fearers and people-lovers. They set out in love, rather than to make a name or legacy for themselves, their church, their family, denomination or organization. They *know* in the core of their being that Christ is all.

Today, the walls of geographic and ethnic separation are being breached with love. Dedicated Jesus-followers are raising a wall of prayer. God's people are living messages of love in action. God's people come from Sweden, Norway, Germany, South Korea, Switzerland, Russia, Ukraine, Kirghizstan, Kazakstan, Jordan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, America, Canada, and Great Britain. They often surrender the blessings of their extended families, their career ambitions, their hopes of marriage, and even their nationalities to find creative ways to stay in Russia for the long-term as ambassadors of God's truth.

Probably the most difficult challenge for cross-cultural workers is to find ways to work within Russia for the long term. Non-Russian passport holders often live like itinerant, urban nomads. They go in and out of Russia, carrying their important documents with them, merely hoping that they will get back to their apartments. These faithful urban nomads are being used by God, and the Church is growing in depth and number!

Why would these peoples remain unreached for so long? They are mountain peoples.

Although geographically small, ethnically very diverse and with few believers in any one people group, the Caucasus reveals how God operates for the glory of His name. Here are a few examples of God's love and blessing among these peoples:

- The Dagestani believers are exploring the effects of living out Acts 2:42-44 ["And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common...."]. Dagestani church leaders are being provoked through situations of difficult church disunity to explore the practical implications of the "John 17 church." The power of God through the relational unity of his followers speaks volumes to unbelievers within Dagestan. They will convene a forum later this year to pray, discuss (and probably argue in full Dagestani style) what this means and looks like for the believers, fellowships, and churches in Dagestan. They are a new generation of Church, discovering Biblical doctrine applied within their context.



Today's fruit results from years of Christ-followers persevering in the crucible of the Caucasus.

missionaries and Muslim-background-believers in a Central Asian country, today the whole Bible is in print and there is high demand for this Scripture revision

in the North Caucasus. This has helped solve the ongoing challenge of prioritizing which Caucasus language needs a Scripture revision the most, because most of these peoples are highly literate in Russian, even though they converse in their mother language or dialect.

- One people group has a very small number of Jesus Followers among them. About 100

can be counted. Believers from this group are researching their own diaspora populations in order to begin addressing the need for reaching them with Christ's Good News. They also now have contextual training in place for some who will then serve as messengers to their own people.

- Over the last few years deliberate (though ad hoc) prayer networks have proven successful, so that local believers and foreign workers in the region may regularly circulate their prayer needs and have them securely forwarded into 25 countries (European, North and South American). God seems to make creative ways for further circulation among churches, organizations and individuals praying for the work and people groups in the North Caucasus.

- It's important to note the handful of women who are persistent, godly follower-leaders. It is often said that

Russia moves because of the women. This is no less true in the Church. The question of "if" women have a role in ministry in Russia is moot. The question is *how* and how to *appropriately* partner God's use of women in the Muslim context, particularly in the local church family. They persist in prayer and prayer recruitment. They coordinate praying people to invoke God's blessings across the Caucasus. This prayer network touches many churches, pastors, and ministry leaders across the theological spectrum of believers in the North Caucasus.

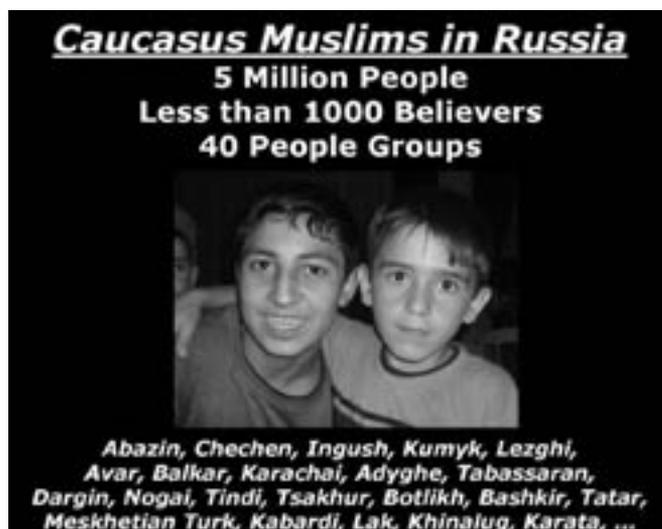
- We can rejoice that today a number of ongoing meetings (forums) take place where local and expatriate mission workers gather to pray, worship, plan, dance, share information (sometimes loudly with arguments in love), share resources and even collaborate on specific projects. Russian is usually the primary language, with some translation to English or Korean.
- Efforts are underway to develop affordable-housing projects for displaced (homeless) Chechen families. The Chechen are viewed as the enemy within Russia. The prejudice against them is extreme. They cannot get jobs easily, and are not welcomed by landlords or local administrative officials. Local people

