



*for all
the people*

ADVENT PRAYER
GUIDE 2023



More than 3 billion people live with little or no access to the good news that Jesus came to earth for them.

In this prayer guide we focus on just a few of these unreached people groups and how God is stirring among them. The work of reaching billions starts on our knees.

Join us as we consider and pray for these people for whom Christ came and died.

Single names identifying listeners and other living individuals in this booklet are pseudonyms, used to preserve their privacy and, in some cases, safety.

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And the angel
said to them,
"Fear not,
for behold,
I bring you good news
of great joy that will be
for all
the people."

LUKE 2:10

DEVOTIONAL

The shepherds on the hillside could not have failed to notice the angel's final four words.

"For all the people."

Not only for the priests, not only for the Levites, not only for the Pharisees, not only for the comfortable religious types who knew and lived by the letter of the law and expected everyone else to as well.

These were the people who might cross to the other side of the street when the shepherds came to town. The shepherds had the sort of job that respectable people didn't want. Their language might have been coarse, their jokes unholy, their belches uninhibited and their drinking heavy. They came to smell like the animals under their charge.

In religious society's view, they were right down there with the lowest of the low—the tax collectors, the lepers, the Samaritans, the Romans.

Yet the angel made that great announcement to these unruly, bottom-of-the-barrel shepherds. They were just the sort of people Jesus would pay the most attention to: the little tax collector watching from a tree, the Samaritan woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery.

All the people.

TWR exists because not all of the people have yet been reached. In fact, of the 17,743 people groups identified in the world, 7,425 are considered unreached, according to the research initiative Joshua Project. Those unreached groups comprise 42.5% of the world's population—3.37 billion people.

We believe that when the Bible says "all the people," it means it. During this Advent season, we invite you to consider with us some of the world's least-reached people. We'll explore some of the ways God is using TWR to reach them and how you can get involved.

Come. Journey with us as we anticipate the coming of the Christ child, our King, the one who came for all people.

PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, we praise you that you reached out to us
through your blood on the cross. Your great gift is available to all.
Open our hearts and minds to those groups
that are still unreached.*



THE *Somali* PEOPLE OF NORTHEASTERN AFRICA

Somali speakers are ranked among the least-reached people groups in the world. They live mostly in Somalia and are across other countries in the northeast region of Africa, also known as the “Horn of Africa”, such as Ethiopia, Kenya and Eritrea, and also in the Middle East. Somalia itself ranks second this year in Open Doors’ World Watch List of countries worldwide where being a Christian is most difficult.

Islam is the predominant religion, at 99.7%, whereas Christianity is at only 0.3%. Somalia’s constitution declares Islam as the state religion, prohibits Muslims from converting to or propagating any religion other than Islam, and requires all laws to comply with the general principles of Shariah, or Islamic law. The constitution requires Somalia’s leading politicians to be Muslim.

Somalis adhere to a single faith and share a cultural heritage that is an integral part of their nomadic lifestyle. A typical Somali family owns a herd of sheep or goats, which the women and girls care for, and a few burden camels. Some may also own a herd of milking camels. The men and boys enjoy taking care of the prized camels. The more camels a man owns, the greater his prestige.

As Somalis consider themselves warriors, the men sometimes leave women in charge of the herds, so that they might train to become more effective fighters. They are a very individualistic people, sharply divided by clans, of which the two largest are the Somaal (primarily nomadic shepherds) and the Sab (normally settled in communities and working as farmers or craftsmen). Fights often occur between clans, resulting in many deaths.

A Somali’s life is often dictated by the ability to find water, as the area is extremely drought-prone, having minimal rainfall. The nomads live in easily collapsible and movable huts, enabling their homes to be moved with the herds in search of water. The more settled farmers live in permanent round huts.



Having an abundant supply of food is a status symbol among the clans. Each family periodically holds banquets for their relatives and friends. A family's prestige is determined by the frequency of its feasts, the number of people invited, and the quality and quantity of food served.

According to Awaale, a Somali Christian who left his homeland and now lives in southern Africa, many Muslims have questions about Christianity. "One main struggle for Muslims concerns the doctrine of the Trinity," he says. "They find it difficult to comprehend that God has a son, in Jesus Christ, and rather see Jesus as a prophet, not as God." Awaale explains that Muslims fear betraying Islam by accepting any Christian doctrine, thereby disobeying Allah and the Shariah, which can result in a death sentence for conversion. "They are afraid of abandoning Islam and subsequently ending up in hell."

Awaale shares how saddened he is by the fact that his own family is angry about his conversion to Christianity and condemns his faith, which they claim is a false belief. "I cannot return home to visit my family and even most friends, as I would probably be imprisoned or even executed for my betrayal of Islam." The crime of apostasy (disobeying Allah) is regarded as worthy of a death sentence, according to Shariah. "The irony is that it's so sad and frustrating that they deny and do not understand the truth and hope of the Christian faith."

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I pray for strength and abundant courage for believers living in Somalia, surrounded by hostility and hate. In their lonely moments, may they see Jesus as their King and conqueror of their foes. Protect them, Lord.

Reaching the Somali

Somalia is one of the countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution. Christian ministries are mostly either prohibited or operate in very challenging conditions. Christian workers in Somalia worship in secret and fear the al-Shabab militant group. Despite this persecution, there are many opportunities for evangelism in this region by using radio programs, different media platforms and Christian organizations.

TWR is responding to the frequent spiritual thirst and corresponding great need present in many people in this area. TWR is ideally suited to addressing and meeting these needs, offering hope and lasting peace through the good news of Jesus Christ, by utilizing radio and digital media. The ministry reaches the Somali people through different programs in the Somali language, namely *Thru the Bible*, *The Word Today*, *Women of Hope*, *Dr. Luke*, and *The Way of Righteousness*. Also, Atoo Sifa 90.7 broadcasts to the Kakuma Refugee Camp, whose inhabitants include many Somalis.

Knowing God is a program comprising of 25 episodes that introduce the Christian faith to communities with no previous knowledge of the Bible. Set in an African village, in the Somali language, it is nonconfrontational and describes a loving and forgiving God. Each episode is a conversation between an older Christian man and two younger nonbelievers who discuss the essentials of the Christian faith. They learn how they can worship God and surrender their lives to Christ. The program is produced for shortwave radio, which is a strategic tool for broadcast because it has a wide range to reach Somali speakers spread across the entire region.

For over 20 years now, TWR Kenya has continued to share the gospel with many believers living among Muslims in Somalia and in other areas of Kenya and beyond that are antagonistic to Christianity. Despite the persecutions meted out on believers, the thirst for the gospel has continued to grow. One factor that has enabled the gospel to reach more people is the growth in digital media. Previously, the only secure way of broadcasting the gospel confidentially in this region was via shortwave broadcasts. Listeners could receive feedback from the ministry only if they were privileged enough to have a secure virtual private network internet connection, a postal address or personal contacts with TWR-affiliated people.

The growth in digital media has turned the world into a global village and thus introduced various secured platforms of communications and broadcasting. TWR Kenya now has several Somali programs downloaded on applications, websites, social media, FM and shortwave. The new platforms have also brought in more secure ways of engaging listeners and receiving feedback. These platforms are secure because listeners do not need to use their real identity to communicate.

