

Spiritual Breakthrough in Turkey

The prayers of hundreds of thousands of Christians in North America and Europe are paying off. The main reason for the openness in Turkey is because people have been praying for years. What has happened in Turkey can happen everywhere else.

by Editors of *Religion Today*

Turkey is "close to a spiritual breakthrough." Christians are boldly proclaiming the gospel in this mostly Muslim country, and as they do they are gaining more freedom and becoming more accepted. So reports a U.S.-based ministry to the country. "Believers are becoming self-confident," said Luis Bush of the AD 2000 Movement, who met with church leaders last year. "The Turkish world is close to a spiritual breakthrough," Bush said. More churches are being granted legal status and are more accepted by society. Istanbul had two churches 10 years ago; there are now 12 with their own buildings and four that meet in houses. Sales of New Testaments are increasing, and a 24-hour Christian radio station reaches 20 million listeners.

Christians distributed 1,200 New Testaments and hundreds of audio tapes telling about the life of Christ in Istanbul's main shopping district on Christmas Eve. Most people warmly received the handouts and police officers did not interfere. "That kind of thing would have been impossible a few years ago," an official of a U.S.-based ministry to Turkey told *Religion Today*. Police arrested and deported foreign Christian workers for the same activities less than five years ago, he said.

Fruit of Concerted Fervent Prayer

There is little doubt that the prayers of hundreds of thousands of Christians in North America and Europe are paying off. "I think the main reason for the openness in Turkey is because people have been praying for years," the official said. For more than 10 years his ministry has given supporters a bimonthly prayer letter about the church in Turkey. "Then there was not much to report, but now hundreds of Christian workers are actively sharing the love of Christ."

Christians have become bolder about living and sharing their faith. "Turk believers are coming to maturity and they are standing up for their rights guaranteed by the constitution," the official said. In the past they worshiped in private and did little evangelism, but their fear and secretive attitude made authorities suspicious. Now that they are standing up for their rights, police are less willing to harass them, he said. "They have gained their rights by being bold."

Openness to the Gospel

Churches are telling others about Jesus Christ. Christians in Ankara

hosted a Christmas drama in a hotel that attracted more than 1,000 people. They distributed gift packets including New Testaments and other Christian literature. More than 250 people indicated on a survey that they wanted to hear more about Jesus, and several prayed to become Christians when workers visited them. Christian books are sold in the marketplaces of major cities and an evangelical newspaper is published in Istanbul.

"There is a whole new atmosphere, especially in the Aegean area," the official said. "I used to feel a pall when I stepped off the plane, but now it's a different feeling." He recently addressed a group of students at a school in Izmir on the subject of Christianity. They listened attentively, asked many questions, and asked him to stay and talk some more. "I was astounded at their openness. I have never seen that before."

A series of Christian events will be held to celebrate the millennium. "Toward 3,000" is a yearlong celebration of the 2,000-year anniversary of Christ's birth. Tourism officials have agreed to allow Christian concerts and sporting events for tourists. Church leaders invited American evangelist Luis Palau to hold a series

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of meetings in February. The ministry has agreed to participate, and is awaiting permission from the Turkish government.

Once a Bastion of the Faith

Turkey was once a bastion of Christianity. The early church spread the message of Christ through the region that now includes Turkey, and the sites of the seven churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation are there. The country converted to Islam in the 15th century, but about 25% of the population remained Christian in 1900. Political upheaval after World War I resulted in the murder and deportation of more than 3 million ethnic Armenians, a Christian minority. Today there are an estimated 1,000 evangelical Christians, about 17,000 Eastern rite and Latin rite Catholics, and 72,000 Orthodox believers.

Evangelizing the Nation

Most of the 55 million citizens have never heard the message of Christ and many oppose Christianity because of the legacy of the Crusades. European Crusaders conquered the country and massacred many people. "They carried the cross with them, no wonder [Turks] hate the cross," the official said.

A Christian effort to apologize for the Crusades has had an effect. Christians are participating in Youth With a Mission's "Reconciliation Walk." Walkers travel through areas the Crusaders conquered in order to apologize for wrongs committed by their forefathers against Turks, Jews, and Arabs. They moved through Turkey in 1997 and 1998, reading a public apology at mosques and public squares. The effort is helping break the legacy of the Crusades, the official said. END

Praying for the Lost in the 10/40 Window

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In John 6:44 Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him..." You can pray, "Father, draw each unsaved person in the 10/40 Window with the cords of Your love. Help them to understand that Jesus paid the ultimate price for them by giving His life at Calvary so they will not end up and go to eternal punishment in hell."

4. *Pray for Holy Spirit anointed laborers to cross the path of each unsaved person in the 10/40 Window.* Scripture says, "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest'" (Matthew 9:35-38).

Some people have majored on the fact that people have a "will" of their own, as if it could never be changed. I have good news for them! God is in the will-changing business! Every person who has ever been born again had a will of their own. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, in response to someone's prayers, that causes people to yield their will to the will of the Father.

You can pray, "Lord, thank You for providing the funds so tracts, books, tapes, videos, people, billboards, bumper stickers and radio and television programs can go into the 10/40 Window to expose these lost people You love to the truth of Your Word. Open their hearts to receive You, Lord Jesus."

Once you have prayed for the salvation and deliverance of the people in the 10/40 Window, begin to rejoice

with thanksgiving that God is performing His Word in their lives. Pray:

"Father, thank You for giving us the nations in the 10/40 Window for Your inheritance and the ends of the earth for Your possession."

"Because of the severity of the persecution some of these people have experienced for taking a stand for Christianity, we bind the spirits of fear, terror and oppression from them and we loose the Spirit of power, love and soundness of mind unto them, in Jesus' name."

"We call the leaders and the citizens of every country, province and village in the 10/40 Window saved, filled with the Holy Spirit and submitted to Your will, Father, in Jesus' name."

"Happy are the people in the 10/40 Window whose God is the Lord!"

"And Father, in the name of Jesus, we loose wisdom and a blood covering of protection over those who orchestrate prayer efforts as well as hands-on missions outreaches into the 10/40 Window."

"Thank You, Father, that You always give us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are steadfast, immovable, always abounding in Your work, knowing that our labor is not in vain."

(Read Psalm 2:8; 2 Timothy 1:7; Isaiah 54:14; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Psalm 144:15; Proverbs 21:1; Psalm 91; 1 Corinthians 15:57,58 for additional biblical support).

Photo here of Daugherty

Billy Joe Daugherty is the founder and pastor of Victory Christian Center in Tulsa, OK. Victory Center has a world-wide outreach through radio, television, books and videos

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