often warn: a friend of the Chechen will be the enemy of the Russian. The 1991 Chechen cause for independence was hijacked by Wahhabi missionaries, and now the global war on terrorism and the Chechen people are inextricably mixed in the quagmire left by a power vacuum. The Chechen and Ingush cultures are very difficult to break into. Yet God seems to be building bridges by using dreams, visions, powerful spiritual experiences, and the horrors of the war with Russia to turn them to Jesus. Chechens are desperate for the Good News. They can't get enough of it, when they are free to inquire. 85% of Chechen children have been psychologically traumatized by the wars since 1994. Many women who didn't escape Chechnya have been raped, or have had to observe a sibling getting raped. Many women have lost a brother, father or uncle to barbarous Russian attacks on civilian villages. Few children in the last 10 years have had consistent access to basic education.

- Throughout the region, Christian workers share their expertise, experience and training with one another in their desire to free families from the downward spiral of alcohol abuse, drug addiction, HIV and AIDS, and tuberculosis. The local governments have limited funding for social services of any form, and that's where the churches are often invited to step into their local communities. Churches in the larger cities are often welcome to minister within the prisons as well. The difficulty is effectively training local workers in short-term increments because expatriate workers often cannot stay for longer than three months at a time. This might merely be God's way of forcing the missionaries into a discipleship paradigm, rather than an empire-building paradigm. It seems that God routinely undercuts the propensity for Christian leaders to

fall prey to the Soviet style of leadership control, which is often harsh and vindictive. The spirit of control is pervasive. Power-sharing models of ministry are effective antidotes and are attractive to the younger generation.

- Due to a specific mentoring program over the last four years, small business development is maturing across the region, as students are becoming business owners, teachers and trainers in their own right.



- One worker moved out of Dagestan after missionaries were kidnapped in 1998 and again in 1999. He struggled as God broke his pride and his belief that the ministry was about his own performance. God gave his family a creative, itinerant model to mentor twelve men and their wives, using a biblical discipleship and leadership development

curriculum. He has joked, "I'm a Presbyterian, teaching Pentecostals, using a Baptist program!" Every two weeks he traveled to one of these men's homes, where they gathered for a few days, to go over the next lesson. Over time, he routinely hosted the men and their families in his home, as a way to model Christian family life to them even though he wasn't allowed to live near them because of visa and registration difficulties. This kind of model was grueling for his wife and children, who said goodbye to him so often and who had to host so many visitors in their home. Yet this worker employed good use of rest and retreat to protect his family. Their relationships with the local people will be remembered for a lifetime.

If God is working in the Caucasus, what might God want you—or your church—to do?

Probably the most difficult challenge for cross-cultural workers is to find ways to work within Russia for the long term.

The first answer is to imagine you are on a relay team running a marathon. Each member of the team has a part to play, but it might be seasonal and our roles may change over time. Most of us will hold the baton for a short while, but we have to pass it along for a variety of reasons, and we may have to wait months or years to carry it again. Ministry to Muslims in Russia is like a Caucasian dance: we partner-up for a bit, then dance out again, while others have a turn in the circle. Though on the sidelines, we still clap, we hear the music, and we are still part of the dance!



