



North American  
Azerbaijani Network



# 30 Days of Prayer for Azerbaijanis

Dear Prayer Partners,

Thank you for joining us in praying for Azerbaijani people. As you pray, you will learn something about the history, beliefs, and culture of the Azerbaijani people. You will see that they are admirable people with many noble qualities. But like all people, there is much in their culture that needs to be redeemed. They are a people who need Jesus.

We have written stories in such a way that the identity and privacy of believers is protected. So, you can share this prayer guide freely with others.

*Please consider this prayer guide an invitation to join God in what He is doing among Azerbaijani people.* What you are doing will have true impact. And if you are interested in learning about how you, your group, or your church can connect more with ministry to Azerbaijanis, we invite you to contact us and visit our website at [www.azerbaijanipartnership.org](http://www.azerbaijanipartnership.org).

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"Prayer lays hold of God's plan and becomes the link between his will and its accomplishment on earth. Amazing things happen, and we are given the privilege of being the channels of the Holy Spirit's prayer."

*Elisabeth Elliot*

"We have advanced on our knees."

*William Cameron Townsend*



# 30 Days of Prayer for Azerbaijanis

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## Day 1

### *Who are the Azerbaijani People?*

Perhaps you have never heard of the Azerbaijani people. So it may be surprising to learn that there are 40 million of them. For many, the name of this people group is hard to pronounce. It's even harder to find Azerbaijan on a map.

They are a [Turkic people](#), which means that their language has similar origins to languages like Turkish in Turkey, and Uzbek, Kazakh, Turkmen and Kyrgyz in Central Asia. Azerbaijanis are perhaps the most open of all these peoples to the Gospel.



Situated at the crossroads of East and West, they live in a beautiful region full of contrasts. From majestic mountain ranges to fertile river valleys and coastal plains, the Azerbaijani people have been shaped by the land they live in. They are tenacious and resilient, yet generous and hospitable. Their music and art overflows from their love for their land.

Only about a quarter of the Azerbaijani people actually live in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The highest concentration of them live in Iran. There are also sizable populations of Azerbaijanis in Russia, the republic of Georgia, Iraq, and even Europe and North America.

The Azerbaijanis are a large and significant people group who may hold the key to bringing the Gospel to many of the largest Gospel-resistant nations.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray for God to call many Azerbaijanis to saving faith in Jesus, creating a growing Jesus movement throughout Azerbaijan and Iran.
- Pray that God will raise up intercessors who continually lift up the Azerbaijani people in prayer.
- Pray for more Christian workers who see the need and opportunity for Gospel work, and who will answer the call to go serve among the Azerbaijanis.



## Day 2

### *Ways of the Past*

The word “azerbaijan” in ancient Persian means “land of holy fire.” Among Azerbaijani people, the ways of the past are deeply rooted in their culture.



Before Christianity came in the first century, and Islam came in the seventh century, Azerbaijani people followed the traditional religion of the region, which we call [Zoroastrianism](#).

This traditional religion that is shared with Persian peoples is monotheistic, which would have made Azerbaijanis particularly receptive to the Gospel in the first century. Water and fire are agents of ritual purity. Fire temples can be found throughout Azerbaijan.

When John the Baptist spoke of Jesus coming, he proclaimed:

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to remove his sandals. He himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”  
([Matthew 3:11 CSV](#))

Many of these ancient traditions point to Christ, and give an open door for sharing the Gospel with Azerbaijanis.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that the seeds of true wisdom in the traditional beliefs of Azerbaijani people will point to a loving Creator who has made a way for spiritual purification through repentance and belief in His Son Jesus.
- Pray that people pursue peace and truth through Jesus, so that He becomes their Bread of Life.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will stir the flame of passion within Azerbaijani believers to boldly share about Jesus in their families and communities.

## Day 3

### *To be Azerbaijani is to be Muslim*

A group of Azerbaijani Christians were reading some comments together on social media. “Azerbaijanis will never be Christians.” They just laughed. They knew from personal experience that this statement was not true.

For the vast majority of the 2 billion Muslims worldwide, Islam is not a religion they choose--it is the religion they are born into. This is true for Azerbaijani people as well.

They are Muslim in name only. Most have very limited knowledge of what Islam actually teaches. Most have never read the Qur'an. Most do not observe the daily prayers. And in Azerbaijan, you will rarely hear the call to prayer broadcast from the mosques as you do in other parts of the Islamic world. Their understanding of Islam is largely cultural and based on traditions.

Still, to be Azerbaijani is to be Muslim. Even if one is not actively adhering to Islam, to become a *mesihchi*--a follower of Jesus Messiah--is perceived by many as a rejection of their Azerbaijani identity and culture. It takes a bold step of faith to follow Jesus.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that, as Azerbaijanis turn to reading the Qur'an, they will see that it speaks positively of Jesus and the Injil, which is the Gospel.
- Pray that Azerbaijanis will discover that following Jesus does not require them to reject the wholesome aspects of their Azerbaijani cultural identity and traditions.
- Pray that as Azerbaijanis turn to Jesus, they will discover a new sense of family and community belonging within the Christian church.



## Day 4

# *The Legacy of Abraham*

God promised Abraham that he would be the father of nations. Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike look to Abraham as the progenitor of their faith traditions.



The Apostle Paul quotes from Genesis 15: “For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness.’” ([Romans 4:3 CSB](#))

Muslims look to the example of Abraham’s belief and full devotion to God. He was willing to sacrifice his son in obedience to God. But God provided a ram as a substitute for Abraham’s son.

