

Issue 2

February 2026

An Interactive Teaching Tool for a New Generation

TABLETalks



VOMC
Voice of the Martyrs Canada

ALONG THE WAY • TURKMENISTAN: WORD WHIRL • A WAY OUT

Along the Way

The following story has been adapted from VOMC's ministry partner, Mission Eurasia Canada.

In a faraway country called Turkmenistan, most people follow the Muslim faith. The government there doesn't let people freely choose how they worship. It controls almost everything – especially religion. If you want to meet with others to pray or read holy books, you have to register with the government. But for years, Christian groups haven't been allowed to register at all.

That means Christians who gather in homes to worship or pray are often in danger. Police can raid their meetings, and people can be fined, beaten or even lose their jobs and homes. It's a tough place to be a Christian.

Yusup knows this all too well. "When I was 16, I heard about Jesus for the first time from my friends," Yusup remembers. "I started going to a secret church that met in someone's house.



One day, while we were reading the Bible and singing songs to God, the police burst in."

They arrested everyone and took them to the station. Yusup was beaten badly. "They told me I'd have huge problems if I kept going to church," he says.

"When I got home, my parents were scared and didn't let me leave the house for a while, so I stopped going."

"My heart started beating faster. It was like a fire was lit inside me."

Years passed, and then one day in 2017, Yusup was invited to a birthday party. There, he saw an old friend – someone who used to go to the secret church with him. “He started talking about Jesus again,” Yusup says. “My heart started beating faster. It was like a fire was lit inside me.”

Yusup began attending underground Bible studies again, moving from house to house to stay safe. Eventually, he joined a special course to learn how to be a leader and help

others grow in their faith. “Thanks to that course, my faith got stronger,” Yusup says. “Now I share about Jesus with others!”

But it’s still risky. “Please pray for me,” Yusup asks. “Pray for my studies, and for the people I talk to about Jesus. Pray that God protects us and our secret meetings. We know it’s dangerous, but we keep going because we need [Christ’s message] to grow.”

Reading Between the Lines

Vocabulary

Match the words with their definitions:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. Underground church | a) A sudden attack or invasion, often by police or military forces |
| 2. Raid | b) A group that meets secretly to worship |
| 3. Discipleship | c) Strength to do something difficult or dangerous |
| 4. Seized | d) Taken by force |
| 5. Courage | e) The process of learning about and following the teachings of Jesus |

Past Tense Verbs

Underline the past tense verbs in the paragraph below:

“When I was 16, I heard about Jesus for the first time from my friends,” Yusup remembers. “I started going to a secret church that met in someone’s house. One day, while we were reading the Bible and singing songs to God, the police burst in.”

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Turkmenistan: Word Whirl



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 V T O P U Z Q V Y A A F K H I
 O Z U F P B O F H U D V C F T
 F A M I L Y J S C K U L A T D
 S B I J X G T D S F T Z R L V
 U L E X U I Z E W D A W P C A
 A P V T F J B S D N R A E M X
 O S J F E S W E I O V K T G R
 K A H K I L L R P W J H D L Z
 T T S G Q P P T C R G A T Z P
 X W V I A B A E N U C L V U R
 Y Q E T S B F Z K Z U T A G U
 H R N I T L A T Q T A E Y F N
 I X Z S V X H T N M C K S R C
 V C C H U U M O C U E E D Y U

Words to Find

Ashgabat - Capital city of Turkmenistan.

Oasis - Fertile area in a desert.

Desert - Dry, barren region with little rainfall.

Carpets - Symbol of cultural identity and artistry in Turkmenistan.

Hospitality - Generous and friendly treatment of guests.

AkhalTeke - Horse breed and national symbol known as the "Golden Horse."

Nowruz - Persian New Year celebrated on spring equinox.

Telpek - Traditional Turkmen hat made of sheepskin.

Dutar - Two-stringed, long-necked lute.