When it comes to the Caucasus, most missionaries would suggest that before you do anything, you get as cozy to the Living God as you possibly can. Then you re-define short-term to mean years, rather than months. Then you pray for the greatest measure of perseverance the Lord will give you. After that, a worker does well to learn Russian language and culture, Caucasian cultures, and Islam in non-Arabic forms. It would be irresponsible to oversimplify what it takes to minister in this part of the world, yet God equips those who are willing, even if it takes 5-10 years to do so!

Ministry to Muslims in Russia is like a Caucasian dance.

More specifically, the serious inquirer can connect with a number of mission agencies who are now engaging work in the Caucasus. Prayer networks exist in North

America, Europe and South Korea. Partnership forums exist, and a North American network for the Caucasus is emerging. The great news is that no one has to start from zero anymore! You can join existing work, or learn from others to gain insight for new work.

The dance goes on, and the peoples of the Caucasus are overlooked no longer!

Few agencies and churches make public their specific connections and work in the Caucasus. However, following a screening process, friends at the following E-mail contacts are willing to assist you:

IDRACA@Telus.net
 NCPP@XC.org
 Ncaucasus@ywamsfi.org

For Further Reading

To fall in love with the peoples of the Caucasus (in Russia, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan), here are some resources to help you:

- *National Geographic*, February 1996, Volume 189, Number 2.

Article on "The Fractured Caucasus" (about conflicts in Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Georgia and Armenia). Article includes a political map and a language map of the region.

- *Highlanders: A Journey to the Caucasus in Quest of Memory*, Yo' Av Karny (ISBN 0374528128).
- Excellent bibliography concerning Caucasus history and ethnolinguistic detail:

<http://www.geocities.com/eureka/enterprises/2493/circbibliog.html>

Helen Bruce (a pen name) has been active within the Caucasus mission community since 1997, when she exchanged her military officer commission for God's Great Commission. She finds her military service and bachelor's degree in biochemistry to be a great foundation for mission family life and making play-dough. With young children, Helen dances between life roles as wife, Mum, kitchen chemist, pray-er, host, friend, writer and consultant, while her husband dances his life roles and engages in full-time, collaborative mission work on behalf of the Caucasus.

Peacemaking

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**Part 3:
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A neglected key to church life and church planting.

Rick Love

I have had the privilege of studying under some of the best theologians and missiologists in America. I learned many valuable lessons about hermeneutics, biblical theology, strategy, culture and contextualization. Yet no one prepared me for peacemaking. This was something I had to learn the hard way—on the job. It has been the most difficult lesson I have learned about church life and church planting.

Peacemaking is one of the neglected keys to church life and church planting.

This study has emerged in the context of learning how to become a peacemaker during the past 25 years. I frequently find myself in the midst of peacemaking, but I have to admit I don't like it. Peacemaking is hard work; it's draining. But I do it because peacemaking is love in action. The Bible defines love as obedience to Christ's commands (John 15:9-10; 1 John 2:5, 5:3; 2 John 6). In other words, the most loving thing I can do for others is to obey what Christ has taught about peacemaking.

People often ask me how to apply these peacemaking principles in another culture. My answer: true biblical peacemaking does not fit any culture. While every culture values certain aspects of peacemaking, generally peacemaking is "counter-cultural." This is a heavenly message that rubs against the rough edges of earthly cultures.

I have written this as a study guide that can be used for small group Bible studies or individual interaction with the Bible's teaching on this subject. As you wrestle with the text, I pray this guide will help you develop your own convictions about these urgent issues. The best peacemakers are those who have biblical convictions about Christ's approach to right relationships. Because of this, they are willing to do whatever the Bible teaches about promoting peace in the church—for the glory of God! 🌐

Dr. Rick Love is the International Director of Frontiers, an agency devoted to representing Jesus faithfully to Muslim peoples. The above is taken from the preface to Peacemaking, a book published by William Carey Library and described further on page 20.

Discovering the Wandering Jesus in Central Asia

The following is adapted from a presentation by "RH" at the Frontier Fellowship meeting at the U.S. Center for World Mission on April 15, soon after Easter.

