

Dear friends,

November 4, 2005

Every few months I want to highlight a group of people that you have probably never heard of. My hope is that it will help focus your heart on the task to which we have been called: reaching those who have little or no access to the life-giving gospel of Christ.

Hazara of Afghanistan

The Hazara people are of Persian decent and primarily inhabit an immense tract of Central Afghanistan consisting of narrow valleys, rugged mountain masses, and turbulent rivers. Their main occupation is farming grain.

Most of the year the Hazara live in villages consisting of 30 to 100 houses. The walls are made of baked mud bricks. Long narrow tree trunks support a flat mud-covered roof. The roofs are covered with mulberries and grapes in autumn; the dried fruit sustains families during the winter. One-third of the villagers follow their herds into the highlands, staying from May to early September. There they live in yurts, circular tent-like dwellings. Recreation consists of storytelling, wrestling, and a game similar to baseball. A favorite sport, similar to polo, involves carrying a goat carcass by competing horsemen to a goal a couple of miles away.

99.97% of the population is Muslim. Only .03% are Christians, and there is only one known church for 2.4 million people.

Their needs

The health of the Hazara is perhaps the worst of any in Afghanistan. Lack of personal cleanliness is common in the yurts. Children often suffer from worms, and more than 50% of the Hazara are estimated to be suffering from or carrying tuberculosis. Illiteracy is high as formal education of one to two years is provided for boys only. Teachings are centered around Islam.

Christian converts are hesitant to meet with other believers for fear that a spy may be present among them. Christians turned in by government informants may face torture and even death unless they renounce their faith in Christ. There is little missions work, and those that are continuing (mainly medical and humanitarian in nature) are doing so under extreme difficulties. There are no official missionaries working among the Hazara. Likewise, **there are neither Scriptures nor Christian broadcasts in their language.**

The only way for these people to hear the gospel at this time is through the Hazaragi version of the "JESUS" film.





Prayer Points for the Hazara

- Pray that the Lord of the harvest will send forth laborers into the fields where the Hazara are located, to help meet their physical needs—Christian teachers and literacy workers who can minister to the Hazara.
- Ask God to protect medical and benevolent workers in Afghanistan.
- Pray that a full-time team of language translators and writers will begin working on Scripture translations for the Hazara.
- Pray for the swift completion of “JESUS for Women” and its rapid translation into Hazaragi.

(Information on the Hazara compiled from Joshua Project and Adopt-a-People Clearinghouse. See www.joshuaproject.net for more.)

Tales from the Front (stories from partnering ministries)

from Marj Crouch a Wycliffe translator working in Ghana, Africa:

When we began translation in Deg, a language of northwestern Ghana, we started with the Gospel of Mark. Having struggled through the complexities of the introduction, we came to some interesting details of what John the Baptist ate and wore. It seems his garment of choice was woven from camel's hair. There are no camels around that area, so I asked if they knew what a camel was. "Oh, yes," I was told, "we call it *tataa*." Great! That made it easy.

It was much later that someone working in another language told me they had the same word referring to an ostrich. Suddenly I had a niggling suspicion. I went back and asked the Deg chief to describe a *tataa* for me. He said it was very tall, very strong, and someone could even ride on it. Then the crucial question: How many legs does it have? "Two," he said in some surprise.

So it was an ostrich instead of a camel! And to make matters worse, the word for hair and feather is the same, so here in our initial draft we had the stern and austere John the Baptist clad in ostrich feathers! No wonder all the people from Jerusalem and the surrounding area came out to see him!

Preparations underway for our move!

We're not ready to go just yet but we're getting close enough now to start preparations. The big news is that we now have a home in Orlando. More correctly, we will have one once it's built. We will be moving into a townhome in a development which is being built on land adjacent to Campus Crusade's headquarters. Our place will be close enough to walk to work in the studios each day. We are very excited! Though we don't know the exact timing, and it is still a few months away, it is starting to feel quite near. We'll give you more details as the time draws closer.

Thanks for your continued prayers for us. Please let us know how we can be praying for you.

In Christ,

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