Family - Group of people related by blood, marriage or adoption.

Turkmenistan: Word Whirl



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 V T O P U Z Q V Y A A F K H I
 O Z U F P B O F H U D V C F T
 F A M I L Y J S C K U L A T D
 S B I J X G T D S F T Z R L V
 U L E X U I Z E W D A W P C A
 A P V T F J B S D N R A E M X
 O S J F E S W E I O V K T G R
 K A H K I L L R P W J H D L Z
 T T S G Q P P T C R G A T Z P
 X W V I A B A E N U C L V U R
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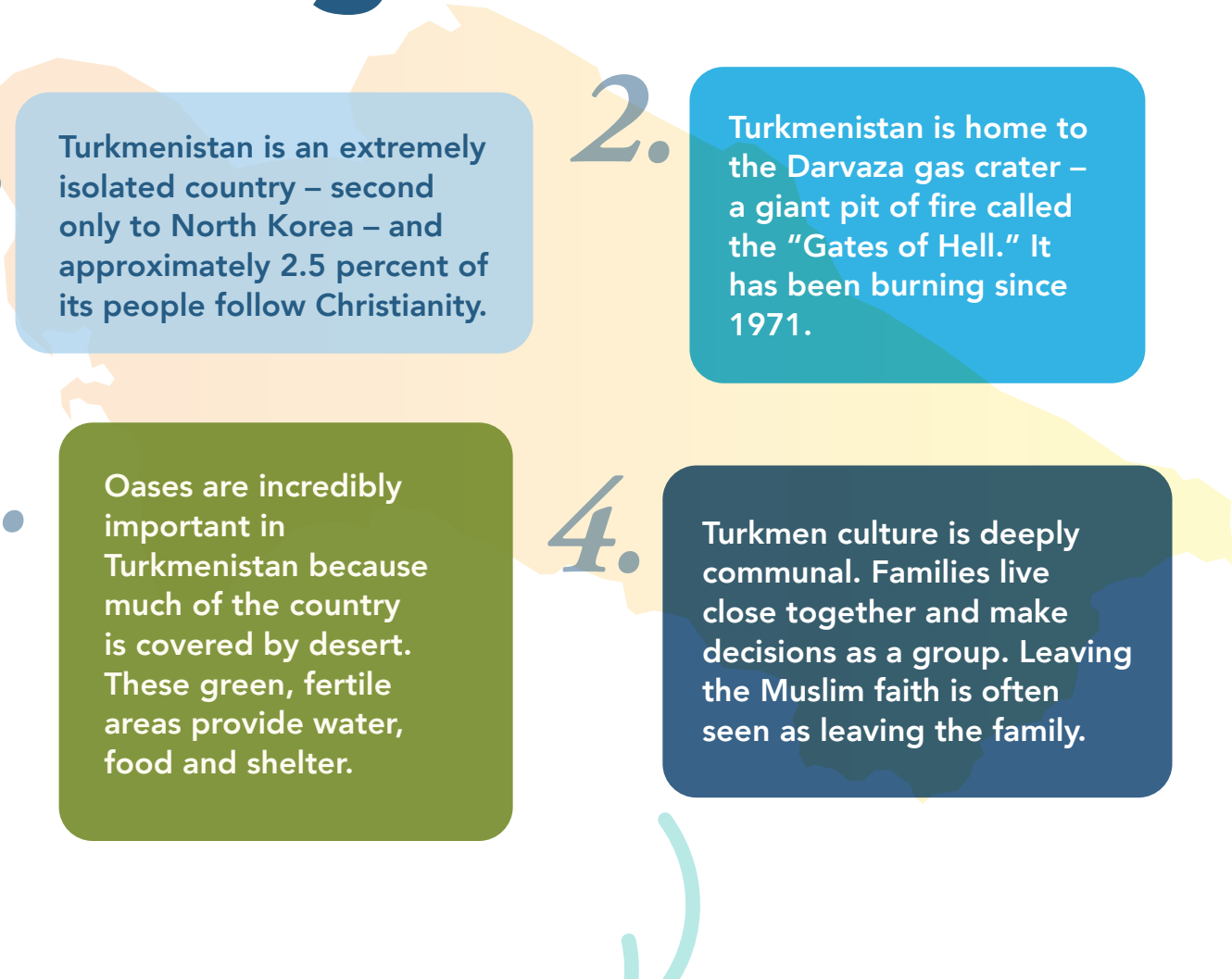
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Weigh In

