

Let the mountains
SING



P R A Y E R S

FOR THE PEOPLES
OF THE CAUCASUS





EVERY MORNING, the sun rises over the rugged Caucasus Mountains and casts its warm glow on more than 2,000 villages found between the Black and Caspian Seas.

The Caucasus Mountains are largely unknown to the praying world; yet within these vast and beautiful mountains, some of the earth's most unreachable peoples live in oppressive spiritual darkness.

Today, 45 distinct languages exist among the peoples of the Caucasus. Suspicious of outsiders, resistant to change, speaking some of the world's most complex languages and shaped by war and conflict, the fiercely independent peoples of the Caucasus are — from a human perspective —

A DAUNTING CHALLENGE
TO THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.





For centuries, the Caucasus Mountains have hosted epic conquerors, power struggles, war and triumph. In Greek mythology, fire was created in the Caucasus. Prometheus was chained in its mountains. Arabs, Byzantines, Mongols, Persians, Tatars, Turks, Russians and Nazis have each tried to conquer and control the lands around the Caucasus.

The many people of the Caucasus are resilient, holding fast to ancient traditions as they raise their families and support their communities. Every day, men and women go about their work — work which is quickly set aside for the greater worth of a neighborly visit or guest's arrival. They honor guests and deeply value friendship. With a love of music, they celebrate traditional events by dancing long into the night.

Each rising sun carries the grace of another day for the Caucasus — a day filled with hope and opportunity. As God carries out His redemptive plan, each tongue in the Caucasus will return to its creation purpose — singing the praises of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Despite the challenges, the people of the mountains will indeed one day sing Christ's praises.

ENTER INTO **GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PLAN** FOR THE CAUCASUS BY PRAYING FOR THE PEOPLE BETWEEN THE SEAS.

CIRCASSIAN

The Circassians historically include 12 ancient tribes. The largest tribe remaining today is the Kabardian people. After surviving mass deportations and wars over centuries, Kabardians still proudly live by their ancestors' values. Known for their hospitality, horses and orchards, Kabardians exemplify the life and culture of the Caucasus. Kabardians place the needs of their friends above their own and generously share their belongings with others.

WEEK 1

1

Pray for *Amina*,* who delivers eggs, buttermilk and fried bread. Pray that God will give her interactions with believers and a deeper understanding of faith in Jesus.

2

Pray for *Madina*,* a divorced mother of four children. As she struggles to raise her children in a culture that shames divorce, pray that in Christ she will find freedom from shame.

3

Pray for believers in the major Circassian cities to be faithful and bold. Pray that God will transform these cities through the proclamation and power of the gospel.

4

Pray for God to work among the Circassian diaspora, stirring longing and giving faith to many men and women.

5

Pray that *Sam*,* one of the few Circassian believers in Jordan, will grow in faithful obedience and that God will use Him to bring many to faith in Christ.

6

Pray for *Hope** as she shares the gospel boldly with those she meets in her diaspora city. Pray that God will bear much fruit in the kingdom among her people.

7

Pray that many Circassian families will experience new life in Christ and bear the fruit of the Spirit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness and self-control.

TURKIC AND OSSETIAN

Unique among the Caucasus peoples, a majority of Ossetians have staunchly retained their identity as Eastern Orthodox Christians while continuing to blend pagan rituals into their practices. They also maintain their own Indo-Iranian language, distinct from the 45 other Caucasus languages. Today there are 25 to 30 evangelical congregations in North Ossetia. Turkic peoples, however — including Karachai, Balkar and Meskhetian Turks — maintain loyalty to their ethnic and Islamic traditions.

*Vadimir's** life was such a mess that his Muslim community told him, "God doesn't need you. The devil needs you." Yet God relentlessly pursued him. Now a follower of Christ, Vadimir looks back on his turbulent past and testifies about God, "He is good — very gentle."

REJOICE, HEAVENS, FOR THE LORD HAS ACTED SHOUT, DEPTHS OF THE EARTH.

Break out into singing,

MOUNTAINS, FOREST, AND EVERY TREE IN IT.