Azerbaijanis commemorate this sacrifice with the Qurban holiday. Families choose a goat or lamb without defect. They divide the sacrificed animal into portions which they give to the poor.

Despite commemorating Abraham’s sacrifice, they deny the sacrifice of Jesus. They believe that Jesus was never crucified, so they reject God’s true Qurban Lamb.

On one occasion, Abraham’s legacy came up in an altercation between Jesus and the religious leaders. Jesus said,

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad.” The Jews replied, “You aren’t fifty years old yet, and you’ve seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.” ([John 8:56-58 CSV](#))



### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that Azerbaijanis will reflect on the sacrifice of Abraham, and realize that there is no reconciliation with God without the sacrifice of Jesus.
- Pray that Azerbaijanis will give serious consideration to who Jesus truly is and what he truly did, not based on what Islam teaches but what the Gospel teaches.
- Pray that Azerbaijani believers will use the legacy of Abraham to point to Jesus, who was willing to lay down His life for his friends.

## Day 5

### *All the Books of Islam*

A couple of believers were taking a taxi across Baku. The taxi driver was very conversational. One of them noticed the driver had some prayer beads on his dashboard. So he began asking questions.

“Do you pray?” The driver said he tries to pray, especially on Fridays.

“Do you read the Quran?” The driver said he reads it often.

“Have you read the other holy books of Islam?” The driver gives him a puzzled look. “Other books? What other books?”

“The Quran says there are other holy books. Tovrat, Zebur, Injil. You should read those books as well.” The passenger encouraged him to start with the Injil, because it’s the Gospel about Jesus.



The driver was intrigued. As the ride ended, the driver said farewell with a common Azerbaijani blessing.

When asked about the other books of Islam--the Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospel--many Muslims have a ready response. They say the other books were corrupted, and lost their meaning over time. They believe the Quran is God’s final revelation, has primacy, and is incorruptible.

But Jesus gave his followers a marvelous promise: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” ([Matthew 24:35 CSB](#))



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that, as many Azerbaijanis read the Quran, they will be drawn to the passages about Jesus and have serious questions about what the Good News really is.
- Pray that Azerbaijanis will take the challenge to read the Injil, and compare the teachings of the Gospel with the empty teachings of the Quran.
- Pray that they will see the contrast between the life of Jesus and the life of Mohammed, and be compelled to learn more about Jesus Messiah.



## Day 6

### *Finding Isa in Islam*

When you talk to devout Muslims, you discover that they actually hold Jesus (Isa Mesih) in high regard. He is considered one of the great prophets of Islam. Jesus is mentioned in the Quran more times than any other person.



There is much that Islam teaches about Jesus that Christians would agree with:

- His birth was miraculous, because his mother Mary was a virgin.
- He performed miracles, such as restoring sight to the blind, healing lepers, and even raising the dead.
- He was sent by God to bring the Good News.
- He ascended into heaven, and one day will return to judge the world.

All of these things are good common ground to begin spiritual conversations.

But these common things are twisted into critical differences in stories about Jesus, and with beliefs that sharply dispute the core claims of the Gospel. Muslims do not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, nor do they believe that he was crucified. To them, these are the two most offensive things that Christianity teaches.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that Azerbaijanis will seek the truth about Jesus, and know the truth that sets them free ([John 8:32](#)).
- Pray that Azerbaijanis will seek to read more about Jesus--not only in the Quran, but also in the Injil (The Gospel).
- Pray that Azerbaijani believers will prepare themselves to always be ready to share stories about Jesus with Muslims.

## Day 7

### *A People Separated*

For centuries the Azerbaijani people were situated between three great empires--the Persian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and the Russian Empire. A common language gave them a close bond with Turkish people. A common religious tradition gave them a close bond with Persian people.

The Azerbaijani homeland saw many conflicts between the Persians, Ottoman Turks, and Russians. When the Russians defeated the Persians in the Caucasus, the [Treaty of Gulistan of 1813](#) divided the Azerbaijani homeland and split the Azerbaijani people apart.



That divide was amplified when the Russian Empire collapsed. The Soviet Union invaded and imposed 70 years of communist rule on Azerbaijanis in the north. During Soviet times, religion was outlawed, and the border with Iran was closed.

Now, the Republic of Azerbaijan is a sovereign state. And despite Iranian Azerbaijanis living under theocratic tyranny, there is open trade and cultural exchange between the Azerbaijani people of the Caucasus and Iran. This presents a great opportunity for the spread of the Gospel.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that celebration of their common history and culture will open avenues for Azerbaijani believers in Iran and Azerbaijan to work collaboratively in sharing the Good News.
- Pray that greater religious freedom in the Azerbaijan Republic will help southern Azerbaijanis obtain resources such as Scripture and Gospel media, as well as encouragement, renewal, and training for church leaders.
- Pray that the fast-multiplying underground house church movement in Iran will spread north into Azerbaijan, so that northern Azerbaijanis will see the same phenomenal growth of the Christian faith.



## Day 8

### *Lord, reveal Yourself to Azerbaijani people...*

Most Azerbaijani people live in Iran and the Azerbaijan Republic, but they can be found throughout Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe and even North America.