PRAYER

*Thank you, Jesus, for the program, Knowing God. May those seeking answers find themselves listening to a radio teacher and gain wisdom.
May listeners find you, Jesus, as their Living Water in a desert place.*

God at work

Although there are now various reception possibilities, the listenership is still mostly present in secrecy. With the help of regional contacts and local fellowships, however, we have been able to get more listener feedback. The success of the ministry has also had its equal share of challenges, because those who oppose Christianity are on constant high alert, using the same avenues to discredit the Scriptures and are always in search of believers or those who support them.

Therefore, encouraging as well as hostile listener feedback has been received. Thankfully, though, the positive feedback far outweighs the negative. In this instance some encouraging messages include this woman's response: "Even though I live in great suffering, I listen to your program. Each Saturday I receive God's grace through the *Women of Hope* program. It is so helpful and encourages me to trust God in all my life situations. I am in a terrible situation, but I have great hope to return and serve God. Please pray for me."

The following is a selection of other positive responses:

- "Greetings. You are working very hard, and it is a very good program. Maybe there are some people who are not happy about this program, but I am very happy, so I want to tell you that you should not give up. Love God and God bless you."
- "I am greeting you. I am happy to hear the Somali women who have no fear to preach the word of God—thank you, God! Sisters, even if I do not know your names, I encourage you not to fear preaching to Somali ladies, those who are in the dark. God bless you."
- "I am greeting you. I like your radio program. So I would like to get an idea from you how one can become a Christian. Please answer my question."

There is also the account of Mohammed, who is a Somali Christian in Ethiopia. He is intensely occupied with studying the Bible and wishes to become a teacher. He spends a lot of time on TWR social media pages, the TWR360 app and the website of *Thru the Bible*. He testifies that he shares the gospel with others and requested two books from TWR, namely *King of Glory* and *The Living Answers*. Previously, he had watched the *King of Glory* video on the TWR360 website.

Then there is Hussein, a diaspora Somali listener who points out to TWR workers portions of the Bible that are hard to understand for people not well acquainted with God's Word. In turn, TWR team member Zuleka responds to Hussein and other listeners who get in touch, assuring them that all their questions will be answered.

PRAYER

Lord, give courage to Somali listeners to respond to Christian programs in their language. Protect, guide and fill Somali speakers with the knowledge of who you are, Jesus.

THE Hazara

PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN

At 16 years old, Marzia Mohammadi had many dreams. At the top of her bucket list was to meet the award-winning novelist Elif Shafak, followed by visiting the Eiffel Tower in Paris and eating pizza at an Italian restaurant.

Some of her other wishes were more ordinary, like wanting to ride a bike and walk in the park late at night.

But on Sept. 30, 2022, the Hazara Afghan teenager's dreams came crashing down in a suicide bombing attack at the Kaaj education center in Kabul's Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood, a predominantly Hazara populated area in Afghanistan.

Marzia, alongside her cousin Hajar, was taking a practice test for a national university entrance exam. Both girls aspired to be architects. They were among the 53, mostly young women, who lost their lives that day.

This incident is just one of countless attacks directed at the Hazara people in Afghanistan, an overwhelmingly Shia Muslim community disfavored by the nation's Sunni Muslim majority population. They also are often singled out for their physical features.

The Hazaras are arguably one of the most persecuted people groups in the history of Afghanistan and the world. For over a century, they have endured oppression and discrimination like no others. Some estimates suggest that more than half of the Hazara population were massacred, sold as slaves or forced to flee to other countries in the late 19th century. Once the largest Afghan ethnic group, the Hazara people today constitute approximately 9% of Afghanistan's 40 million population.

Since the fall of Kabul in August 2021, the community has become increasingly vulnerable to unlawful assaults—to the point where many do not feel safe leaving their homes to attend religious services, school or seek medical attention. With barely any representation in the current government, the community does not have much of a political voice.

Bearing the brunt of the political upheaval are Hazara women, who suffer not only for their ethnicity and religion, but also their gender. Traditionally, the



Hazara community has placed a strong emphasis on education for both males and females. Shortly after the government takeover, however, girls were barred from attending school past the sixth grade. And just a few months after the deadly bombing that claimed the lives of Marzia and Hajar, only male students were allowed to enroll in public and private universities.

Some other challenges women face include being banned from their workplaces, being forced to take a pay cut, as well as restrictions on freedoms and movements.

It would be remiss to not highlight the incredible resilience, determination and grit exhibited by the Hazara people amid all they have experienced. Though rarely covered in mainstream media, numerous Hazaras are trailblazers in their own right, having risen above the odds to attain progress and success.

After learning that they could no longer go to school, Marzia and Hajar took matters into their own hands and began preparing for the national university exam, knowing it was their ticket to furthering their education and fulfilling their dreams.

Week after week, they would take the practice test at the education center, each time doing better than the last.

“My Marzia and Hajar were such amazing girls, so different than others their age,” Zaher Modaqueq, the girls’ uncle, told Al Jazeera. “I wish more people could have known their determination. They could have inspired many. I believe they still can.”

PRAYER

*Dear God, I lift the Hazara women of Afghanistan to you in prayer.
Thank you for the team producing the Word of God programs.
Give them clarity as they write the scripts.
May Hazaras, deeply loved by you, see a breakthrough
from fear, hurt and insecurity to peace
and comfort in Jesus.*



Reaching the Hazara

Undoubtedly, ministering to the Hazaras is an uphill endeavor. Open Doors has consistently ranked Afghanistan on its World Watch List of countries where it's most difficult to follow Jesus. Only 0.03% of the Hazara Afghan community is Christian. Most, if not all, are forced to keep their faith in Jesus a secret, as discovery could lead to grave consequences including death.

While in-country ministry initiatives are currently not possible, TWR partners with like-minded organizations to reach Hazara believers on the air. Where believers and pastors cannot go, God uses media—in this case, radio—to bring hope to his children.

Word of God is a Hazaragi-language program specially produced for the Hazara people. Broadcast three times a week over medium wave (AM), each 15-minute episode presents key stories from the Bible and provides a biblical perspective on God, man, sin and salvation. The program aims to:

- Help listeners overcome fear and insecurity.
- Equip women to navigate social, physical and spiritual challenges.
- Offer biblical guidance on everyday things like personal finance.

After the program, listeners can call in to the follow-up team to ask questions and share whatever is on their mind and heart.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, protect the Hazara women as they live with the attack of evil intent each day. Thank you for building strong, resilient people through their hardships. I pray for listeners of the Word of God programs to find courage to connect with the listener response team.

God at work

Even in the depths of suffering, the Lord is at work. Below you will find a sampling of testimonies from our *Word of God* listeners that demonstrate just that. We trust these heartfelt stories will uplift your spirit as they did ours.

- “Although I was not religious at the time, something about *Word of God* piqued my interest, and I became a regular listener. They spoke of peace. And yet, all I saw around me was a world engulfed in war. The presenter also delved into discussions about Jesus Christ and other fascinating topics. Before long, I stumbled on a Christian gathering, and it was a far cry from those I had attended in the past. There was an incredible regard for women and their loved ones. I thank God for guiding me on the right path.”
- “My brother introduced me to your programs five months ago. We thank God for your program, as it has opened our eyes. We cannot tell others about our faith because it’s too dangerous here, but our families gather frequently to listen to you. Can I call you sometimes if we have questions about our faith?”
- “Brother, I’ve been listening to your radio programs and praying for you. The story of Joseph that you are teaching on the radio gave me the confidence to call you and apologize for once being your persecutor.”