FOR THE LORD HAS REDEEMED JACOB,

AND GLORIFIES HIMSELF THROUGH ISRAEL.

—ISAIAH 44:23, HCSB

* Name changed

WEEK 2

1

Pray that God will bring unity among believers within the Turkic people groups in the Caucasus — Balkar, Karachai, Kumyk, Nogai and Meskhetian Turks.

2

Pray that many Turkic men and women will respond in biblical faith to the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

3

Pray that Turkic families will turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.

4

Pray that the gospel will rapidly spread among Turkic villages as men and women believe the truth with joy.

5

Pray for God to bring spiritual awakening among the leaders of Ossetian clans.

6

Pray for believing clan elders to lead their families in repentance from pagan practices, dead religion and vengeance cycles.

7

Pray that God through His gospel will set entire clans free from the centuries-old practices of pagan spirit worship and animal sacrifices.

VAINAKH

The Vainakh people — Chechen, Ingush, Akkin, Bats and Kist — are known for their strength, resilience and love of homeland.

“We feel a sense of home here,” one Vainakh man explained after living away from his homeland for many years and finally moving back to Chechnya. This strong sense of identity pulses through the Vainakh people. Chechens proudly refer to themselves as “the people of Noah,” believing their traditions and culture go back to the time of the flood.

Ingushetia is the poorest of Russia’s 85 federal subjects.

*Belita,** remembers the day many years ago when Russian soldiers arrived in her village and arrested her husband. She never saw him again. Her daughter, eight years old at the time, “was such a daddy’s girl,” Belita recalls. Her daughter and other children like her are now in their 20s. Memories of war shape them as they keep alive their fathers’ longing for freedom.

** Name changed*

DAGESTANI

The region of Dagestan, largely unknown to the west, was once considered the edge of the world. As such, those who were on the run found a home within the shelter of its mountains. Over thirty distinct people groups — and even more unique dialects — exist within a region the size of West Virginia. Over the centuries, this complex history and geography has bred a warrior-mentality and intense distrust of outsiders in Dagestan. Famous for their pride and courage, Dagestani men represent their region internationally among Olympic medalists in wrestling and mixed martial arts sports.

“There is salvation in no one else,
FOR THERE IS NO OTHER NAME
UNDER HEAVEN GIVEN TO PEOPLE,
AND WE MUST BE SAVED BY IT.”

—ACTS 4:12, HCSB

WEEK 3

1

Vainakh children are reared to be tough, proud and resilient in the face of violence. Pray for God’s protection over the children and youth. Pray that God will mercifully give them peace through Christ.

2

Pray for the diaspora believers among the Vainakh. Pray that they will hunger and thirst for righteousness, grow in obedience and find other believers with whom to gather and worship.

3

Pray that elder men in Vainakh families will hear, understand and believe the gospel. Pray that their families will follow in faith and repentance.

4

The strength of the people are also visible in their pride and stubbornness. Pray that God will bring salvation and transform these defining qualities into a tenacity to exalt Christ forever.

5

Pray that men and women will come to comprehend biblical forgiveness and strength that comes through weakness.

6

Pray that as God opens hearts to the gospel, He will raise up many men and woman to be heralds of righteousness among their own people.

7

*Mustafa** is an Ingush believer, father of five, and the only believer in the entire republic of Ingushetia. Pray that God will raise up more believers to encourage him.

1

Dagestanis revere Imam Shamil, a hero known for taking the punishment of another upon himself. Pray they will understand the sacrifice of One who bore punishment for their sin.

2

Unlike other Caucasus peoples, a Dagestani’s pride would prevent him from accepting a menial job. Pray that God will transform Dagestani pride into a bold love of the gospel of Christ.

3

Many Dagestani diaspora peoples live in a gateway city near Dagestan. Pray for gospel breakthroughs among the Lezgi, Dargin, and Avar who live in this city.

4

Pray that God will raise up Dagestani diaspora believers who will return to their home villages and make disciples.

5

Pray for Kazakh believers who have a desire to reach Dagestanis with the gospel. Pray that God will open many doors for them to build relationships and share the truth of Christ.