There are a variety of ways that Christians in Azerbaijan have encountered Jesus. As we have listened to the testimonies of Azerbaijani believers, we have seen a pattern of how God works. It is usually not just one thing, but a combination of experiences that compel Azerbaijanis to reject Islam and atheism to follow Jesus.

We have written a prayer that includes the most common experiences that Azerbaijani believers have shared in their testimony. As you pray this prayer, give thanks to God that He is using these common experiences to draw people to himself.

We invite you to share this prayer with others. It can be incorporated into your missions prayers at church. You can also [order](#) bookmarks with this prayer to keep in your Bible or devotional books.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

*Lord, reveal yourself to the Azerbaijani people through Your Word, through dreams and visions, through miracles and answered prayers, through Gospel films and social media, through interest in their ancient Christian heritage, and through the life and witness of believers.*

*Lord,*

**Reveal Yourself  
to the  
Azerbaijani people  
through...**

- Your Word in their heart language,
- *dreams and visions,*
- miracles and answered prayers,
- *Gospel films and social media,*
- interest in their ancient Christian heritage,
- *and the life and witness of believers.*

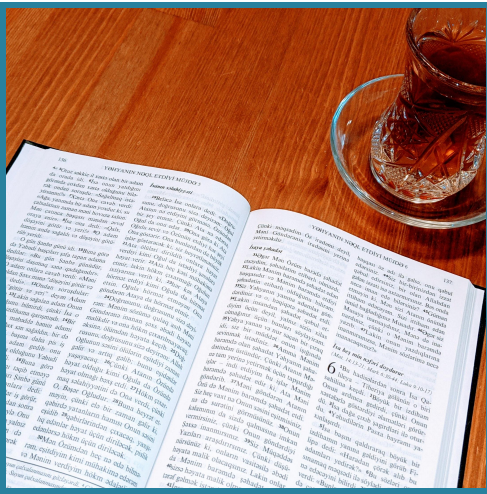
*Amen*



Day 9

## ...through Your Word

An Azerbaijani believer shared that her faith journey started when she was reading the Quran. She read that Islam has four books--the *Towrat* revealed to Moses (Torah), the *Zabur* revealed to David (Psalms), the *Injil* revealed to Jesus (Gospel), and of course the *Quran* revealed to Mohammed.



Since the *Injil* was regarded by the Quran as a heavenly book of Islam, she determined that she must read it to be a good Muslim. She went to an Islamic book store to find an Injil, but the storekeeper told her it was a Christian book. It was a North American friend that helped her find an Injil. Now her family is following Jesus.

Azerbaijani speakers have only had the complete Bible in modern Azerbaijani since 2008. There are two Scripture translations--one with a Latin alphabet for Russian-influenced Azerbaijanis in Azerbaijan Republic, and one with an Arabic alphabet for Persian-influenced Azerbaijanis in Iran.

Though these translations are available, most Azerbaijanis do not know how to get one. Only one bookstore in the whole country of Azerbaijan sells the Bible. Printed Bibles are nearly impossible to distribute to Azerbaijanis in Iran.



### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that God's Word will be shared widely among Azerbaijanis so that they may hear Good News and learn how to follow the Way of Jesus.
- Pray that Azerbaijanis will search for and find electronic versions of Scripture through websites and mobile apps.
- Pray the promise of [Isaiah 55:10-11](#): that God's word will not return to him empty, but will accomplish what He desires and achieve the purpose for which He sent it.

## Day 10

### *...through Dreams and Visions*

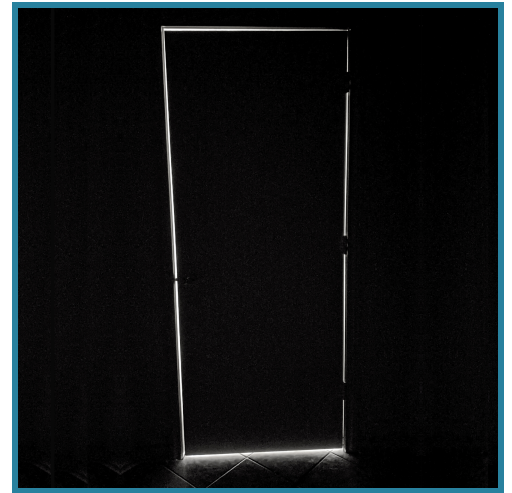
Every week, a Korean woman would come and have tea with her Azerbaijani friend. She would share a story from the Scriptures and ask, “Are you interested in this?” Each week, the Azerbaijani friend kindly responded, “No,” and they agreed to meet up again the next week for tea and stories.

One week, after the Azerbaijani woman said, “No,” the Korean friend replied, “That’s okay. Just remember, any time you are interested, Jesus stands at the door and He knocks. All you have to do is open the door, and He will enter.”

Later that day, the Azerbaijani woman was alone in a room. The door to the room was closed. Suddenly, she turned and saw light shining through from the other side, so that the door was silhouetted in a ring of light. She was certain it was Jesus!

She remembered her friend’s encouragement that Jesus would come in if she invited him in. From that moment, she believed and committed her life to following Jesus.

Visions and dreams are a very real part of the spiritual life of Muslims. They often accept them as signs from God. This seems strange to Westerners, but it is very common for Azerbaijani believers to share that seeing Jesus in a dream was part of what compelled them to follow him.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that many Azerbaijanis will see visions and dreams of Jesus, and that they will recognize him when they see him.
- Pray that these dreams and visions will lead them to hearing the truth about God's Son and obeying His voice.
- Pray that God will give them divine appointments with believers who can tell them how to find Jesus through the Word of God and their testimony.