Weighing the facts
about Turkmenistan

- 
1. Turkmenistan is an extremely isolated country – second only to North Korea – and approximately 2.5 percent of its people follow Christianity.
 2. Turkmenistan is home to the Darvaza gas crater – a giant pit of fire called the “Gates of Hell.” It has been burning since 1971.
 3. Oases are incredibly important in Turkmenistan because much of the country is covered by desert. These green, fertile areas provide water, food and shelter.
 4. Turkmen culture is deeply communal. Families live close together and make decisions as a group. Leaving the Muslim faith is often seen as leaving the family.

Corresponding Question Points:

(1) What do you think it would be like to live in one of the most isolated countries in the world? What kind of support do you think Christians in isolated places need most?

(2) If no one lives near the crater, do you think it's still important to try to extinguish it? Why or why not? (*Hint: It's burning up valuable natural gas!*)

(3) How would the importance of oases, and the fact that Turkmenistan is covered by desert, have a greater impact on persecuted Christians in the country? (*Hint: Think about what is needed for survival.*)

(4) Why do you think family is so important in Turkmen culture? Does this contribute to question (3)? What would it be like to feel cut off from your family?

Fun Fact!

The plural form of the word “oasis” is “oases.”

One Way

Religious Comparison: Compare & Contrast What the Bible Says

Many of the “One Way” sections of *Table Talks* explore the concept of worldview – an essential lens for understanding culture and aligning it with God’s Word.

Culture is formed when people who live in the same area begin acting in similar ways because they learn from each other. A country’s culture is shaped by the common ways its people think and live. These habits are often learned and followed without questioning whether they’re right or wrong. It’s just “what everyone does.” This is why it is so important to ask yourself *what* you believe and *why* you believe it.