We praise God for the incredible transformation taking place within the lives of these individuals and the immense privilege to be a part of it. May their stories kindle hope and faith within our hearts, reminding us that even in the darkest corners, God’s light can shine through.

PRAYER

Lord, I pray for your power to equip Hazara women to navigate social, physical, and spiritual challenges. May they find the God of all comfort and peace.

*"I will bless those
who bless you,
and him who dishonors you
I will curse, and in you*

*all the
families
of the earth
shall be blessed."*

GENESIS 12:3



DEVOTIONAL

The surprising thing about Abraham—or Abram, as he was still known to be at this point in the story—is that he didn't seem to be surprised. There's no "Who, me?" moment.

At this point in Genesis 12, Abraham seems to take the promises as a matter of course. Yet the words he hears are astounding. Here's a man, married but with no children, being told (in verse 2) that he will be the father of a nation. And then, in verse 3, that he—by implication, the nation he fathers—will have special status. People who treat his people well shall be blessed. People who dishonor his people will be cursed.

Then, most astonishing of all: *"In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

Whoa! In terms of audacious promises, that probably would not be matched until many centuries later, when an angel appeared to a girl named Mary, a virgin, and proclaimed that she would give birth to a child whose kingdom will have no end (Luke 1:33).

Think of what Abraham would have seen if all of it had been laid out before him: His great-grandson Joseph rising to the No. 2 position in Egypt; his descendant Moses leading his people out of Egypt; his descendant Joshua leading his people to conquer the Promised Land; Jesus coming to bring the blessing; and the apostle Paul coming to announce that the blessing really did belong to all peoples, not just to Abraham's descendants.

To all peoples: Japanese, Somalis, Turks, Syrians, Bosnians, Hausa, Wayana, Trio, you, me. No one is excluded except those who will not open their hearts and receive the blessing.

How about you? Who are you asking the Lord to bring into his family? We'd like to join you in that. Send a prayer request with the person's first name via [twr360.org/prayer-request](https://www.twr360.org/prayer-request), and our staff will pray for him or her within 24 hours.

Through the seed of Abraham, all are blessed.

PRAYER

Lord God, we praise you for the blessing through the seed of Abraham, which became fully known in Jesus. Thank you that this blessing is for all of the families on earth.



THE *Bosnian* PEOPLE OF SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

Bosnians, those with historical roots in the nation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, are among Europe's least evangelized peoples. And the past few decades have seen a sharp decline in the already small Christian population.

Three major ethnic and religious groups make up the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina—Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs—all sharing the same South Slavic ancestry. Within the nation itself, most Bosniaks identify as Sunni Muslims, Croats as Roman Catholic, and Serbs as Serbian Orthodox. Ethnicity and religion have always been bound together.

Another complexity is the language of the Bosnians. According to Britannica, ethnic and political affiliation determine the variety of Serbo-Croatian language spoken. However, these varieties of Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian languages are mutually intelligible within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Influenced by both eastern and western cultures, Bosnia and Herzegovina has a rich heritage with strong values placed on hospitality, spontaneity and storytelling, Britannica reports. Yet, there are considerable cultural differences between urban and rural lifestyles.

Because of its geographic position between Serbia and Croatia and its multiethnic population, the country has been susceptible to nationalist disputes throughout history, Britannica says. As a nation with deep ethnic and religious divides, a large and growing Islamic presence, and an infrastructure still crippled



by the effects of the 1992-1995 civil war, Bosnia and Herzegovina is arguably one of the toughest mission fields in Europe. During the war, instances of ethnic cleansing and genocide took place, and tensions between ethnic groups still exist. Many live with the pain of having lost loved ones in the war.

Bringing the good news to a Bosnian person is difficult from the human point of view as becoming a Christian is seen as changing one's nationality. And giving up one's ethnic background is equal to betrayal. However, through radio and other forms of media, Bosnians are hearing the gospel, even in remote rural areas.

Persecution toward Christians is a stark reality. Bosnians who profess faith in Jesus risk social pressure or even being banned from their families. Plus, there are few evangelical churches in the country, so loneliness adds to the difficulties they endure.

The small minority of Bosnian Christians struggle to gain access to churches and biblical teaching, and radio or digital Christian content is their primary source of encouragement and comfort.

PRAYER

*I pray for Bosnian believers, dear Father, feeling lonely and isolated today.
Surround them with your loving care and protection from the evil one.
Put a new song into their hearts, praise to our God.*

Reaching the **Bosnians**

Ikonos is TWR's Serbian-based ministry partner that oversees media ministries in most of the countries of former Yugoslavia. Today, Ikonos produces and shares content in the main languages and dialects of Bosnians.

Treasures of Wisdom, a 30-minute program designed to strengthen believers in their faith and reach the lost, is aired on medium wave (AM) radio and distributed online. Its role as “daily bread” for isolated Christians makes it a vital source of biblical teaching. Many Bosnians describe *Treasures of Wisdom* as their lifeline, especially those who can't access a local church. The program has covered various talking points from a Christian perspective, such as science and the Bible. The dramatized audio version of the *JESUS* film was also aired, and many heard about Jesus for the first time.

First aired in 2004, *Treasures of Wisdom* brings God's Word to people who don't have access to regular spiritual nourishment or have never heard of Christianity. It has enabled Bosnian Muslims to hear about God's Word in their own language. Because responding to Christian programs can be risky, it's likely the program has more listeners than we can track based on feedback alone.

Written with Islam's perspective of God, sin and salvation in mind, *The Way of Righteousness* presents key Old Testament Bible stories that point to Jesus as God and Savior. Through 100 episodes, it challenges Muslim listeners to consider Jesus as more than a prophet.

After the launch of *The Way of Righteousness* radio programs for a Bosnian audience, we found a person in-country to focus on digital promotion. We now have 7,000 followers on Facebook, mostly Bosnians from a Muslim background. In addition, we share the episodes on a podcast platform with hopes to broaden our audience. Through partnerships with like-minded ministries, we can engage more Muslim Bosniaks—a predominantly unreached people group—with Jesus' message of hope.

The Word Today is one of seven programs available to stream on Ikonos' Bosnian website. Each 15-minute episode emphasizes a word or phrase from God's Word. It communicates biblical truth through simple messages so that listeners can find answers to their spiritual questions.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, speak into the hearts of listeners through The Way of Righteousness program. May they hear the love story of Jesus as God, Savior and friend. Open their hearts, heal their pain, pour a spirit of understanding into their lives.

God at work

“When I visited a friend who is a believer, she invited me to listen to a radio program that she regularly followed. Although I honestly never listened to Christian programs, I agreed so that I wouldn’t offend her. That day, I heard *Treasures of Wisdom* for the first time.

“Surprisingly, I really liked what I heard. I thought it would be boring and full of rules and commandments, but what I heard was quite the opposite. It was about the human heart which has a need for love.

“The program mentioned that although the earth’s population is dramatically increasing, people are becoming lonelier, feeling less loved. It touched my heart because I often feel lonely even though there are many people around me.

