

From Then to Now

Back in 2006, I invited Jim to join me on a trip to Tajikistan to teach Tajik youth pastors. We were hosted by The Bible League of Tajikistan, and Jim greatly enjoyed the trip (although he nearly backed out at the last minute!) In fact, Jim enjoyed the trip so much that he has returned to Tajikistan at least ten times now and hopes to return again.

Fast forward to a couple of years ago, and Jim felt it was time for him to move on from his corporate job. He had a great position and benefits and had been with the same company for around twenty years. But he felt that he needed to make a change. So, Jim left his comfortable job and started working for a small local non-profit company that helped Christian organizations with their fundraising. Within a couple of weeks, Jim and I were talking because he was worried that he had made a huge mistake. Jim was not able to do some things he thought he would be doing. He felt many of his talents were not being used. The culture at the new company was not very friendly. He had taken a big salary cut to work for a parachurch ministry and quickly realized he was not happy in this new job. I advised Jim to stick it out for at least six months or a year, and then, if he was still unhappy, pursue other opportunities.

So, as uncomfortable as it was, Jim stuck it out. One of the organizations that Jim was working with was Feed the Hungry. After the U.S. pulled out of Afghanistan in the spring of 2021, thousands of Afghans began fleeing the country. The folks at Feed the Hungry were trying to get food into Afghanistan even before the U.S. pull-out, but the container they sent was stuck in Pakistan. When Jim heard about their situation, he realized the friends he had worked with in Tajikistan might be able to help.

Jim reached out to Ruslan in Tajikistan and heard that many Afghans were heading north via the “Underground Railroad,” then crossing the river in northeast Afghanistan to safety in Tajikistan. Ruslan explained that the Tajik churches were already working with Afghan refugees but had very limited resources. And that is when Jim became the center of bringing everything together.

Here is what transpired. Feed the Hungry is now shipping food to Tajikistan, which is received by The Bible League (TBL) of Tajikistan. TBL is one of a handful of non-government organizations (NGOs) that have permission to bring food and clothing into the country for distribution to people. That was a critical contact.

The containers are received by TBL, but they don't have people or resources to distribute the food. But Ruslan, who has served as our translator many times, has great relationships with most of the Christian churches and organizations in Tajikistan. Ruslan has started a ministry, Greater Mercy Ministries, that takes the food received by TBL and distributes it to several churches in Tajikistan. Greater Mercy Ministries was also helping Afghan refugees get settled in Tajikistan. The churches Ruslan contacted in turn work directly with the Afghan refugees and are

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getting the food into their hands. And on the side, Ruslan is working with another man who is recording the Scriptures into Afghan dialects (Dari and Pashto,) and distributing them to the refugees on inexpensive MP3 players.



This network of organizations has been able to provide food, other supplies, and Bible teaching to over 30,000 Afghan refugees since they started working together. They are supporting over 2,000 Afghan families and several house churches have been planted.

Even though Afghans have been historically almost impossible to reach for Christ, there have been at least 74 baptisms since October 2022.



One of 17 Afghans to be baptized in July 2023

To finish Jim's story, he left the fundraising company after a year and is now happily employed in a new corporate job. But he realizes that God moved him into that uncomfortable position for a year precisely so he could connect these parties that no one else would have been able to pull off. Jim is thankful and humbled that he could be the one that had the relationships to bring these diverse organizations together so God can be reaching these Afghan refugees.

And what is exciting is that many of these Afghans are communicating with their families who are still in Afghanistan. Using social media, they are sharing the good news of Jesus and how the Christians have helped them. They may not be in country, but they are still reaching their Afghan friends and family who are. And some are hoping to return to share the good news of Jesus in their homeland.