6

Pray that Dagestani men will be so radically changed by the gospel that they will be known as blessed peacemakers and sons of God.

7

Pray that Dagestani believers will have courage in suffering, knowing that Christ conquered death through the cross.

WEEK 4

“AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD,
EVERY KNEE WILL BOW TO ME,
and every tongue
WILL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.”
—ROMANS 14:11, HCSB

MOUNTAIN OF LANGUAGES

Now thousands of years after the curse of Babel, the Caucasus Mountains maintain a disorder of languages — in quantity as well as difficulty. The Roman historian Pliny the Elder reported that it took 80 interpreters to carry on business in the Caucasus. Centuries later, Arab geographers labeled the region “the mountain of languages.” The Tabasaran language is considered to be among the most complex language systems on earth with its 66 consonants, 8 vowels and 48 noun cases. Within this treasury of Caucasus languages, some have dozens of varieties that are more different from each other than English is from French.

WEEK 5

1

Pray that every tongue will proclaim God’s righteousness and praise all day long.

2

Pray that the mouths of many righteous men and women will utter wisdom and speak what is just.

3

Pray that many Caucasus men and women will have a broken and contrite heart that leads to a mouth that declares the praise of God’s forgiveness.

4

Pray that entire families will shout for joy together because God has redeemed them through Christ.

5

Pray that among a culture of “piercing swords,” Caucasus believers will be known for tongues that bring healing.

6

Pray that God will redeem and transform many Caucasus women to open their mouths and provide wisdom and loving instruction.

7

Pray that every tongue in the Caucasus will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

STABILITY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

From village to village, varying levels of corruption and political instability permeate the Caucasus peoples. Some villages are nearly impenetrable. One region, inhabited by the “eagle people,” is so remote and politically sensitive that any visitor — even another Russian — must obtain preauthorization from the Special Forces and approval of every piece of luggage 90 days prior to entry into the region. Once approved, the visitor must drive for hours up into the mountains and past several checkpoints until arriving at a fortress-like military facility equipped with tanks. Even at that point, permission to enter is not guaranteed.

“There will be times of security for you
— A STOREHOUSE OF SALVATION,
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE.
THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS ZION’S TREASURE.”
—ISAIAH 33:6, HSCB

WEEK 6

1

You will find no region in Russia as corrupt as the Caucasus. Pray that among those who demand bribes, enact revenge and steal, God will open eyes to see their need of repentance.

2

Political instability has shaped each generation of Caucasus men and women for centuries. Pray that God will give those in political power a desire for peace.

3

Violence permeates many homes and marriages. Pray that God will open many hearts to see the beauty of a gospel that is incarnated in husbands who love their wives as Christ loves the church.

4

Pray that God will give a hunger and a thirst for righteousness to the political leaders who make decisions related to the peoples of the Caucasus.

5

Pray that the Caucasus families will come to understand a love that finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth.

6

Pray that God will bring the people of the Caucasus the righteousness that comes through Christ — a righteousness that brings peace and quiet confidence forever.

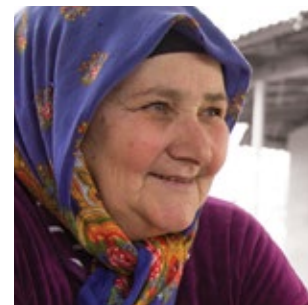
7

Pray that Caucasus believers will be deeply committed to what is good and know that they are blessed even if they suffer for righteousness.

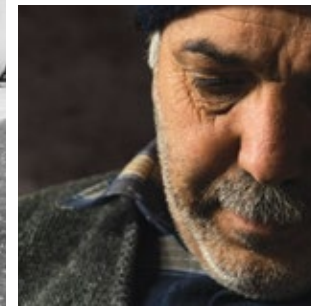


IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I would like to thank my Lord Jesus because while I am still a sinner, he gave his life on the cross to give me new life, to heal me with his blood. I WAS A LOST SHEEP. He looked for me many years until He found me."
~ Hope,* Circassian believer