“The kind voice I heard on the radio continued to speak of the importance of love, how much God loves this world, and about his Son’s sacrifice. It was about how God chose to love us, even while we were dirty and living in sin.

“I felt like the speaker was talking directly to me, but I didn’t want to admit it to my friend. My pride didn’t allow me to tell her that loneliness and a lack of true love were my deepest problems.

“But I cried inside because that radio program touched me so deeply. Finally, the speaker asked a few questions: ‘Do you believe in Jesus? Do you let him love you and guide you?’

“That evening when I got home, I thought a lot about what I had heard. I decided to admit to my friend that I really liked the program and that I wanted to listen together again. We’ve been listening to the *Treasures of Wisdom* program for several months now, and I feel that God is changing me. I know that I’m on the right track.

“Keep up the work you do because I believe there are many people who need God and do not want to admit it because of their pride. I pray that God touches the hearts of others in the same way he touched mine.”

– a listener of *Treasures of Wisdom*

PRAYER

Thank you, Jesus, for the Ikonos team producing programs to reach the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Speak through radios, media players and other internet devices with the power of your love and care.

THE Sundanese

PEOPLE OF INDONESIA

Primarily occupying the western third of the island of Java, the Sundanese (or Sunda) are the largest unreached people group in Indonesia. Joshua Project estimates that Christians comprise less than 1% of their population. Islam is the predominant religion.

They are also the nation's second-most-populous ethnic group after the Javanese, who live in the central and eastern provinces of the same island.

For most Sundanese Muslims, faith is a blend of Islamic beliefs and pre-Islamic practices like spirit worship. Joshua Project explains, "The Sunda seek to protect their harmony with the natural world. They do this through traditional ceremonies for spiritual life and through group work for mutual assistance."

In traditional Sundanese society, following Jesus is synonymous with deserting one's Sundanese identity. During the years of Dutch colonialism, a division was formed between the Europeans and the Sundanese, who came to view the good news as foreign. To become Christian is to become like the colonizers.

Ministry among the Sundanese is undeniably arduous, but not impossible. It is often when they experience the love of Christ in real, practical and culturally relevant ways that they learn that the gospel is for them, too. A true story, told by Matt Kirkas, an author and missionary among the Sundanese, illustrates this truth.

Cakra, a widower and single father, worked tirelessly to provide for his daughter. Sometimes, he even skipped meals to save money for her tuition fees.

However, the constant strain of hunger and stress eventually led to his own illness, rendering him unable to work. This created a challenging cycle: Because he was sick, he couldn't work. And because he couldn't work, he had no money to seek medical treatment, which meant he couldn't work.



Photo by Dedy Kurniawan on Unsplash

When a group of church planters visited Cakra, their hearts broke for the family. Immediately, they took him to the clinic. They also prepared meals for him and prayed for him and his daughter.

Three days later, Cakra was well again. The church planters continued their visits, each time sharing the gospel in greater depth. Because of the love the church planters demonstrated in such practical and caring ways, both Cakra and his daughter turned to Christ.

But for those who embrace the gospel, the road ahead is far from easy. It is a journey marked with opposition, persecution and intense pressure from their families and communities to renounce their newfound faith, as there is almost zero tolerance of family members who take on new religious identities. Kirkas depicts this daunting reality through yet another story.

When Meimunnah, a Sundanese woman, came to Christ, she was physically abused and threatened by her family not once, not twice, but five times. She endured injuries, property damage, humiliation and ostracism from her family. Yet her undying commitment to following Jesus never wavered.

“Even though I must die, I will continue to follow Christ,” she told her tormentors.

Eventually, her tormentors reached a breaking point. Realizing that Meimunnah would not be swayed, they decided to leave her alone.

PRAYER

Jesus, I thank you for the bold courage of believers among the Sundanese on the Indonesian island of Java. Protect them. Give wisdom and strength to those enduring persecution from their own families. May their testimonies speak loudly and clearly of the love of you, Jesus.

Reaching the Sundanese

Radio broadcasts

Our ministry to the Sundanese began with the airing of *Thru the Bible*, followed by *The Way of Righteousness* in the Sundanese language. Both programs are broadcast over local FM stations and shortwave from our station on Guam.

Through *The Way of Righteousness* and its 100 episodes of Old Testament stories that point to the coming Christ, listeners learn that Jesus is more than just a prophet. He is the Son of God who gave his life for our salvation.

Listener groups

In addition to distributing the programs via radio, TWR uses them to disciple Sundanese listeners groups scattered throughout the West Java areas of Bandung, Cianjur, Cirebon and Kuningan.

Each group consists of five to 10 members and a listener coordinator appointed by TWR or local church leaders. They meet at least once a month to listen to the programs and engage in discussions about what they have heard. Members may also direct any questions they have to either the listener coordinator or TWR's follow-up/listener-care team.

Radio distribution

Last year, our ministry partners in Indonesia held a radio distribution in which they handed out about 100 radio and audio players to listener groups throughout West Java. Each of these devices came with an SD card preloaded with *Thru the Bible* and *The Way of Righteousness* Sundanese programs.

Listener visits

At TWR, we understand the importance of continued and effective discipleship on the ground, which is why our ministry partners make it a point to meet with our Sundanese listeners, either individually or in groups. These gatherings, which happen once or twice a year, serve as precious opportunities to establish and nurture relationships, fostering a deeper understanding of our listeners' unique and varied needs.

PRAYER

Father, speak into the hearts of listeners via Thru the Bible and The Way of Righteousness. May the radio conversations open understanding and clarity that you are more than a prophet. May their questions find answers from your teaching.

God at work

We are humbled and delighted to share these heartfelt messages from our Sundanese listeners. Witnessing the transformative work of God in their lives has been an immense privilege, and we give thanks for this incredible opportunity.

- “I’ve been thoroughly enjoying *The Way of Righteousness (TWOR)* since I first started listening. It is truly a remarkable spiritual program for the Sundanese people. I’m sure a lot of listeners are thankful for it.”
- “I want to express my appreciation for this TWOR program. Its ability to deliver discussions in a clear and simple manner has greatly enhanced my understanding of the Bible’s teachings. There aren’t many programs like this, particularly in Sundanese. TWOR has also been instrumental in nurturing my congregation, enabling them to better grasp God’s Word spanning from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Above all, this program has allowed us to develop a deeper understanding of our Savior.”
- “The *Thru the Bible (TTB)* Sundanese program brought about a transformative shift in my perception of caregiving. I have come to understand that caring for our parents, who have sacrificed greatly for us, is an act of love. And to have the opportunity to fulfill such a role is truly a blessing. I am grateful for this program that has helped me realize the importance of giving my best to my mother.”

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, teach and disciple the Sundanese. Speak through the radio programs and listener groups. May they seek you and find you with all their hearts.

“Sing praises
to the LORD, for he
has done gloriously;
Let this be
made known in
all the
earth.”

ISAIAH 12:5

DEVOTIONAL

Of all the Old Testament prophets, none had more to say about the coming Messiah than Isaiah.

“Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:2).

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations” (Isaiah 42:1).

Isaiah devotes Chapter 11 to the “stump of Jesse,” a reference to the father of King David, who was to be the Messiah’s ancestor. He immediately follows in Chapter 12 with an ecstatic song of praise: “The Lord God is my strength and my song. ... Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously. ... Shout and sing for joy.”

