



Pray for China's Silk Road

Ramadan, 5th May-5th June 2019

We long to see China's Silk Road people blessed by the abundant love of God.

Thank you for being willing to pray for China's Silk Road people. May God's presence be close to you and bless you as you meet to pray.

China's Silk Road regions have been influenced by Islamic faith and practices for many centuries. Ramadan, the traditional Muslim month of fasting, is a special time for these regions. It is also a key time for us to pray for the people there.

"I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer."

Psalm 17:6

Time and Money

"Show me where you spend your time, money and energy and I'll tell you what you worship." – John Wimber

A community's use of time and money shows what is most important to them. During this prayer time, as we pray about issues of time and money, we will be praying God's grace into the places where people need it the most.

Organising your prayer time: Three Ways to Pray

1: Move between prayer stations

Print the stories and prayer points from the following pages. Place them in four different places in your meeting room. Ask people to move between the four "prayer stations", and pray for the information they find at each one.

Explain to participants whether they should move between prayer stations in their own time, or if you would like a group of people to start at each prayer station, and move to the next station when you give a signal (e.g. after 10 minutes).

2: Pray in sequence

Introduce the first topic to the whole group, and have someone read the story. Then pray together for the prayer points, before moving on to the next topic.

You may like to sing a worship song or read a passage of scripture as you begin, or between some of the topics.

3. Choose one topic

If you only have a short time available, for example in a church service, choose just one topic. Tell the story and pray for the prayer points (or invite others to pray).

To make the prayer time more interactive, you can use a different prayer style to pray for each topic, e.g. writing prayers on sticky notes or a large page, praying silently, praying in small groups, or using drawings to symbolise prayers.

Next Steps

Did you hear something from God while praying? Do you have questions or ideas?

Contact us: silkroad@omfmail.com, www.omf.org/silkroad

Want to find out more? Visit our website, or type "China Muslim" into a web search.

Time and Money at Work

Wherever we live in the world, our work takes the majority of our time and energy. Here we have the opportunity to pray for a young family, and millions of others like them, as they engage with the stresses and struggles of work on China's Silk Road.

Do you have time?

Feifei looked down, her eyes filled with tears. “上周你也是这样说的, she mumbled, “*But you said that last week.*”

FeiFei has been waiting for me to take her to the newly-opened playground in the new mall near our home. Her dad promised to take her, but then he was caught up in department meetings before he returned to his PhD program in a city 30 hours' train journey from here. FeiFei really misses him. That's the main reason why she's crying.



But FeiFei misses me too. My department at the university is preparing for a visit from a prominent scholar in Beijing. It's our university's first visit from a Beijing scholar, so it's important that it goes smoothly. Last month, we had celebrations for our tenth anniversary of upgrading from a college to a university. Before that, we had meetings for new regulations for examinations.

Teaching at the university is a very good job for me and my husband. We're very glad that we can provide well for FeiFei. Our jobs helped her get a place at the best elementary school in our district. But the jobs come with some extra responsibilities, and a lot of extra meetings.

“Next week, for sure,” I tell FeiFei, hoping that I will be able to keep my promise. FeiFei nods sadly. She doesn't say what we both know: I can't guarantee that I will have time.

Praise God for good **job opportunities** in the Silk Road areas of China. Rapid development has benefitted many people.

In Silk Road communities, **the boss** has a lot of authority over his employees' lives, especially how they use their time. Pray that bosses will find a good balance between their plans for their company, and their employees' personal needs.

On the Silk Road, many people believe that **money** is the best solution to any medical, relational or practical problems. Pray that Silk Road people will find a more reliable source of security.

During Ramadan, those who fast only eat at night time, and can be tired and short-tempered during the day. Pray for extra **patience and grace** in work relationships during Ramadan.

Markets and job opportunities are changing quickly as China urbanises. New **graduates** and **small business owners** are finding it especially hard to adapt. Pray that God will give them the wisdom and support they need.

Time and Money at Home

Our homes are our places of refuge, where we gain strength for the rest of life, and where we live out the values we hold dear. Lift up China's Silk Road homes to God, asking that he will make them places of true safety and refuge.

Her Passion

An enormous sheep bone, swimming in an ocean of noodles, appears on the table in front of me. It jostles for space with overflowing dishes of dried fruit and nuts, and a tower of steaming naan bread. But my friend Ainur is not content. She produces a knife from somewhere in her delicate outfit and starts hacking at the meat, tearing off the extra large parts and gesturing. "Eat, eat," she commands me.



Ainur stands still, watching as I reach out and pick up some meat and a long noodle. I put it in my mouth and I start to chew. At last Ainur relaxes and smiles. It is a smile of deep satisfaction. Hospitality isn't just a custom for families on China's Silk Road. It's like an all-consuming passion.

In just a few short hours, Ainur will take her son Aslan back on the long bus journey to the mountains where she works. She teaches in a small village elementary school, while her son attends second grade. They live together in the teacher's dormitory during the week, then come back to the city for the weekend. The weekend is the only time that Ainur sees her husband and her 15 year-old daughter, who live, study and work full-time in the city. She spends her weekend cooking and caring for them, enjoying the precious hours together.

