

What happened to the Gospel in Eurasia?

The Orthodox faith moved from Greece to the Balkans barely a century before Islam arrived. Later the Kievan "Rus" adopted Orthodoxy a few hundred years before the Mongols invaded. Catholics evangelized Poland and the Austro-Hungarian Empire then shaped the culture of Central Europe through the Middle Ages. The Moravians once began an early Protestant world mission effort starting from what is now the Czech & Slovak Republics. But the Counter Reformation snuffed out the early Reformers in this part of the world. In the 1800's Mennonites running from European religious wars took open lands in the Ukraine and planted the first evangelical churches in the Russian Empire in what is now the Ukraine. Late in the 1800's British evangelicals assigned to the czar's court in St. Petersburg brought their faith with them. But the Communist Revolution blunted these efforts and forced these believers to concentrate on personal survival and passing the gospel to their children.

This pattern of the gospel breaking through to a new language group, rapid adoption, then reversal under oppressive autocratic governments has repeated itself over and over for the last 1000 years in Eurasia.

Today, Eastern Europe and most of the nations left over from the Soviet period have quickly adopted a secular lifestyle. People associate Christ with art and old church buildings-not daily life matters like raising families and earning a living. Those who do know history remember the many wars that were fought over Christianity and the corrupt politicians who used the "doctrinal squabbles" of Christians to grab power.



Slavic Nations of Eurasia

Why work in Eurasia?

The question seems appropriate as 261 million Slavs were baptized in one of the traditional national churches and profess belief in God. Only within Russia do sizeable unreached people groups still exist and they total just 14 million. However there are very few Evangelicals living within the Slavic "ethne" or nations, almost 6 million in Eurasia. Only Romania, the Ukraine and the Baltic nations include more than the typical thin 0.5-1.5% slice of the population held by the evangelicals in this region.

Eurasian Christians face two critical tasks:

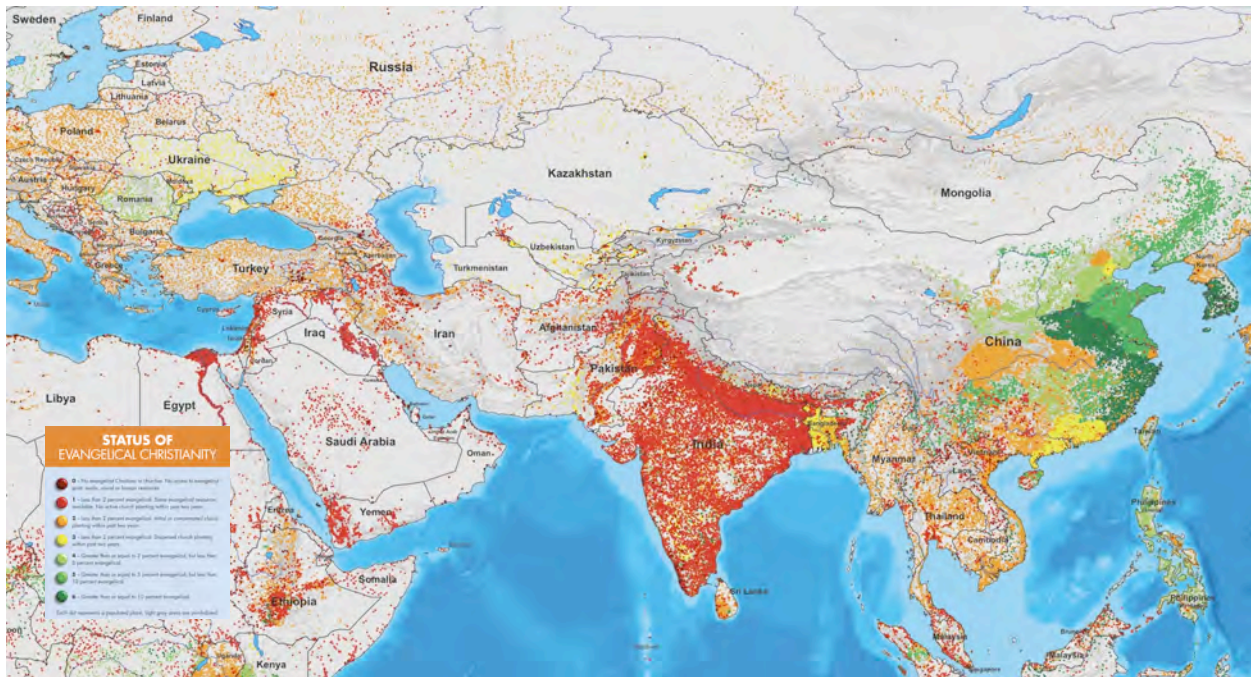
- 1. Call the sizeable number of Slavic cousins near to faith back to their "first love for Christ" and**
- 2. Together share that faith with their 2 billion unreached neighbors just across their borders!**

Otherwise, few in the Slavic world have much of a chance of hearing the gospel in a language they understand from a neighbor or local church they trust. This area needs to be re-evangelized. The unreached of Central Asia, China, Japan, India and the Middle East have never adopted the Orthodox faith as readily as have the Slavs. Something that will seem very radical to the Orthodox Slavs will need to occur, if they are to join with Chinese, Korean and Anglo missionaries hard at work in these countries.

Yet God has a plan to equip Slavic believers like the ones who partner with Leading Edge for this huge task! Our partners are already working strategies that bring the gospel to outcasts like the Roma, refugees from Central Asia, orphans, youth, the marginalized, secularized and even the lost and previously unreached in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Africa.

IMB Resources created this map that has been adapted to show the status of Evangelical Christianity in Eurasia. The small dots are population centers. The warmer red colors signify places that may never even have heard about Christ. The greens have well established churches active in spreading their faith. (For additional research go to: www.imb.org/globalresearch)

One can quickly see that the Slavic cities and towns are not well reached (less than 2% evangelical) and are neighbors with some of the most highly populated and highly unreached areas of the world like the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia.



Status of Evangelical Christianity

The graphic on the following page was created from statistics provided by the Joshua Project. It visually depicts the "Lost Ratio" which describes the relatively small numbers of active believers in Eurasia who are available now to take on the huge challenge of our generation – the lost in countries that are near neighbors of Eurasia.

EURASIAN PEOPLES	PROFESS CHRIST (millions)	EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS (millions)	LOST RATIO Active Christians : Unbelievers
Albanian	1.5	0.02	144 : 1
Baltic	4.1	0.19	26 : 1
Caucasus	3.3	0.06	50 : 1
Hungarian	8.7	0.28	36 : 1
Romanian	20.5	1.14	19 : 1
East Slavs	134.0	3.54	55 : 1
South Slavs	18.9	0.19	280 : 1
West Slavs	40.9	0.25	49 : 1
Total	240.4	5.67	67 : 1

Imagine you are an evangelical believer in Eurasia. The Great Commission looks like this to you!
"Go and make disciples of all nations ..." Mt. 28.19
 (All statistics derived from joshuaproject.net - 2011)