He makes it clear that this isn’t just a message for Israel. It’s for “the peoples” (verse 43). It’s for “all the earth” (verse 5). Isaiah knew his message was ultimately for everyone.

By the grace of God, TWR is able to use media to go to some of the world’s most difficult places. We do this because the message Isaiah foretold wasn’t just for the Jews, nor is it just for Western Europeans or North Americans. It’s for all the peoples in all the earth.

Doesn’t this make you want to shout and sing? Perhaps you’d like to write the words to your own song of praise for your salvation, or a prayer that more unreached people groups be saved.

If you do, we have a favor to ask. Would you share it with us? You can send it by email to Advent@twr.org.

PRAYER

Thank you, Father God, that you have provided the tools to reach all peoples in this generation. Give us courage and fortitude to do our part in bringing gospel truth wherever we go.



THE *Syrian* PEOPLE OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Syrians, the people originating from Syria, are ethnically diverse.

Arabs make up the majority, with the Kurdish people being the second-largest Syrian ethnic group. That said, there are many other Syrian minority groups such as Assyrians, Armenians and Turkmen. Many Syrians have been forced to flee their homeland due to war, and a massive Syrian diaspora stretches across the globe, from Australia to Brazil.

When it comes to religion, most Syrians are Muslim, according to Britannica. And of the Muslim population, three-fourths are Sunni Muslims. Druze is another popular Syrian religion, known for “an eclectic system of doctrines,” says Britannica. Only one-tenth of Syrians identify as Christian, with Greek Orthodox being the largest Christian denomination in the country.

Syria is in the Middle East, situated along the Mediterranean Sea and bordering Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Israel. The capital of Damascus is one of the oldest cities in the world. Known as the “City of Jasmine,” it’s the center of education and culture. The nation’s climate is arid from May to October, with mild winters near the coast. Farther inland, snow can occur in winter.

It’s no surprise that Syrians have a rich culture. Throughout history, they’ve been influenced by Arabian, Mesopotamian, Greek and Roman cultures. Still, the dominant character of the Syrian people remains Arab, Britannica says. Linguistically, most Syrians speak Arabic, although Kurdish, Armenian and Turkish languages are spoken regionally.



In years past, arranged marriages were common, says Britannica. They're becoming less frequent, but parents still play a crucial role in determining who their children marry.

Social life is at the heart of Syrian culture, and sitting on the floor together to enjoy coffee is common, according to Joshua Project. Meals typically consist of wheat bread and boiled meats.

Ministry in Syria is challenging due to the unreliable infrastructure. Since 2011, the nation has been embroiled in a civil war, and many Syrians have lost homes and family members in the war. When the 2023 earthquakes devastated parts of northwest Syria, it left affected residents "grappling with their new and worsening reality," says Al Jazeera.

TWR's Arabic team is helping Syrians find refuge in the Prince of Peace, the only source of true freedom.

PRAYER

*Dear Father, I lift the people of Syria to you today.
Lord, speak straight into broken hearts through the Hope for Syria program.
As listeners walk the trauma of daily life in war-torn Syria,
may they find the Prince of Peace.*

Reaching the Syrians

Hope for Syria is a daily radio broadcast produced by TWR. It examines difficult life issues from a biblical perspective, inviting listeners to call in and interact with the program presenters. It includes devotions, prayers, Bible readings and counseling for Syrians who are working through trauma.

Designed specifically to bring the hope of the gospel to those grappling with fear, shock and loss, *Hope for Syria* episodes are produced in the Syrian Arabic language. Jesus met both spiritual and practical needs when he walked the earth. Similarly, the media team in Syria balances spiritual themes with medical and psychological guidance. Following the tragic earthquakes of 2023, each episode was modified to reflect the daily struggles of the victims.

Also popular among refugees, *Hope for Syria* has attracted listeners from as far away as Europe. Syrians uprooted from their native land are discovering the program on social media and on media players that TWR distributes.

In Syria, generations of children have never known anything but war. A 19-year-old Syrian named Muhannad said, "I am so tired of all that is happening here. I cannot bear the daily conflicts, bloodshed, fear and exhaustion."

Before the 2023 earthquakes, there was already a humanitarian crisis in Syria. But since the natural disaster, many children have now lost families, homes and schools. They've been forced to grow up too fast, experiencing immense tragedy at an early age. TWR's programs are a voice of hope for children with nowhere to turn.

Youth in Mind is a 15-minute weekly radio program in Syrian Arabic. Through peer-to-peer interaction, counseling and support, the program helps Syrian youth understand their spiritual and emotional needs. The program presents listeners with the opportunity to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Episode titles include "Being a Syrian," "Facing Shock," "Proof of the Resurrection" and "True Love."

As violence and human rights abuses spread throughout Syria and its surroundings, the need for *Youth in Mind* became apparent. The youth are having to navigate adolescence amid the trauma of war. They need a safe environment where they can voice their questions, frustrations and hopes for the future. By having conversations with youth leaders who can set an example of God's compassionate and unconditional love, the youth are able to have their deepest emotional needs acknowledged. In time, they learn to incorporate core biblical values into their struggles.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I pray for Syrian young people struggling with what life has dealt them. Direct them to the Youth in Mind program on their media player. Speak into their broken, questioning spirit with your unconditional love.

God at work

- “You were talking about how to deal with abuse. In such times as these in Syria, how can I forgive those who hurt my beloved ones, and my own people? Through your episode, I believe that something touched my heart and soul. I’m having different feelings now of peace and trust that the Lord can handle our pain and hurt. His will is above any situation and evil. I surrender to Jesus.”
—a listener of *Hope for Syria*
- “Dealing with economic oppression during this war is very difficult but your episode really helped me think differently, being content to work any kind of job. I used to be a businessman, and my days have become tough, but I should be thankful! You are surely a blessing to me and my fellow Syrians. I know that God sent you to us so we can learn to hang on through hard times.”
—a listener of *Hope for Syria*
- “I was relocated to Germany, and I’m writing to share the questions I’ve been asking God after listening to a few of your episodes on an audio device: Are we given a choice in life? Are we not like puppets in God’s hands? Do we have free will? Tell me, how can I say what I want while being a refugee, hundreds of miles away from the only home I’ve ever known, away from friends and school?”

Later, the same listener wrote back:

- “Thank you for answering my questions and for your prayers. Apparently, they are making a difference, maybe not in my circumstances, but inside of me. I am assured somehow that God is holding my tomorrow. He is unchanging in the love and peace he gives. So I declare that God is my father who takes care of me.”
—a listener of *Hope for Syria*
- “I have learned that everything can disappear in a second (money, shelter and even the flesh). I have learned that nothing in this material world is here to stay and I cannot depend on anything nor anyone but Jesus. He is the only one who will not leave me nor forsake me. Thank you for reminding me that I can live today with hope. Hope in Jesus alone.”
—a listener of *Youth in Mind*

PRAYER

Lord, may your Word penetrate through barriers in the lives of the people of Syria. Direct the Syrian refugees to a TWR program in their heart language. Bring new lives into the kingdom.

THE Hausa

PEOPLE OF WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA

Jesus gave us the Great Commission, telling us to “go into all the world and make disciples of all nations.” In response to this high calling, TWR, through its programs and projects, reaches out to unreached people groups throughout the world. In Africa, that includes the Hausa people.