## *...through Miracles and Answered Prayers*



When an Azerbaijani woman became a new believer, she committed to praying for the salvation of her Muslim husband. But a cancer diagnosis led her to an impossible choice.

Should she continue to pray for the salvation of her husband, or pray for God to heal her?

Surely, she reasoned, it was too audacious to bother God with two urgent prayers. She resolved to continue praying for her husband.

Then she read the story about the woman who touched the robe of Jesus to receive healing.

“Jesus turned and saw her. ‘Have courage, daughter,’ he said. ‘Your faith has saved you.’ And the woman was made well from that moment.” ([Matthew 9:22 CSV](#))

In the same way, this Azerbaijani believer sensed that God was inviting her to ask for a miracle. So she *did*, and He answered in an unexpected way.

When she went back to the doctor, there was no sign of cancer! This was an amazing answer to her audacious prayer. But even more, her miraculous healing was the catalyst for her husband becoming a follower of Jesus. He saw the results of her faith, and he believed also.

Muslims around the world are turning to God in desperation--and discovering that He answers prayers when they ask God in the name of Jesus.



### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that Azerbaijanis in desperate need will have the audacity to call on the name of Jesus in prayer.
- Pray that God will demonstrate His lovingkindness to Azerbaijanis by answering their prayers for healing, provision, wisdom, and restored relationships.
- Pray for believers to have boldness and faith to pray in the Name of Jesus for the needs of their family members, friends, and neighbors.

## Day 12

### *...through Gospel Films and Social Media*

Ramil clicked on a Facebook ad inviting him to learn about the life and teaching of Jesus. The ad led him to the “[Life of Jesus](#)” Facebook page that features dozens of Scripture videos from the LUMO Project Gospel films. He wanted to learn more about Jesus, so he began asking questions online.

After more than a month of intermittent chat sessions on Facebook, Ramil was referred to a local evangelist who met with him and shared the Gospel. Ramil became a follower of Jesus. Then, he told his friend Elnur.

The evangelist met with Elnur as well. He was hesitant at first, but then the Holy Spirit opened his heart and he became a follower of Jesus! Elnur shared with the evangelist that his friend Tural needed to hear the Gospel. So they invited Tural to join them. Before the evangelist could share the Gospel, Elnur began sharing the Gospel that he had just accepted. Tural became a follower of Jesus as well!



These three friends became Jesus followers because Ramil viewed Gospel media on the "Life of Jesus" page. This page now has over 13,000 followers. There are over 3 million Facebook users in Azerbaijan, so the outreach potential is tremendous.

Azerbaijanis are spending more time on social media, especially after COVID quarantines limited gatherings of families and friends. In response to quarantines, several churches began livecasting their church services and prayer meetings on Facebook and Instagram. Azerbaijanis who would never visit a church have been secretly watching these livecasts to see what Christianity is all about.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that many thousands of Azerbaijanis will see the LUMO Gospel films and Jesus Film through Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.
- Pray that those who see Gospel films online will turn their hearts towards Jesus, and talk about Jesus with family and friends.
- Pray that believers will have meaningful interactions with Muslim friends as they share Gospel posts on social media.

## Day 13

### *...through Interest in Their Ancient Christian Heritage*

In Acts 2, Parthians and Medes were present in Jerusalem to hear Peter preach at Pentecost. Imagine them bringing Good News about Jesus back to their homeland. Christianity reached the region of Azerbaijan during the days of the Apostles. Orthodox tradition says that the [Apostle Bartholomew](#) was martyred in the city of Albanopolis, which some scholars believe to be modern-day Baku.



In the year 314, King Urnayr of Caucasian Albania became a Christian. He established the Church of Caucasian Albania, declared Christianity to be the state religion. Though Islamic conquest came in 667, a remnant of this ancient Christian church still exists in the Udi community of Azerbaijan.

In the Azerbaijani provinces of Iran, the Assyrian Syriac Church and other ancient Christian churches coexisted with Islam for centuries. This came to an end with the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Many of these Christians sought asylum in Europe and North America, leaving little to no remnant of ancient Christian witness in Iran.

Christians in Azerbaijan and Iran can look to their ancient Christian heritage as a source of inspiration and hope. A resurgent interest in their ancient Christian past can lead curious Muslims to ask questions about Jesus.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that the long tradition of peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians will lead to respect and curiosity about Jesus.
- Pray that historical structures, including church buildings, monasteries, and graveyards, will prompt nonbelievers to investigate Christianity and discover Jesus.
- Pray that the ancient Christian heritage of the region will be a challenge to the belief that to be Azerbaijani is to be Muslim.

## Day 14

### *...through the Life and Witness of Believers*

For Azerbaijani believers, it is an unsettling truth that most of the people they know and love do not know Jesus. They may be the only Jesus followers in their workplace, their school, their apartment building, or even their own home. For many of them, it compels them to pray fervently, share Good News, and live a life that honors Jesus.

They remember well the words Jesus gave us in the Sermon on the Mount.

*"You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."*

[\(Matthew 5:14-16 CSV\)](#)



This challenge also compels some Azerbaijani believers to go to other cities and villages, just as the apostles did, to share Jesus with people who have never heard and have no access to the Good News.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray for love and unity among believers as Jesus prayed in [John 17:20-21](#):  
"I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me."
- Pray that the bond of love that Azerbaijanis see among Christians will open them to believe that God sent Jesus to bring reconciliation.
- Pray that believers will have spiritual insight to know when someone is receptive to the Good News, and be faithful in sharing stories about the life and teachings of Jesus.