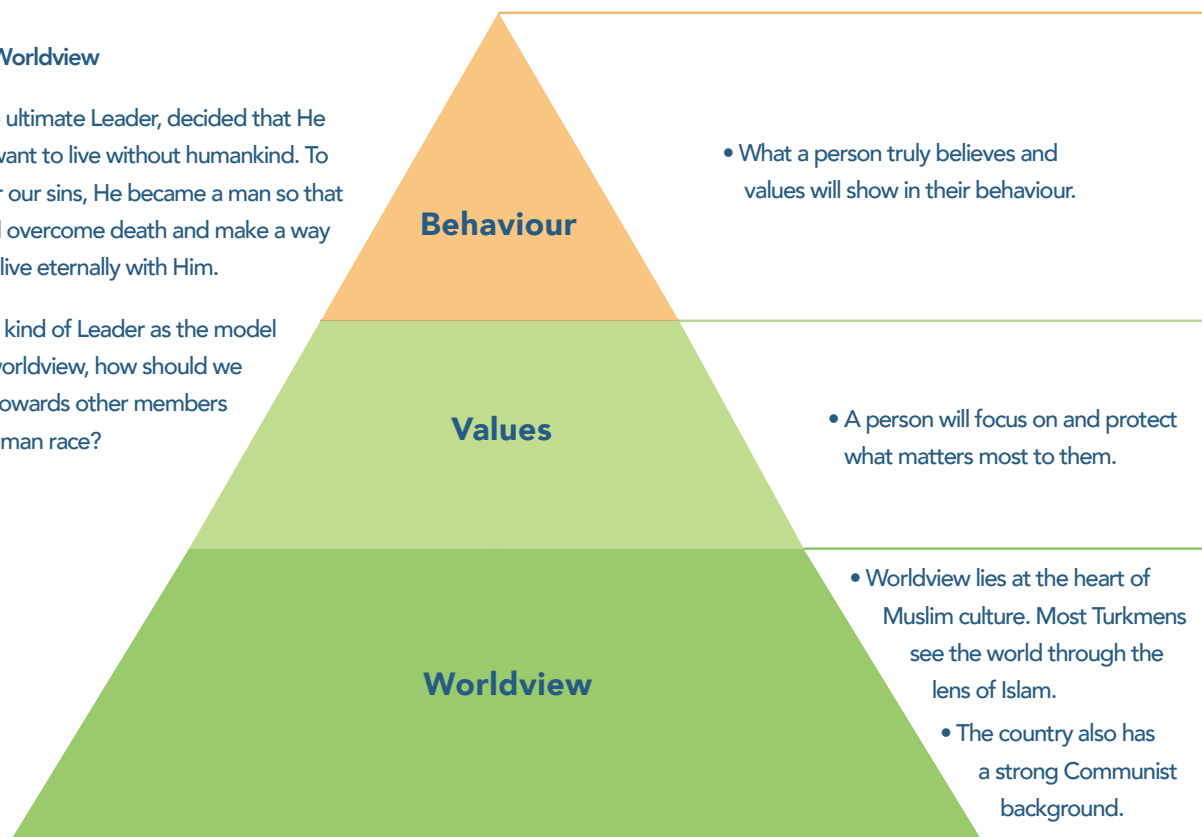
In Turkmenistan, the government tightly controls the daily life of its people. According to *Human Rights Watch*, it remains one of the world’s most repressive (strict or cruel) countries. People are not allowed to speak their minds, gather in groups or practise what they believe. Freedom to travel within the country and across its borders is heavily restricted. There are also reports of forced labour, even involving children. Citizens, especially Christians, are arrested for no reason and denied fair trials. Others are taken away and never seen again. Life in a Turkmen prison can be very harsh.

Look at the pyramid chart below. Think about the leadership in Turkmenistan. If what a person truly believes always shows up in their actions, what conclusions can you draw about their worldview? Specifically, what do the country’s leaders appear to believe about ultimate leadership or about God?