I've been in Kyrgyzstan for ten years. Before going, I felt the Lord said to me, "Learn from these people." In the 1980s I had been very encouraged by Don Richardson and his book *Eternity In Their Hearts*, which set my mind in a different direction. I really believe that in the genetic code of every nation is Christ, and people cannot get away from him. No matter what tribe they are in, no matter what nation they are in, no matter what religion they hold, they cannot get away from Jesus. They keep burying him, and what does he do? He keeps rising. He's been buried once, and he's risen once, but I believe that every culture, every generation, every era in a sense tries to bury him, and he just keeps popping up again – popping up out

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of bogus graves and bogus lies and accusations. He just keeps coming back.

The Kyrgyz have in their culture a kind of Melchizedek figure, called the Wanderer. He's mentioned in Sura 18 of the Qur'an, talking to Moses. He's a traditional character who's existed in the DNA of the Kyrgyz culture from the onset, and one of the first things I heard about this Wanderer is that he has a hole in his hand.

One of the next things I heard about him is that he goes around incognito from village to village blessing people, and if you'll greet him well you'll get your

blessing, but if you don't greet him well you will lose your happiness. This belief has really infected the Kyrgyz in a good way and encouraged their remarkable hospitality.

The Wanderer is said to have a holy number of seven. He often comes riding into town on a donkey. Often after he gives his blessing he disappears; if you greet him, and you recognize that it's him, you should hold on to him and not release him until

you get his blessing. Often in sharing Scripture with Kyrgyz, I read aloud Genesis 32, where Jacob wrestles with God or an angel or a man (it's ambiguous) and where Jacob realizes that this is someone who could bless him and so (just like the Kyrgyz) he holds on to the angel until he gets the blessing. The Kyrgyz say when you shake his hand and you feel the hole in his hand, you're supposed to hold on to him until you get his blessing.

I read Genesis 32 to people, and by the time I read Genesis 18, 28 and 32 a Kyrgyz is hooked on the Bible because it so relates to their culture. The supposedly "Russian, Western, American" book all of a sudden feels like their own book. It's very, very exciting.

And I believe part of this has come simply because the Lord asked me to learn from the people – listen to their issues and to their stories before I started to open my mouth. I believe Jesus our Lord is right in the very DNA of their culture, of every culture, because we have been created for him, through him and by him. Jesus reigns, and there's no way you can keep him down in any culture, or religion, or nation, or era, or generation.

So then, I just show these passages in the Old Testament and a number of other passages that don't mention Jesus' name, and then I often go to Luke 19,



Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. There is no other prophet than Jesus in Islamic culture or Kyrgyz culture who rides a donkey and who weeps. Luke 19 is a very, very influential passage in Central Asia; Jesus comes into Jerusalem and says, "You did not know the time of your visitation." Jerusalem did not receive Jesus, and Jerusalem lost its happiness. This is exactly what the Kyrgyz say about the Wanderer: if you receive him you will be blessed, and if you don't receive him you will lose your happiness.

Also, the Kyrgyz often say, before someone goes travelling, "May your road be unobstructed, may your road partner be the Wanderer." This is wonderfully similar to Luke 24, where Jesus walks on the road to Emmaus. Jesus comes alongside the two men, he's incognito, they don't recognize him, but their hearts burn within them. Like a Kyrgyz, Jesus looks like he'll keep going, not assuming he is invited to stay. But the two disciples invite him to stay. Like a Kyrgyz, Jesus tears the bread, and like the Kyrgyz legends, their eyes are opened and they realize who it is, and then Jesus disappears, all just "by the book," which is so exciting.

My favorite story, the way I love to end when I am sharing about the Wanderer, is from John 20, where Thomas says, "I will not believe until I put my finger in the holes in his hand, in his hand and his side." Jesus appears and says, "Thomas, come; don't doubt, believe, put your fingers into my hand and in my side." The very identifying mark of the Wanderer in Kyrgyz culture, the hole or the soft spot in the hand, is the very thing that Jesus uses to prove his identity to Thomas. It's really powerful and exciting.