## Day 15

### *Challenges and Hardships*

Azerbaijani people are amazingly resourceful and resilient. Still, for a long time, their culture has borne a great weight of sorrow and despair. Centuries of conflict and conquest have left an indelible mark on the Azerbaijani psyche.



Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijanis in the Azerbaijan Republic have experienced new freedoms, including the opportunity to reclaim a religious identity.

But the changes have ushered in new challenges, too. Dependence on oil revenue and lack of economic diversity have created a climate where corruption is difficult to overcome. For many, it seems the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

For Azerbaijanis in Iran, the Islamic Revolution in 1979 exchanged a progressive, modern society for one that harshly applies Islamic law.

They live in a climate of hostility where gender inequality and religious oppression prevail. And aggression towards neighboring countries and the West has brought devastation to their economy.

This week, we will share prayer requests specifically related to the hardships that Azerbaijanis face. May God bring hope in the midst of their despair.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that this will be the year of the Lord's favor as Jesus proclaimed in Luke 4: *that the poor will hear Good News, that prisoners will be set free, that the spiritually blind will clearly see Jesus, and the oppressed will be set free.*
- Pray that God will bring peace to the Azerbaijani people--that He will raise up a generation of peacemakers and bring an end to conflict in the region.
- Pray that the Gospel of Peace will be heard by the millions of Azerbaijani people who are desperate for hope.

## Day 16

### *Oppression of Islam*

Along the southern border of Azerbaijan, religious teachers have been pouring into the country from Iran to rekindle interest in Islam. They have offered financial rewards in exchange for religious devotion. Those who reject their influence are scolded and ridiculed, so they feel worn down and disheartened.

Meanwhile in Iran, 40 years of theocratic rule has driven people away from Islam. They blame religious leaders for their hardships. The promises of a golden age under Islamic rule have been proven empty. Many people are becoming atheists, but a substantial number are turning to Jesus.

House churches are spreading like wildfire. People are desperate to get Bibles, which are illegal. Religious leaders are even warning people to avoid evil Christian programs on satellite television, which is creating interest in the Christian message.



As the largest minority group in Iran, Azerbaijani people are a vital gateway to reaching the nation. Free travel between Iran and Azerbaijan creates amazing opportunities for the spread of the Gospel.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that oppression will drive people to seek true spiritual freedom in Jesus.
- Pray for the leaders of the growing house church movement to be effective in making disciples despite overwhelming persecution.
- Pray for creative ways for the Word of God to spread among Azerbaijanis, including word of mouth spreading of Bible stories, media on mobile devices, and social media distribution.

## *The Value of Human Life*

“Elara had a baby boy!” Leyla told her neighbor with excitement. “They had abortion after abortion, all girls, and finally got the boy they wanted.”



“Did I ever tell you my parents almost didn’t keep me?” responds Jamila. “My mother went to the clinic, but she didn’t have her documents. My father went to go get them and then he thought no, we shouldn’t do this. When she was pregnant with my brother, my mother had a dream. ‘You shouldn’t abort this child. It will be a blessing to you.’”

In a society where birth control is not trusted and the dangers of abortion not well publicized, it is not unusual for a woman to have eight or more abortions. Jamila had seven. “I did not want to have them. It’s hard, it’s sad’ she says softly. But her husband made the decision and it seemed the right one. Financially they could not manage another child.

There are many benefits to living in a community-oriented society, but the small value placed on the individual leaves many Azerbaijanis, especially women, with little sense of their personal value. Could someone actually consider them a person of significance? The idea is staggering.

“When you come to know the Lord, it’s hard to take in that God thinks you are special and you are worthy,” explains a Christian worker serving among such women. “To be special to be somebody, to be God’s little girl, is just amazing.”



### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray for God to bring comfort and healing to women who have had many abortions and see no other option.
- Pray that attitudes will change about abortion being the primary form of birth control in Azerbaijan.
- Pray for believers to have influence in the culture regarding the sanctity and dignity of all life, including attitudes about the value of girls, women and people with disabilities.

## Day 18

### *Economic Hardships*

Life for Azerbaijanis has been economically challenging for a long time. But the COVID19 crisis is having a devastating effect on an already fragile economic system.

People in Azerbaijan have endured very strict shelter-in-place requirements. One friend confided that it doesn't matter. "No work, no food, everyone is hungry."

Many Azerbaijanis live week-by-week, or even day-by-day. Wages are very low compared to developed nations, and inflation means that prices are increasing while wages are stagnant. For many, finding stable work is hard. And corruption leads to even more hardships.

In Iran, the economic situation is even more dire. Sanctions from the United States have not only limited Iran's ability to sell oil abroad, but also their manufactured goods and agricultural products. The government in Tehran will issue a new currency soon because of hyperinflation.



Life is hard, and getting ahead is seemingly impossible. But when Azerbaijanis hear of a friend in need, they often invoke this blessing: "May God give you help". As people cry out to God in their times of need, may this blessing lead people to know God as Provider, Advocate, and Savior.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that God will bless Azerbaijani people as they give heart-felt blessings to their family, friends and neighbors.
- Pray that Azerbaijanis will learn not to worry about tomorrow, what they will eat, or what they will wear, but rather they will seek first the Kingdom of God.
- Pray for Azerbaijani believers to be creative and resourceful in providing care for people in economically challenging times.