It is estimated that of the 7.83 billion people alive in the world today, 3.37 billion live in unreached people groups with little or no access to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Joshua Project counts 17,428 people groups in the world, with more than 7,400 considered unreached, comprising more than 42% of the world's population. The vast majority (85%) of these least-reached groups exist in the 10/40 window (between 10 degrees and 40 degrees north latitude in North Africa, the Middle East and Asia), but less than 10% of missionary work is done among these people.

The vast majority of Hausa are followers of Islam, although there are some Christians and some hold to a traditional faith.

The Hausa people originally were from Nigeria and still are predominantly found in the northern part of Nigeria. However, Hausa also live in the African countries of Niger, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Chad, Ghana, Sudan, Togo, Gabon, Algeria, the Republic of Congo and Burkina Faso. Their primary language is Hausa. It is spoken by up to 150 million people, largely in Nigeria and Niger. But it can be heard throughout West Africa as a lingua franca, a common language used among people of various mother tongues.



The Hausa people are considered the largest ethnic group in Africa. Their language has spread because of long-distance trading as well as pilgrimages to the holy cities of Islam. This spread has solidified it as a language to be used in commerce.

Hausa lands are hostile to Christianity. Many who would come to Christ stay away out of fear for their lives. The harvest is ripe, but hundreds of them perish every day without being told about the love of Jesus Christ.

The intensity of the persecution of Christians in northern Nigeria, especially those who are Hausa, is increasing by the day. Hardships and pain are becoming the order of the day, and life is becoming meaningless and hopeless for many. Christians are losing their lives and properties daily. New converts are at risk of losing their lives or being subjected to severe torture until they denounce Christ.

Millions of Hausas in Nigeria have not been reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. About 60% have never had any contact with any kind of Christian missionary.

PRAYER

Father, we ask for protection for believers in Nigeria, where the persecution and even the killing of Christians continues to take place. We pray that Hausa-speaking believers in Africa would be touched and renewed daily by your Word.



Reaching the Hausa

In a land where many believers face persecution, TWR has broadcast Christ's hope to Hausa-speaking people for years.

TWR broadcasts in the Hausa language include devotionals, audio teachings, music, Christian encouragement and more.

"People listen to our programs aired in their heart language," says Garth Kennedy, director of the West Africa Transmitting Station.

Thru the Bible in Hausa has been the favorite, along with *In Touch* and *Hausa Evangelization* programs.

"We also distribute media players," Kennedy adds. "Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout West Africa endure horrible suffering daily, and many have lost their lives because of their faith."

The Story of Jesus, the made-for-radio version of the *JESUS* film, also is broadcast in Hausa at times.

PRAYER

Father, we lift up to you those involved in TWR's ministries in Nigeria, as well as local churches that have increasingly come under attack. Father God, please guide us and make provision as we consider additional ministry opportunities to Hausa-speaking people of Africa.

God at work

Responses by listeners of TWR's *In Touch, Thru the Bible* Hausa and *Hausa Evangelization* programs reflect the impact that the teaching has on countless lives.

A woman who listens to the Hausa-language broadcast in Nigeria said, "I cannot appreciate you enough as a widow. Your teachings are comforting me more and more. I pray for more grace to keep on helping us through God's Word."

Another listener from Nigeria said, "For the past years I have been living in darkness, outside God's will. Through your *Thru the Bible* Hausa program, I got to know the Lord as my Savior. Keep me in your prayers and send me a Holy Bible."

Here are some more reports from listeners:

- "Greetings to you people in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I would like to use this opportunity to thank you for your encouragement. You really help me to know God through your programs. I pray that the Lord will give you more wisdom. God bless you." —a listener from Taraba State, Nigeria
- "I am writing to thank you for the message of yesterday. I was blessed. I now see the light. Please, I want to become a Christian. What will I do? Please help me." —a listener from Kano State, Nigeria
- "For the past six years I have been living in darkness, outside God's will. But this year ... the Lord helped me through your programs. Now I know the Lord. Please, I need your prayers and a Holy Bible." —a listener from Plateau State, Nigeria
- "I like your teaching very much because you help my spiritual growth. But my husband does not want me to listen to your programs. What should I do?" —a listener from Bauchi State, Nigeria

PRAYER

Lord God, we give you thanks for those among the Hausa who have come to faith in Christ, and we intercede on behalf of those who are still seeking. May Hausa-speaking believers in Africa be touched and renewed daily by your Word through TWR's broadcasts.

Would you grant courage to new believers and lead them to others who can help them grow in the Word?

And he who was seated
on the throne said,
“Behold,
I am making
all things
new.”

REVELATION 21:5A

DEVOTIONAL

The juxtaposition is striking.

The baby in a feeding trough, born amid farm animals, adored by his nervous young parents.

The unjustly condemned criminal, beaten until he was hardly recognizable, hanging naked on a cross in front of a mocking crowd, with callous soldiers gambling over his clothing.

The mighty King on his throne.

And not just any king. This King “is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war” (Revelation 19:11). This King “will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty” (Revelation 19:15). “On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:16).

This is a King who will wipe away every tear, who will end mourning and crying and pain and even death (Revelation 21:4). What other king could do that?

As the Scriptures foretold, this King was the criminal on the cross, the baby in the feeding trough. The angel Gabriel had announced it to Mary: “He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:33).

This King would make all things new. As the apostle Paul put it: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

This is a King who excludes no one but doesn't force himself on anyone. C.S. Lewis said, “There are only two kinds of people in the end: Those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’”

This King came to make all things new. And he came for all people.

PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, you alone are worthy. You are my King, you are my Lord.
We praise you that you make all things new.*

THE Japanese OF JAPAN

Four years. That's how long one church in Japan went without a pastor.

"Please send us a pastor, Lord," a deacon and 40-year member of the church prayed. "Whomever you call to this role, we will take."

And God answered her prayers. Kosuke Yanagibashi, then a newly minted seminary graduate in his late 20s, was sent to lead the congregation of about 20 members, of which many were over twice his age.

Today, 31-year-old Yanagibashi belongs to the 10% of Japanese pastors who are younger than 50. Many aging pastors are approaching retirement without having anyone to take over the reins. Some estimates suggest that around half of Japanese churches will be without a pastor by 2030.

Japan is also home to the world's largest unreached people group. In a nation that values freedom of religion, fewer than 1 in 200 people are saved.

These statistics underscore a significant crisis: Despite considerable efforts by missionaries and local pastors, Christianity has long struggled to take root beyond the realms of church-style weddings and Christmas festivities. An overwhelming majority of Japanese individuals have yet to grasp the significance of Christmas or embrace the gospel.

Another noteworthy aspect is that Japan consistently ranks as one of the most secular nations. Yet anyone who visits the Land of the Rising Sun will quickly notice the abundance of shrines and temples scattered throughout the country.

For many Japanese, religion (*shukyo*) and religious affiliations hold more customary and practical significance rather than being driven by personal convictions. It is common for a Japanese person to casually participate in rituals and practices associated with various faiths yet remain indifferent to the underlying doctrine of each religion.