"THEY ARE A FEARLESS PEOPLE."
~ Dagestani man describing his own people



"I'M THE ONLY MAN IN MY FAMILY WHO HASN'T KILLED A MAN WITH MY BARE HANDS."
~ Dagestani father



*"What I found was summed up in one simple name—**JESUS.** In Him, the holy Lamb of God, my tormenting thirst for genuine love, purity and holiness could at last be satisfied."*
~ Shaadia,* a believer



**Names changed. Photos do not represent individuals quoted above.*

“YOU ARE NO LONGER FOREIGNERS AND STRANGERS,
BUT FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS,
and members of God’s household,
BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION
OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS,
WITH CHRIST JESUS HIMSELF AS THE CORNERSTONE.”
—EPHESIANS 2:19-20, HSCB

NO LONGER STRANGERS

Caucasus peoples maintain an intense control over their own people as well as a suspicion of outsiders. Informal village security men who spot an unknown car driving past their village may force the car to stop. “Who are you? Why are you in our village?” they demand of the strangers.

Despite the initial reserve towards outsiders, once bonds of friendship are established, they are powerful. By sleeping under the protection of a Caucasus host, a guest enters a relationship of *kunakh*, a lasting bond of friendship, protection and loyalty.

WEEK 7

1

When Caucasus peoples receive an outsider into their inner circle they give themselves as deeply loyal and sacrificial friends. Pray that God will bring about many deep friendships with believers.

2

Each village has its own law and code of life. Pray that God will bring the law of grace into each village, uniting strangers under the gospel.

3

Marriage outside the village group is frowned upon and many marriages within the village are arranged. Pray that God will open their eyes to His love in Christ.

4

Friendship is of more value than money in the Caucasus. Pray that God will open many hearts to see the friendship with God available through Christ.

5

Pray that God will build churches in the Caucasus filled with men and women who show familial affection to each other, outdoing one another in honor.

6

Control over others is common in the Caucasus. Pray that God will bring many to submit to the control of the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ.

7

Pray for believers who struggle under oppressive family environments. Pray for God to help and sustain them to persevere in faithfulness.

1

In the past decade, an increasing number of young people have turned toward radical, violent Islamic reform movements. Pray that God will mercifully soften hard hearts.

2

Pray that men and women who long for their sins to be forgiven will come to understand God’s vast love that made a way for forgiveness of sin through Christ.

3

Respect for the older generation is a high Caucasus priority. Pray that God will work among the respected village elders to see and believe Jesus as Savior.

4

The primary social unit in a village is the *tookhoom*, a group of up to 15 family units organized with unique social obligations. Pray that God will build churches among the *tookhooms* of the Caucasus.

5

Pray that many in the Caucasus will understand Christ as the supreme host who gave His own life so that sinners could feast at His table.

6

The Lezginka is a traditional Caucasus dance that showcases the strength of the man and the femininity of the woman. Pray that men and women will come to comprehend God’s design and purpose.

7

Each people group proudly maintains their distinctive traditional artistry and music. Pray that many from each people group will one day sing and dance before the throne of God.

WEEK 8

POWERFUL TRADITIONS

As the western world reaches forward to grasp each new trend, the peoples of the Caucasus cling tightly to the past, letting ancient traditions continue to shape their lives. Patriarchal authority permeates Caucasus society. After putting off marriage for several years, *Ayub** woke up one day to an older relative standing over him. “Get up. We’ve married you,” the man said. Putting on his clothes, Ayub followed the man out the door and to the wedding prepared for him. “I couldn’t say no,” Ayub said about his arranged marriage.

Islam is the strongest tradition of the Caucasus peoples. Some regions of the Caucasus have been under Muslim control since the seventh century. Islam arrived in Derbent, Dagestan in 642, only ten years after Muhammed’s death. In the past decade mosques have been rebuilt in many villages throughout the region. Ask God to break down the strongholds of Islam among the Caucasus and bring many to salvation through Christ.

BORN AGAIN

Andy,* a Circassian man living in Jordan, walked into the smoked-filled pool hall. The other men in the room looked up from the tables and shouted to him “Congratulations!” He had just returned from the Umrah, a lesser pilgrimage to Mecca that takes place at a time other than the Hajj. Andy beamed with pride as he proclaimed that his visit to Mecca was like a born again experience. Pray that Circassians like Andy, would learn what it truly means to be born again.