## Hardships for Women

Azerbaijan boasts many positive indicators for women's rights. Women can pursue higher education and professional careers. Yet they still carry the weight of traditional cultural expectations.



A married woman is judged not only on her personal appearance, but also her husband's appearance, how clean her home is, how her children behave. And while many men treat women with honor, abuse and domestic violence remain a hidden problem as it does in many countries.

In Iran, women have borne the most negative effects of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. They must cover their heads in public with a traditional hijab or face severe punishment. Husbands or fathers have authority over women, so that rights to travel outside the home, own property, or engage in business are limited. They are largely shut out of education and careers.

Despite this, women have a vital role in the life and leadership of the church. In Iran, the house church movement is largely led by women. Women in Iran know that part of the punishment for practicing Christianity in the underground church includes rape and torture.



### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that women will hear the Good News of Jesus, and see how He showed great honor and love towards women who followed him and came to him for help.
- Pray that God will show a clear way for women to follow Jesus, despite the expectations and limitations placed on them by men.
- Pray that Christian men will demonstrate love and moral courage by showing the highest honor to women, particularly to their wives.

## *From Village to Urban Life*

An Uber driver in Baku makes a wrong turn down a one-way street and curses in frustration. All these meandering, one-way streets are confusing for newcomers. This driver just moved to the capital city from a small village in the Azerbaijani regions.

Despite being oil-rich, Azerbaijan is still developmentally poor. So, people flood into the cities to find their livelihood. Baku, with its constantly changing cityscape and new development, is now home to nearly 40 percent of the country's population.

People leave their villages because they think the city is the only place to find good employment. But they often discover that employment opportunities are not what they had expected. And the demands of city life--the expense, the pace, the time it takes to do things--are different from village life. This creates a great deal of anxiety and even despair.



Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit.” Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring—what your life will be! For you are like vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes. ([James 4:13-14 CSB](#))

Urbanization is a worldwide phenomenon, not unique to Azerbaijan. However, Azerbaijanis' identity can be closely tied to their home villages and the social networks they leave behind. This is an opportunity for Christians to model a new kind of social network in the city--one where community is formed in the common bond of following the Way of Jesus.



### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that the hardships of living in the city will make people receptive to hearing Good News about Jesus.
- Pray that Azerbaijani believers will have divine appointments to share Good News with newcomers who don't have any Christian witness in their home villages.
- Pray that the Good News will spread beyond the cities to reach every Azerbaijani village in Azerbaijan and Iran.

## Nagorno Karabakh Conflict



For over 30 years, there has been an ongoing armed conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the disputed mountainous region called Qarabag. In 1988, open war started between the two Soviet republics and continued beyond the fall of the Soviet Union.

Tens of thousands of people were killed, and as many as a million people are still internally displaced. Following a 44 day war in Fall 2020, Azerbaijan regained much of the occupied region. Plans are underway for the refugees to return home. But restoration of these lands came with a high loss of life. This is a source of much grief for the Azerbaijani people.

This is an immensely complex and impassioned conflict for the entire region. The historically great powers of Russia, Iran, and Turkey have played various roles in the conflict--from sending peace envoys to selling military equipment and supplies.

The wounds of war press heavily on the hearts of the Azerbaijani people. Everyone knows someone who has been directly affected. Many have lost loved ones or are family to those returning from the war, still bearing the war physically or mentally..

Such conflict also impedes the Good News of Jesus, because Armenia is historically a Christian country. The Azerbaijani people need to know Jesus as the Prince of Peace for their country.



### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that those who have lost family members and homeland as a result of the conflict will have the comfort of Christ. *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."* ([Matthew 5:4 CSB](#))
- Pray for God to raise up true peacemakers in the region who can facilitate respect between the governments of Azerbaijan and Armenia, and find a solution that will establish lasting peace. *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."* ([Matthew 5:9](#))
- Pray that Azerbaijani believers will increasingly continue to model the difficult call of Jesus to *"love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven."* ([Matthew 5:44-45](#))

## Day 22

### *Azerbaijani Virtues*

This past week, we have been praying about the hardships and challenges that Azerbaijani people face in their daily lives. These hardships and challenges have shaped the character of the Azerbaijani people in good and bad ways. In some ways, there is a hardness and deep sadness in the culture. In other ways, there is a resilience and celebration of goodness in the midst of adversity.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians:

“Brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things.” ([Philippians 4:8 CSV](#))



This week, we want to acknowledge and pray about the virtues of Azerbaijani culture. The beautiful, honorable, commendable things in Azerbaijani culture are bridges for Good News about Jesus. They are the common things that Azerbaijanis can treasure as they follow Jesus, even as they repent of the things that bring them shame.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that Azerbaijanis will realize that God loves them, and He wants to restore their honor and claim them as sons and daughters.
- Pray that Azerbaijanis will discover that following Jesus does not mean they must reject the virtuous things of their culture.
- Pray that believers will exemplify following Jesus in such a way that is both true to the Gospel and authentically Azerbaijani.



## Day 23

### *Blessings*

A woman with a broken arm draws the attention of people on the street. With compassion, many people offer her a heartfelt blessing: “Alla shefa versin” which means “May God give you healing.”



As a student pays a private tutor at the end of a lesson, the tutor responds with a blessing of gratitude: “May your pockets always be full.”