Don Richardson was brilliant in bringing out redemptive analogies in different cultures around the world. In the Kyrgyz culture there are hundreds of these analogies, and the Wanderer is one of the more powerful. 🌐

"RH," a native of the Los Angeles area, is a writer living among the Kyrgyz of Kyrgyzstan.

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A314

BRIDGES IN BAGHDAD (Circa 814)

Ties Between Nestorian Christians and 'Abbasid Muslims

Samuel Moffett

Excerpted by permission from Samuel Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia, Volume 1: Beginnings to 1500*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998, pp. 348-354.

Editor's note:

Comparing the cities of the world in 814, the Times Atlas of World History notes, "The most astonishing phenomenon was the stupendous growth of Baghdad, which ... by 814 covered an area of approximately 10 by 9 km, the equivalent of modern Paris within the outer boulevards. The West had still a long way to go before it caught up By 814 [Baghdad] was probably the world's largest city." Within this context, between 750 and 850, Nestorian Christians served under the early 'Abbasid empire of Islam, as described below by mission scholar Samuel Moffett.

The 'Abbasids ruled Islam in Asia for the next half a millennium, from 750 to 850 as "the most celebrated and longest-lived dynasty in Islam...." They claimed to be more strictly orthodox than their predecessors and proved to be more aggressively Muslim in the treatment of religious minorities than the practical-minded Umayyads....

**The truth must be taken
wherever it is to be
found, whether it be
in the past or among
strange peoples.**

– *al-Kindi, Baghdad, 801-873*

The new dynasty moved the center of government out of Syria, which had been the power base of the Umayyads, eastward into Iraq (Mesopotamia) and in 762 its second caliph, Mansur (754-775), built a magnificent new capital at Baghdad some twenty miles upstream from the ancient Persian capital of Seleucia-Ctesiphon on the Tigris, which he plundered for its brick and marble. He chose the site not only for its military advantage but also, as he said, "because it will put us in touch with lands as far as China"....

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The emphasis on true religion did not at first worsen the treatment of Christians in the empire or further exacerbate friction between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims. The third caliph, Mahdi, opened his rule with a determined effort to appease the Iranian Shi'ite opponents of Baghdad orthodoxy, and in an unusually irenic gesture toward Christians staged a famous debate that brought him face to face with the Nestorian patriarch Timothy I (779-823)....

Timothy I (779-823, or 778-821), who came from Adiabene, the ancient seat of the earliest Persian Christians, was the greatest of all the patriarchs who served under the caliphate. The year of the debate, probably 781, was also the year that saw the erection of the Nestorian monument in China and so may well mark not only a peak in intercommunication between Islam and Christianity, but also the height of Nestorian influence in the second half of the first Christian millennium in Asia's two greatest empires, 'Abbasid Arabia and T'ang China....

[Timothy] was also a strongly missionary-minded patriarch, not content simply to teach and defend the faith but eager to expand it. He appointed a bishop for Yemen at its old capital, San'a, despite earlier Muslim precedents of stringent prohibition of Christianity among



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Arabs. He prayed openly before a Muslim caliph, as we have seen, that Christians might share “the pearl” of the gospel with Muslims, adding with evangelistic directness, “God has placed the pearl of His face before all of us like the shining rays of the sun, and everyone who wishes can enjoy the light of the sun”

His patriarchate coincided with the great age of Muslim intellectual ferment and inquiry that P.K. Hitti calls “the epoch of translation” (ca. 750-850), a time when Islamic thinkers were first discovering the world of Greek science and philosophy and the church in the West was in the process of forgetting it. One of the greatest contributions of the Asian church to the history of human thought was its key role in transmitting to the Arab empire the heritage of the Greek classics and, through the Arabs, preserving them for rediscovery and transformation of the West in the Renaissance and Reformation.

Arabian education remained in debt to the scholars of the Christian *dhimmis* [religious enclaves] all through the first hundred years of the 'Abbasid dynasty. One of the reasons Caliph Mahdi welcomed Timothy to debate was undoubtedly because Timothy was a zealous patron of education, familiar with Aristotle and well versed in Greek and Syriac texts. “Remember that the school is the mother and nurse of the sons of the church,” he once wrote.