*Name changed

WEEK 9

1

Pray that many will be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an imperishable inheritance.

2

Pray that God will use dreams to drive men and women toward understanding Christ as the Savior and promised Messiah.

3

Pray that God will build biblical Christ-exalting churches in villages across the mountains of the Caucasus.

4

*Aminat** has heard the gospel many times yet has no desire to change. Pray that she and others like her will understand that sin brings death and only Christ can bring new life.

5

There is a remarkable absence of grace and forgiveness in the Caucasus. Pray that God will open many eyes to see the beauty of forgiveness through Christ.

6

Pray that in diaspora countries, God will bring about a rapid multiplication of churches that will continue into the Caucasus heartland.

7

Pray that God will encourage the households and communities of Caucasus believers who live in a desert of fellowship.

1

Pray that God will bring His Word to each language of the Caucasus.

2

Some Caucasus languages have no word for “forgiveness.” Pray that God will protect the gospel meaning in the difficult work of translation.

3

Many Bible translators are unbelievers. Pray that God will open the eyes of their hearts as they intently study the Word of God.

4

Satan is eager to hinder translation of God’s Word. Translation work in one language was delayed after the translation was lost. Pray for God to physically protect each stage of translation work.

5

Pray for the completion of evangelistic audio and video material in Caucasus languages. Pray that God’s Word will bear fruit as it goes out in even the briefest forms.

6

Finding able and willing translators is a difficult and challenging task. Pray that God will raise up translators and editors who will work with skill and integrity.

7

Some translators of North Caucasus languages receive physical threats because of their work. Pray that God will protect them from danger and sustain them through this task.

WEEK 10

“For the word of God is living and effective

AND SHARPER THAN ANY DOUBLE-EDGED

SWORD, PENETRATING AS FAR AS THE

SEPARATION OF SOUL AND SPIRIT,

JOINTS AND MARROW.”

—HEBREWS 4:12, HCSB

WORD OF GOD

*Alex** is a Balkar man who became a believer after Stalin exiled his people to a Central Asian country in the 1944. He returned to his homeland in the Caucasus and lived as the only known Balkar believer for over thirty years. During that period, he began translating the Scripture from the Russian language into his mother tongue. Twenty years later, he had completed translations of the New Testament and several Old Testament books. There are now 37 known Balkar believers. Many Caucasus languages do not have any Scripture or gospel material in their own language.

*Name changed



BELIEVERS AND CHURCHES

As a violent young man in a desperate, drunken stupor, *Nikolay** cried out to the Most High, “which is the way that is true?” Believers shared the gospel of Jesus with Nikolay and in time, God answered all of the critical questions in his mind. “I vowed at that point,” he said, “to be faithful to this living God for the rest of my life. I was going to serve him, and I was going to bring people into the kingdom.”

Mustafa,* father of five, is the only believer in his republic. As the youngest son in his family, he holds little authority in his community. His older brother is an Islamic teacher and has begun studying the Scripture. Pray for God to save the households of Caucasus believers.

PARTNERSHIPS

The challenges in the Caucasus are immense and the work is slow. Gospel-believing Russians must address the centuries-old attitude of hostility that exists between themselves and their Caucasus neighbors. Nearby Central Asian countries have begun sending believers into the Caucasus to proclaim Christ in the darkness. A growing number of North American churches have chosen a people group as a long-term prayer commitment. God’s work in the Caucasus is indeed a global work of partnership. Ask the Lord to draw believers from around the world together in unity to reach the peoples of the Caucasus with the gospel of grace.

“I GIVE THANKS TO MY GOD FOR EVERY REMEMBRANCE OF YOU ... *because of your partnership in the gospel* FROM THE FIRST DAY UNTIL NOW.” —PHILIPPIANS 1:3-5, HCSB

“NOW THE GOD OF ALL GRACE, *who called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus*, WILL PERSONALLY RESTORE, ESTABLISH, STRENGTHEN, AND SUPPORT YOU AFTER YOU HAVE SUFFERED A LITTLE. THE DOMINION BELONGS TO HIM FOREVER.” —1 PETER 5:10-11, HSCB

WEEK 11

WEEK 12

1

Pray that God will protect Caucasus believers from the enemy, the world and fleshly entrapments.