After finishing a wonderful meal, the guests respond with a blessing such as: “May your table always be full,” or “May God bless the one who earned and the one who cooked.”

Giving these kinds of blessings are common for Azerbaijani people. Frequently, the name of God is invoked on behalf of the person being blessed. Whether it is a blessing of compassion or gratitude, the blessing is an offering of kindness.

And it’s a reminder of God’s kindness, and his promise to Abraham to bless those who give blessings.

“I will bless those who bless you, I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” ([Genesis 12:3 CSB](#))



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that God will hear the blessings that Azerbaijanis give to others, and reward them by blessing them for their compassion, gratitude, and kindness.
- Pray that Azerbaijanis will truly know the compassion and kindness of God in their times of need, who wants to bless them with peace and newness of life through Jesus Messiah
- Pray that Azerbaijani believers will be a blessing to their people through word and deed, so that the name of Jesus will be honored by all Azerbaijanis.

## Day 24

### Hospitality

One should always say yes to an Azerbaijani dinner invitation. As you sit at the table, dish after dish will be served, each one more amazing than the one before.

Appetizers of white cheese, olives, tomatoes, cucumbers and fresh herbs. Delicious, ornate salads. Savory chicken stuffed with walnuts and sour cherry paste.

And then comes the crown jewel--the Shah Plov, a golden dome of crispy, buttery crust. When it's cut open, like a treasure chest, beautiful saffron rice filled with meat, apricots, golden raisins, and chestnuts pours out.

Hospitality in an Azerbaijani home is generous and extravagant. They are always prepared to serve, even unexpected guests. So if you plan to visit an Azerbaijani home, it is good to have a strategy. Pace yourself. Be gracious with compliments. But be ready to say "beste, beste" or "enough, enough."



Jesus told his disciples, "Truly I tell you, whoever receives anyone I send receives me, and the one who receives me receives him who sent me." ([John 13:20 CSB](#))

Receiving hospitality is a bridge of opportunity for sharing Good News about Jesus. As a host shares their best, so we too can share the best we have to offer.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that God will stir the hearts of Azerbaijanis to welcome messengers of Good News, not only with generosity, but open hearts and minds to stories about Jesus.
- Pray that Azerbaijani believers will follow the model of Jesus for both giving and receiving hospitality.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will give discernment to believers about who He has prepared to receive the Gospel, and how to share it in a way that it is best received.

## Relationship Networks

A customer walked into a small Baku clothing shop. The shopkeeper was close by, waiting to see what he would pick. The customer asked, “Do you have black caps?”

The store did not, but the shopkeeper answered, “Yes we do. Just one minute.” He disappeared, and five minutes later, he came back into the shop with the exact item. He had run to another store owned by a friend, and bought the cap from him.



Azerbaijanis have a collectivist culture, where loyalty, sharing, and helping others are strong values. When one has a need, and the other has a resource, it is a natural thing to share. So when one shopkeeper did not have black caps, it was an opportunity for his friend to share in the transaction.

In collectivist cultures, many decisions are made as a group. The Good News spread in the days of the Apostles through collectivist cultures. The Greek word *oikos* means house, but also household, which includes family, servants, and people important to the family. So when the Good News was received, it was often received by everyone in the *oikos* group, not just an individual.

Among Azerbaijanis, there is great potential for spreading the Good News in the same way.



### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that the Good News of Jesus will not just reach individual Azerbaijanis, but entire families and relationship networks.
- Pray that God will reveal himself in dreams and visions to leaders of *oikos* groups like Cornelius in [Acts 10](#).
- Pray that God will lead Jesus followers to share Good News with receptive people like Lydia in [Acts 16](#), who will not only receive Jesus, but help share Jesus with others.

## Day 26

### *Taking Time for Tea*

A group of Azerbaijani office workers are sitting around a table with a fresh pot of tea. To the outsider, they are wasting time and not being productive. But for Azerbaijanis, there is more brewing than tea. They are talking, enjoying one another's company, and collectively solving a work problem.

The most important thing is taking time for relationships. Azerbaijanis will drop everything to spend time with a friend. In fact, attending to an unexpected guest can be an acceptable excuse for being late to an appointment.

Men are intentional about taking time to meet with friends at a tea house, where they will sit for hours playing games and talking over hot tea. Women welcome other women into their homes for tea and friendship. Even in business, taking time for tea tells a person that the relationship is valued.



Jesus modeled this same virtue for us. He spent much time with his followers--the people who were most important to him. And because of his love for people, He always accepted interruptions to talk to people or help them.

Imagine how God can redeem this virtue in Azerbaijani culture for His glory.



#### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that, during this time of spiritual seeking, God will lead many Azerbaijanis to talk about reconciliation and finding peace with God and others.
- Pray that the topic of Jesus will come up in many conversations between Azerbaijani friends.
- Pray that believers will be able to tell many stories about the miracles and teachings of Jesus over tea.



## Singing and Dancing

If you get a room of Azerbaijanis together, soon there will be songs and dancing. Often it starts with the children, but soon the whole room will be involved. Everyone will gather in a circle, clapping. When they are together with family and friends, Azerbaijanis are fun, spirited people.



And if it's a special occasion, such as a wedding, you can count on full-out [lezginka](#). For men, dancing can be quite vigorous. It requires fast footwork, wide sweeping arms, and spinning. They are strong, and assertive. For women, their movements are more graceful and flowing. They are elegant and beautiful.