In an article published by the New Yorker, Japanese entrepreneur Hiroko Yoda wrote, "I was born and raised in Japan and feel a great affinity for my nation's spiritual traditions. I pay my respects at Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples,



Photo by BREAKIFY on

dance at summer Obon festivals that welcome the spirits of the departed, and make a point of saying a prayer on the first day of the New Year, a custom known as *hatsumode*. Yet if someone were to ask me if I had a *shukyo*, if I were religious, I would instinctively answer no. This isn't some form of subterfuge or insecurity. I suspect that most Japanese people simply don't see themselves as yoked to any one particular faith, as so many in the West seem to be."

Further exacerbating the spiritual challenges in Japan are tragic events associated with new religious movements, such as the 1995 Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway by members of the Aum Shinrikyo movement and more recently the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe by an individual who believed Abe had ties to the Unification Church. These incidents have contributed to a general reluctance among the Japanese population to identify with religion in any form.

Additionally, the Japanese worldview does not include beliefs in a Creator God, heaven and hell, and there is fear of possible isolation when embracing the gospel.

However, the 2011 Tōhoku tsunami and earthquake seemed to mark at least some softening of Japan's hard soil, said Pastor Park Sang Bum, TWR Asia's Japan Ministry Director. Many Japanese, especially the younger generation, were starting to rethink their worldview and became more open to hearing the gospel.

Though the numbers are few, young pastors like Yanagibashi represent God's interest in the Japanese people and his continued provision for them. While the church in Japan seems to face an uncertain future, we know for certain that God hasn't given up pursuing the Japanese people—and neither should we.

PRAYER

Father, I join the team praying regularly for the Japanese people listening to Christian FM radio programs. May your words of hope penetrate deep into hearts through The Word Today and Power of the Gospel programs.

Reaching the Japanese

Earlier this year, TWR Japan celebrated 10 years of speaking hope to the Japanese people on FM radio. Beginning with areas affected by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in the Tōhoku region, our radio ministry now has a broadcast reach spanning 19 of Japan's 47 prefectures and a potential audience of 17.5 million. Airing from local FM stations are *Every Man A Warrior*, *Women of Hope*, *Power of the Gospel* and *The Word Today*, with more programs underway.

Although *Every Man A Warrior* (EMAW) has a radio component on the air in Japan, the heart of this men's ministry are Bible study groups that take men through a discipleship curriculum. Topics cover how to walk with God, marriage and parenting, money, work and much more. Currently, about 65 men across 15 groups meet regularly throughout Japan.

Several challenges hinder Japanese men from readily partaking in the *EMAW* groups. One being a lack of time, another being a reluctance to bare their hearts to other men, which is a core aspect of *EMAW*. However, those who have participated have seen how being vulnerable can transform their spiritual lives.

Like *EMAW*, the *Women of Hope* ministry has both a radio program and an on-the-ground ministry of women's groups who meet regularly. In addition to praying for each other, they pray through a global prayer calendar featuring the needs of women around the world.

We thank God for the monthly prayer meetings attended by believers and TWR staff based in Singapore and Japan. Every second Tuesday of the month—whether in person or online—these faithful prayer warriors gather for an hour to learn about the ways God has been working through the ministry, hear from guest pastors in Japan and pray for spiritual revival. For more information about the prayer meetings, visit twr.org/pray-for-japan

Christians are partnering with TWR to share the gospel with the Japanese people. Since 2014, about 300 believers, mostly from Singapore, have participated in 30 Donkey Tracting mission trips to Japan. These short-term mission trips are inspired by Jesus, as he came "humble and mounted on a donkey" to bring salvation for all people (Zechariah 9:9).

In the same way, Christians outside of Japan can carry the good news of Jesus to the second-largest unreached people group in the world. Over the course of a week, participants come alongside Japanese churches not only in prayer, but also in distributing gospel tracts, radio broadcast fliers and information about local churches to the surrounding communities.

PRAYER

Lord, I thank you for the gathering of Every Man A Warrior groups across Japan. Deepen their relationships with you and with each other. Speak words of hope through the radio programs. May Japanese men find courage to be men of God in their home, church and community.

God at work

What brings you comfort? When you're tired and weary, when you need a break from the troubles of the world, is there someone or something you could turn to?

For Kei, the radio is his source of comfort.

Unlike most Japanese, he grew up in a family of staunch adherents to a new religious movement. For as long as he can remember, practices and rituals unique to their faith were deeply ingrained in his family's customs and traditions.

"I had a magnificent idol statue and many religious books at home, and I was made to read them all," he wrote in an email. "Sometimes I was even tested, so that the teachings were thoroughly drilled into me."

As he grew older, however, Kei began questioning these practices and beliefs. He noticed that they were exclusive to those who shared his faith, and some of his relatives had even severed ties with his family.

One day, he learned about the Christian faith, and the Lord opened his eyes to the truth.

"I like the Christian saying, 'Love your enemy,'" he shared. "Every day I think about how I could turn the eyes of the people in this house to the other world."

Eager to walk with the Lord, Kei yearns to go to church. But it is easier said than done.

"I would be delighted if my whole family could accompany me to church, but I doubt they would ever agree," he said. "I want to make a fresh plea to learn about Christ's teachings from the beginning, but I haven't found the courage to do so. When I think that I might be betraying my parents, I can't bring myself to do it."

In the meantime, he tunes in to *Power of the Gospel*, which TWR produces in collaboration with local pastors in Japan.

"At the very least, I try to listen to the stories of the teachers that I hear on the radio and feel deeply," he related. "I don't know what I'm going to do now, but radio is my source of comfort. I definitely want to go to a church one day."

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, may the Women of Hope radio programs reach deep into the hearts of Japanese women. I pray for bold strength as Women of Hope prayer warriors lift the needs of global women to you while caring for the needs of their own Japanese neighbors and friends.



THE Wayana PEOPLE OF SURINAME

Christ comes to the jungles of Suriname

Tom Schoen was 2 years old when he moved with his older brother and sister and his mom and dad from California to the jungles of the tiny South American nation of Suriname.

The family traveled by dugout canoe to the vicinity of the Wayana, an unreachable tribe that his parents, Ivan and Doris Schoen, sought to introduce to Christ. The young family lived in a tent for nine months, gradually getting to know their new neighbors and their language, until the Wayana invited them to live in their village. They built a hut just like the other huts in the village and lived in it as a family.

For an active boy growing up, life couldn't have been better.

"Growing up in the jungle for a boy is heaven," said Tom Schoen, now 65, who has served many years as a pastor in California. "I mean, it's a big playground."

Though the jungle was a playground from a boy's perspective, the mission agency sending the Schoens had wanted to send only Ivan initially. Just a few years earlier, Jim Elliot and four other missionaries had been martyred by the Auca Indians, a similar South American tribe.

Ivan and Doris prayed intensely and thought God was telling them to go as a family. The wisdom of that choice became clear later, after the Schoens had befriended the tribe.



“The things that they had intertribal warfare over—they would shoot men, and they would steal women and steal children,” Tom explained. But the tribe reasoned that if Ivan had come for war, he wouldn’t have brought his own wife and children. They adopted a wait-and-see posture instead.

In time, the Schoens were able to learn the Wayana language and their fearful, animistic worldview. The Wayana believed that the only good spirit, the one who had created the world, had left.

“We were able to begin to present Christ in the fashion that that great spirit may have left at that point, but that he sent his Son, and his Son’s name is Jesus,” Tom said.