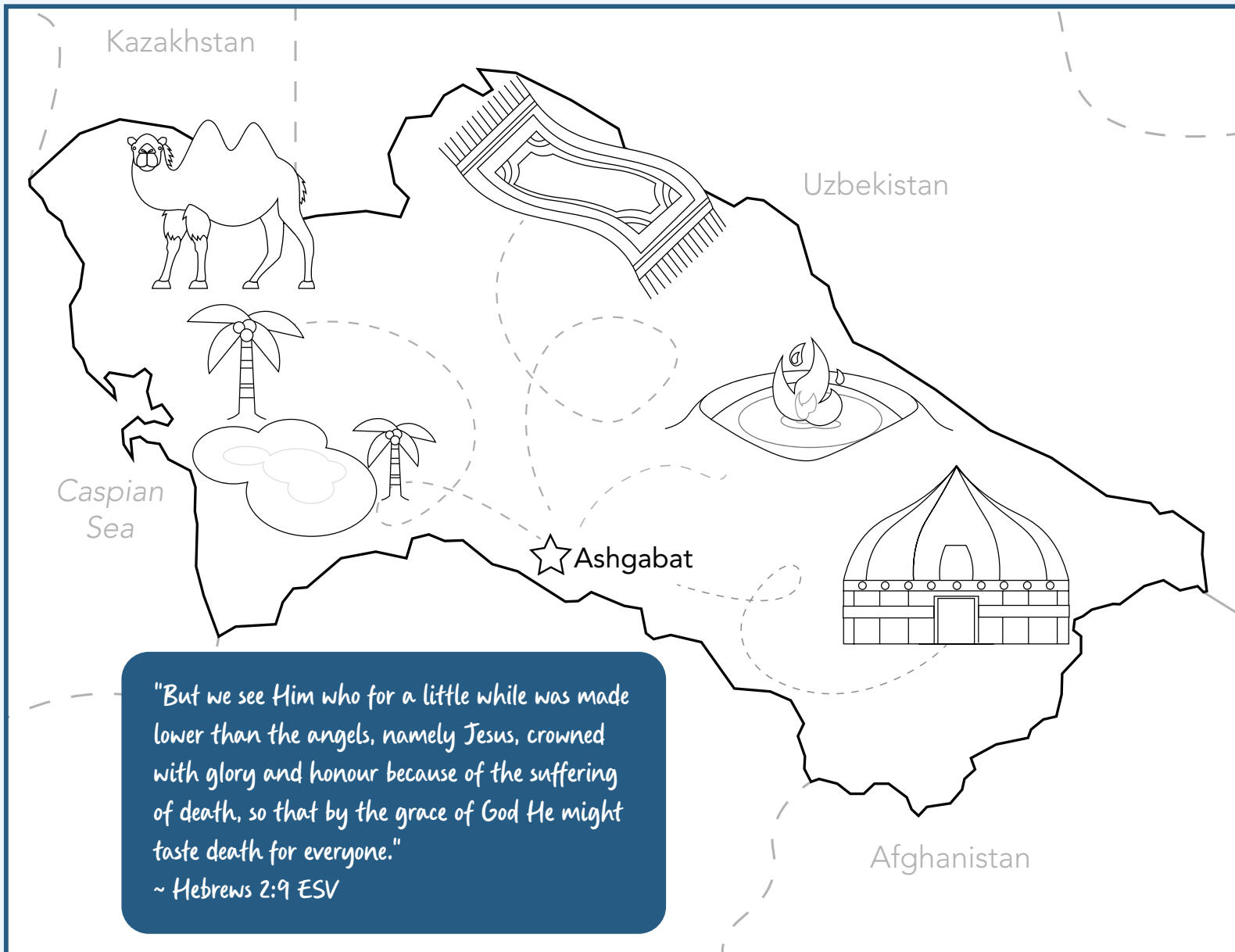
Biblical Worldview

God, the ultimate Leader, decided that He did not want to live without humankind. To atone for our sins, He became a man so that He could overcome death and make a way for us to live eternally with Him.

With this kind of Leader as the model for our worldview, how should we behave towards other members of the human race?



Colouring Connection!



Culture Quest

Photo Challenge: "A Day in the Life"

Get ready to discover Turkmenistan – a country that many people know little about! Your mission is to explore the lives of the people who call it home. What do they wear? Where do they live? What do their daily routines look like? Then, imagine what life might be like for a Christian in a place where most of the population follows a different faith. For this creative challenge, each person will design a scene and capture a photo that represents a day in the life of a Christian living in Turkmenistan. To learn more about this activity, visit: vomcanada.com/TableTalksTurkmenistan26.



What You'll Do:

Create a Costume: Design an outfit inspired by what someone in Turkmenistan might wear, adding special touches that reflect Christian identity.

Build a Scene: Make a background that shows where your character lives, works or prays. You can use craft supplies, draw it or build it using materials you have at home.

Take a Photo: Put it all together and snap a photo of your costume and scene. If you prefer not to show your face in the photo, think of a creative way to conceal it.

To Participate:

Please email the photo to tabletalks@vomcanda.org and include your name, age, mailing address and parent phone number.

Deadline:

All entries must be submitted by February 28th, 2026.

Prize:

The winning photo will be featured in an upcoming issue of Table Talks!

To learn more about this activity, visit:

vomcanada.com/TableTalksTurkmenistan26.