Their dancing can tell you much about the culture. Despite many hardships and challenges, there is much goodness in life to celebrate. So they celebrate with much fervor.

In Luke 15, Jesus tells the story of the lost son. When the father welcomed his lost son home, he called for a celebration. There was music and dancing, which made the other son jealous. But the father responded, "[We had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.](#)" ([Luke 15:32 CSB](#))



### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that, in their moments of celebration and joy, Azerbaijanis will give thanks to God who blesses them and gives them all good things.
- Pray that God's goodness will draw the Azerbaijani people to himself, so that there will be much celebration in heaven as many turn back to him as their Heavenly Father.
- Pray that believers will live a celebratory lifestyle that reflects the deep joy they have in Jesus.

Day 28

## *Bread is Life*

An Azerbaijani man spots a broken cracker on the sidewalk. He stoops over to pick it up and put it on a nearby window ledge so that it won't be stepped on.

For Azerbaijanis, bread is life. No meal is complete without bread at the table. And there are some remarkable cultural practices related to bread that have some spiritual implications.

Bread is revered as a sacred and pure food, and is treated with utmost respect. It is offensive to waste bread--you never throw it out. People can swear over it--and a promise made over bread should never be broken. And a person who steps on bread is a person of bad character.

Remember that Jesus said, "[The bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world...I am the bread of life.](#)" ([John 6:33, 35 CSB](#))

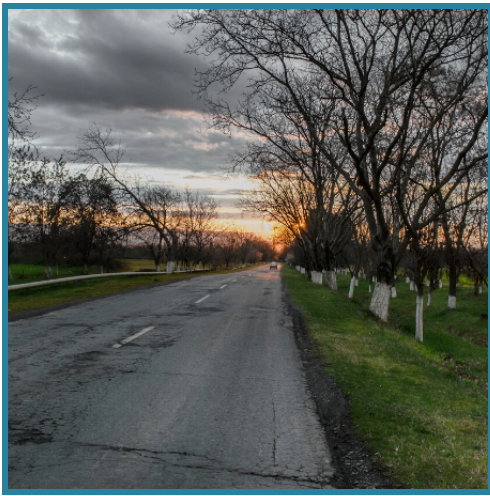
We need him every day to sustain us. But for Azerbaijanis who do not know Jesus, there is no spiritual bread at their table. They have a hunger for heavenly bread--and only Jesus can satisfy that hunger.



### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that Azerbaijanis will understand that they need God to sustain them every day, and the true provision of heaven is Jesus.
- Pray that Azerbaijanis who hold Jesus with deep reverence as good Muslims will seek out the Good News about Jesus through the Scriptures and through believers that they know.
- Pray that Azerbaijani believers will live with the daily confidence that God will provide for their every need, so that this hopeful confidence will be a witness to those who do not yet believe.

## *Spiritually Ready*



Two Azerbaijani believers went out to share Bible stories that they just learned. They took a road trip to a mountain city called Sheki. During the four-hour taxi ride from Baku, they began a friendly conversation with their driver.

They shared some stories from the Bible about some of the Islamic prophets: Noah, Abraham, and David. They shared stories about the life and ministry of Jesus: His birth, His miracles. And they shared stories that Jesus himself told: The Good Samaritan, The Prodigal Son, and the Rich Man and Lazarus.

They shared over twenty stories with the driver in a very natural, conversational way. The driver was ready to hear them--and ready to receive. They led him to Jesus, and connected him with a local church.

Though Azerbaijanis are not always religious, they consider themselves to be spiritual people. Many are ready to hear Good News about Jesus, but they have not met a believer who can share with them.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

“How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: **How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.**” ([Romans 10:14-15 CSB](#))



### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that Azerbaijanis will have opportunities to meet believers who will share stories about Jesus.
- Pray that, as they hear stories about Jesus, they will share them with family members and friends.
- Pray that Azerbaijani believers will be diligent in learning Bible stories that are easy to remember and retell.

Day 30

## *Harvest Workers are Few*

During a social media evangelism campaign, people in Azerbaijan and Georgia were offered the opportunity to receive an Injil--a New Testament. The response was overwhelming, with over 100 requests coming in the first month alone.

The hope was to have each Injil delivered by an Azerbaijani believer who lives in their community. This way, they would have a relational connection to a local church. In the capital city of Baku, this was quickly accomplished.

However, many requests came from remote villages where there is no community of Christians to share the Good News with their neighbors. Injils were sent in the mail, and these seekers are waiting for a Gospel worker to follow up with them.

This is not a new challenge for Gospel work among unreached peoples. Jesus even taught his disciples to expect this:

When he saw the crowds, he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest." ([Matthew 9:36-38 CSB](#))



As God answers our prayers and draws Azerbaijanis to himself, they need Christian brothers and sisters to teach them how to follow Jesus. Now more than ever, there is a great need for more harvest workers to find those who God has prepared to receive Jesus, and welcome new believers into his Kingdom.



### PLEASE PRAY...

- Pray that God will raise up devoted followers of Jesus to go as harvest workers and share the Gospel in communities where there is no known Christian witness.
- Pray for harvest workers to find persons of peace who God has prepared to hear the Gospel and are ready to follow Jesus.
- Pray for American believers to be called to do cross-cultural Gospel work among the Azerbaijanis to help encourage, equip, and strengthen the ministry of evangelism, discipleship, and church planting.