2

In a culture that does not cherish women, Caucasus men face a radical life change after they believe. Pray that believing men will love their wives as Christ loves His church.

3

Pray for believers who have been rejected and persecuted by their families. Pray that God will comfort them with His presence, strengthen them and deliver them from evil.

4

Pray that God will bring a sweet spirit of unity and trust among believers from different ethnicities within the Caucasus, showing evidence that they have passed from death to life.

5

Pray that Caucasus believers will hunger and thirst for the Word of God, accepting it as the new authority over their life.

6

Pray that God will provide encouragement and employment to believers who struggle to provide for their families.

7

Pray for Christian leaders to emerge within the local church with His vision for reaching their own people with the good news.

1

Pray that the Russian church will develop a heart of compassion for the people of the Caucasus.

2

Pray that Russian speakers will desire to go to difficult places in the Caucasus to build friendships and proclaim the truth of the gospel.

3

Pray that God will raise up — from near-culture countries — the right people at the right time to work among Caucasus peoples.

4

Vlad,* a Russian Baptist, assists two groups of Caucasus Muslim men who are studying the Bible. Pray for *Vlad* to effectively teach obedience to the Gospel.

5

Pray that God will burden many churches in the United States to pray for the peoples of the Caucasus.

6

Pray that God will raise up gospel-focused, mature ministries to reach out to diaspora and displaced peoples of the Caucasus.

7

Pray that the Russian and European church will grow in maturity and in fellowship with Caucasus believers from Muslim backgrounds.

HAS SOMEONE BEEN PRAYING?

Translation work on the Gospel of Luke was not going well for one Caucasus language. The entire manuscript was lost and the translators were ready to quit.

But surprisingly, the project came together and the translators completed the project. Amazed, an employee at the Institute for Bible Translation asked, "Has someone been praying for [these] people?"

Thousands of miles away, a small, country church in the Midwestern United States — filled with people who have never travelled overseas — had made a commitment to pray for this Caucasus people group. They prayed specifically for the translation work on the Gospel of Luke.

*Sally,** the pastor's wife, recognizes that their prayer commitment has not ended. She and the others in the prayer group now pray for the development of an oral version of the Gospel of Luke. She likens their commitment to a mother's prayers for her children.

"It's not an overnight prayer," she explains.



Kabardian. Lezgi. Adyghe. Just pronouncing the names of Caucasus peoples can be a challenge. How can we possibly understand their lives? How do we go about responding spiritually to such a kaleidoscope of cultures and peoples? But like the Midwestern church, we can make a decision to get involved through prayer.

HERE ARE A FEW WAYS TO BEGIN:

TAKE A PEOPLE GROUP INTO YOUR HEART

Choose a people group mentioned in this guide and begin praying. Use the prayer suggestions in this booklet. Pray Scripture. Pray the gospel.

RESEARCH

Use the Internet and other resources to research your people group. Explore their history, location, culture and traditions. Search current projects at the Institute for Bible Translation in Moscow to see if any Scripture translation projects for the people group are underway <http://ibtrussia.org/en/> Visit imb.org to learn more.

ADVOCATE IN YOUR CHURCH

Become an advocate for the people group in your church. Educate others and encourage them to join you in prayer. Start a regular prayer meeting, and encourage perseverance in prayer when others are ready to give up.



THINK LONG-TERM

Make a ten-year commitment to pray. In a Western culture of instant-gratification, few people will take this challenge seriously. Yet some will. Perhaps you are one of the few who will persevere long term in prayer for the land between the seas. For more information contact, capconnecting@imb.org

We do not know what God will do in 10 years, but we do know what He will do on the final day — He will receive worship from every nation, tribe and tongue. From each language in the Caucasus Mountains voices will unite in fulfilling their creation purpose —

singing the praises of God.





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