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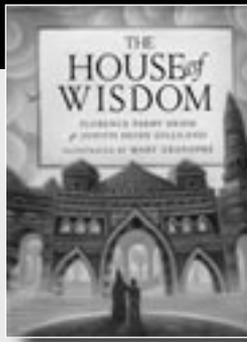
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Thanks in large part to pioneering Christian translators, the Arabs, who hitherto had been little schooled but were possessed of quick and inquiring minds, were propelled into an intellectual revolution. As Hitti puts it, “In only a few decades Arab scholars assimilated what had taken the Greeks centuries to develop.” Some astronomical and mathematical works were brought to Baghdad by travelers from India but the earliest and by far the most important source was classical Greece communicated through Christian Greece to Christian Syrians and Persians and passed on by them to the Arabs. 🌐

To help children understand related topics ...



- Read *The House of Wisdom*, by Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland, New York: DK Publishing Inc., 1999. The House of Wisdom is *Bayt al-Hikmah*, the famous learning institution, library, and translation bureau that drew scholars from many traditions to ninth-century Baghdad.
- Utilize “Abbasid Baghdad: Intellectual Capital of the World,” part of the “Iraq in the Classroom – from Mesopotamia to Modernity” curriculum guide offered by Mercy Corps on the Internet at mercycorps.org/pdfs/1082069429.pdf.



Learning from a Parable

Greg H. Parsons



(Also consider whether you should get a copy of the first four years of *MF* coming out in a bound volume soon—there are additional articles of interest beyond this one. See the box below for more details.)

A Parable?

From *Mission Frontiers* Vol. 1:3 pages 3,7, March-April 1979. (Part 1 of 2).

The following story illustrates the need for a strategic approach to cross-cultural missions. My name is Osaku. I grew up in a rural Japanese town in the 1940s. My family embraced Shintoism as a religion and I felt at an early age the compulsion to share its truths with the rest of the world's peoples.

If I had been asked to choose a particular country in which to spread the news of my religion, I probably would have responded with...Korea, China, or even India. But just a few short years after my uncles and aunts were destroyed by an American B-29 bomber, I was divinely guided to consider the place I abhor the most on this Earth...the United States.

What a confusing place! My father visited there once. He told me that the people were very closed to outsiders with different religions. He said they would talk to you occasionally, but for the most part they claimed allegiance to Jesus Christ. This was a martyr who lived about 2000 years ago. My father told them that we accepted Jesus too, in our respect for great men. But for some reason they said it wasn't the same. It was hard to understand what they meant. Why couldn't they just revere Jesus and look into our religion too?

The funny thing was, most of them couldn't explain very well the details of what they believed. They just said, "This is what I believe and that's that!" This is somewhat the way the Muslims are...as well as many Hindus. They don't know exactly what they believe but they defend the religion from a standpoint of pride. This makes those Americans very hard to penetrate. You can't reason with them. They don't practice their religion in depth but mostly go through rituals which are almost impossible to break.

(to be continued in the November-December *Mission Frontiers* – contact greg.parsons@uscwm.org for responses) 

The USCWM was founded in 1976, and the first issue of *Mission Frontiers* was published in 1979. I've been reviewing the early issues of *Mission Frontiers* and came across an interesting parable, the first part of which is reproduced below. This parable reflects one of the USCWM's main activities in those days: mobilization. But it also points out the essence of the problem of communicating the gospel: cultural difference.

What elements of ministry do you see in this parable?

So it talks about strategy and training, too—the two other major foci of the USCWM, then and now.

I'll include the first half of the parable in this issue, and plan to finish it in the next issue. As you read, ask the Lord how you might apply the parable to your own life and ministry. What elements of mobilization, training, strategy, evangelical approaches to evangelism, short-term mission, etc. do you see in this? If you have some reflections, or your own parable to suggest, send it to me at greg.parsons@uscwm.org.

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Jim Montgomery,
Chairman, Founder, Dawn Ministries

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Rev. Greg Parsons is General Director of the U.S. Center for World Mission. He's been on staff at the USCWM for 20 years.