A shaman, or witch doctor, professed faith in Christ after the Schoens nursed him back to health from a serious illness. That opened the way for others in this previously unreachable tribe to embrace gospel truth.

By God’s grace, a large number of the Wayana people, as well as the neighboring Trio tribe, came to faith in Christ. But that’s only the beginning of the story.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank for your work through the Schoen family and other missionaries carrying God’s Word into Suriname. Thank you for reaching the heart of key leaders in the Wayana tribe. May spiritual growth deepen through discipleship training.

The Word of God comes to the Wayana

Nuwahe was a young leader among the Wayana people of Suriname in the early 1960s when he first met Ivan Schoen and his family. The Schoens began their language study and ministry in the village where Nuwahe lived, said their youngest child, Tom Schoen.

Nuwahe helped Ivan learn the Wayana language, and the two developed a strong relationship, Tom said. Nuwahe became Ivan's partner in translating portions of the Bible into Wayana. The Wayana had no written language, but the Schoens gradually transcribed their spoken words into a printed language, and the tribe rapidly embraced literacy.

Nuwahe, who became chief of the entire tribe, felt he had been called by God for his role. The root word for his name means "tongue." The two men would translate one book of the Bible at a time. Ivan would give his wife, Doris, the handwritten transcription. She would type it on paper and use a hand-cranked mimeograph machine to produce the pages.

"They taught through that one book while they were translating the next book," Tom said.

The Wayana were so hungry for the Word that as the pages came off the machine, tribespeople would grab them and read them. The Wayana would have church five days a week, Tom said, missing only Wednesdays and Saturdays, which were hunting days.

When all of the books of the New Testament were completed, the Schoens had them combined into a single volume. Then, work on the Old Testament began.

How long does it take to learn a tribal language, turn it into a written form, teach the people how to read, translate the entire Bible into that language, print and distribute it?

The Schoens started in 1961 and finished in 2021. By then, Ivan and Doris had retired and were living in Texas. Nuwahe was alive but frail, confined to his hammock. The Schoens wanted to come to the ceremony where the full Bible was presented but could not do so because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Instead, the Schoens were present via video link as Nuwahe received his Bible and hoisted it triumphantly into the air.

"It is beautiful," Nuwahe said, weeping. "God is good. God is so good. I thought I might die before we would receive his completed Word."

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I praise you! Your word is now available to the Wayana people in their own language. Thank you for their hunger to learn and read God's Word! Penetrate hearts with truth, grace and love that is now available to them.

Continuing the work with radio

As the family of Ivan and Doris Schoen and other missionaries served in Suriname during the latter half of the 20th century, both the Wayana and Trio tribes went from animistic faiths to embracing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the 1970s, the Schoens heard rumors that another unreached, Stone-Age tribe made its home farther into the jungle, said Tom Schoen, the youngest member of the family. They came across indications that the rumors were true, and they decided to search for the mystery tribe.

“We looked for three years,” Tom said. “The Wayana and the Trio completely bought into it. They had just been delivered from the power of evil spirits. They were excited to be part of the expedition.”

By the time the Akurio tribe were found, they had almost died out. They lived in bondage to evil spirits. The result was a downward spiral: a high rate of suicide, intermarriage, increasing health problems. Only 86 or 87 of them were left.

The Wayana and Trio welcomed the Akurio into their villages. All but one came to faith in Christ. Tom said he thinks that early experience is why the Wayana and Trio are on fire to reach other nearby tribes. They also are concerned that discipleship continue for members of their own people as they move farther out to fruitful places for hunting, fishing and gardening.

That’s what led the tribes to radio, and to TWR. Tom Schoen, who had pastored a church in California, and his wife, Junine, joined the ministry. Working with the tribes, they made plans for a transmitter and station in one Wayana village and in one Trio village. Praise God that one of the necessary government licenses has been granted. Perhaps by the time you read this the second one also will be approved. In the meantime, Tom has been busy translating programs into the Wayana language

Initially, programs will be broadcast in three languages. Tom sits on a committee with another missionary and two members of each tribe to govern the effort. “They’ll be the owners of it,” he said. “And they’ll have the final say on what takes place on the radio.”

Wayana and Trio missionaries will stay for as long as six months with a tribe they encounter, and sometimes another team takes up where they’ve left off.

“But they feel like if they had these radios, man, it would just be huge because they could even leave those radios there and broadcast teaching materials in the language of these other people.”

PRAYER

Dear Lord, with a thankful heart I praise you for the missionary movement happening among Suriname tribes to reach further and deeper across their country. Open doors for the radio station development so your Word can be broadcast across Suriname soon. Stir my heart deeper into missions as I see the Wayana tribes reaching their own country.

For the
grace of God
has appeared,
bringing
salvation for
all people.

TITUS 2:11

DEVOTIONAL

The Somali nomad, moving his family and his herd in hopes of finding a more reliable source of water.

The Syrian family, forced from their home by an earthquake, huddled together in a canvas tent.

The Japanese businesswoman, pausing amid her frenetic schedule to bow before a Shinto shrine out of family tradition rather than any sort of religious belief.

The Wayana people of Suriname, now following Jesus and eager to share the good news with nearby tribes.

The Hazara teenage girl, not allowed in an Afghan school, secretly studying for university entrance exams.

All of them. All people.

Do you remember the Sunday-school song?

*Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.*

The little children and the old men and women, too, are precious in Jesus' sight. He died for the sins of us all: nomad, explorer, business executive, entertainer, soldier, you, me. He brought salvation for ALL people. None is excluded save those who will not receive.

We hope this Advent tour of unreached people groups from all parts of the world informs, inspires and encourages you as you pray for that day when "a great multitude that no one could number, from EVERY nation, from ALL tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, [cry] out in a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Revelation 7:9b-10).

PRAYER

*Lord, as we celebrate this season—may we always marvel
at the gift of salvation that came in the form of a baby.
Thank you for your lavish and extravagant love for all of us.
Touch and transform us to be like you.*

additional resources

- Download the devotional images to your phone and use them as your lockscreen or wallpaper:
[twr.org/advent](https://www.twr.org/advent)
- Learn about TWR's media ministry at
[twr.org/why-media](https://www.twr.org/why-media)
- To learn more about TWR, request our booklet "A Closer Look" by emailing us at advent@twr.org. Please leave your name and address.
- TWR MOTION is currently adapting their animated *Share the Story* program into the language of the Hausa. See a segment of *Share the Story* here:
www.twrmotion.org/sts-videos
- Learn more about TWR MOTION's ministry here:
twrmotion.org/buddhist-project
- Meet the Wayana and hear their story here:
vimeo.com/twrglobal/suriname

A full-length documentary is in production with TWR's video team. Watch for it to debut soon.

for the kids in your life

- Help kids focus on those who are lost without Jesus this month by downloading a prayer chain. Some assembly required.
[twr.org/advent](https://www.twr.org/advent)
- "Reach the Last" is a brand new board game designed to introduce school-age children to people groups who have never heard the name of Jesus. Along the way they'll discover how TWR puts radio programs together as we strive to reach the very last people with the gospel.

The game is currently in production but we would recommend you pre-order one for the children you know. Suggested donation: \$25

[twr.org/advent](https://www.twr.org/advent)

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