And still Ainur is willing to share her time, her food and her love with me. She is treating me with great care, even more care than she gives her family, and when she has nothing left to give. It's all because I am her guest. Hospitality is her passion.

Thank God for the **gracious hospitality** of China's Silk Road people. It can be a picture of God's generosity to us.

Pray for families who are separated because of work or study. Pray that family members will invest in **communication**, so that time and distance will not damage their relationships.

Silk Road parents often focus on their kids' academic achievement more than their **relational needs**. Ask God to help parents to relate well to their children, and support their children well.

In Silk Road communities, elderly parents often live with their youngest son. Thank God for these strong family values. Pray for good **access to healthcare**: finances, time, distance and language can be barriers, especially for older people.

Divorce rates are rising in Silk Road areas. Pray for wise people in Silk Road communities, who can give godly advice and teach much-needed skills in **reconciliation and forgiveness**.

Time and Money in Study

Study is highly prized in Silk Road communities. Good qualifications are a source of honor, and give hope of a comfortable life. Pray for God's presence to be with Silk Road students, and their teachers.

Studies and Sheep

I glance at my brother, hunched over his Chinese textbook. He nudges his heavy spectacles higher up his nose, but doesn't look up at me. He knows that it should be his turn.

YeYe, our grandfather stands hunched in the doorway. He hates having to ask our help to clean out the sheep pen, especially because it takes away from our study time. He is so proud of our studies, and I know it's partly because he never had the chance to attend school. But this work is far too heavy for an old man: one of us boys has to clean the sheep pen.

If only.... But I shake away the thought, and look back at my younger brother. He's twelve years old now, I should teach him to be responsible and make him do the work. But he has another Chinese test tomorrow, and he failed the last one. If his grades are too low, his teacher will start complaining to our mother. And she already has enough things to worry about.

"I'm coming," I turn and say to YeYe. On the way, I pass my parents' room. My mother, is sitting on the bed as usual, talking in low tones to my father. He is lying down and staring at the wall, and he says nothing. Talking has been difficult since the road accident that paralysed him four years ago, and his epilepsy medication makes him groggy. But I think it's anger and shame that keep him silent.

I sigh, and walk on to fetch the shovel that I need for the sheep.



Educational **opportunities** have been developing rapidly in China's Silk Road regions. Thank God that schooling is now available for all Silk Road children.

Pray for Silk Road students who have to deal with **challenging situations at home**, whether illness, needs of the family business or relationship problems. Pray that God will give wisdom in balancing their family's needs and their studies.

Honor is very important in Silk Road society. Students, and their families feel ashamed if their grades are low. Parents feel ashamed if they are unable to provide for their family. Pray that God will show them the source of **true honor**.

Many Silk Road parents struggle to read the national language, **Mandarin Chinese**. Pray for creative ways for these parents to communicate with teachers, and for friends or neighbors who can help the children with homework.

Pray for good teachers to be willing to work in rural areas. As China urbanises, it can be a significant sacrifice for teachers to serve in **countryside schools**.

Time and Money in Traditions

All cultures have traditions and festivals that mark the passage of time, and bring communities together. For China's Silk Road, Islamic festivals like Ramadan reinforce peoples' heritage and strengthen their relationships.

A Good Day

Mr Ma looks around and sighs with contentment. This is a good day.

On his left, Mr Ma's two sons are tucking into "nao nao", flour powder cooked with bean curd, vegetables and beef. It's their favorite dish. On the right, his parents and wife are enjoying "shou zhua rou", roasted lamb. The smell of homemade

"momo", steamed bread, wafts through from the kitchen. Today is Eid al-Fitr, the festival of the breaking of the Ramadan fast, and the meal is as it should be.

The family is chatting quietly, but Mr Ma's ears still ring with Mubarak! and Assalamalaikum, "*Blessings! Peace be with you*". These were the greetings spoken and shouted over and over this morning as men gathered at the mosque for worship. The men of his family and his community united in prayers, and united in listening to the Imam's talk. They united in giving alms to the city's poor after worship, to show gratitude to Allah for his provision over the past year. This, also, is how things should be.

The meal is ending. Afterwards, Mr Ma will bless the family. First, his parents, then his children. The children will also receive gifts of money. The two boys sit quietly during the blessing, even though everyone knows it's the money they're really thinking about. Mr Ma smiles at them. He was the same when he was young. But as he grew older, he recognised the importance of traditions, ceremonies and blessings. These are the things, he thinks to himself, that hold our families and our communities together. He hopes that they always will.



Pray for Silk Road families as they observe **traditions** this Ramadan. Thank God for the unity they enjoy in their communities during festival times.

In this generation, fasting and public worship are becoming less common, even during Ramadan. Pray for Silk Road people to find good ways to express their ethnic identity as they **adapt to today's society**.

Muslim communities mark the 27th of Ramadan as the "**Night of Power**" (31st May 2019), when they believe prayers are especially powerful. Some will stay up all night to pray. Pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal the power and grace of God.

Ramadan is traditionally a time for religious devotion and pure living. Pray that Silk Road people will hear about Jesus' teachings on **purity and devotion**.

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice...?" (Isaiah 58:6) Pray that God will bring special wisdom and compassion to government officials, who have responsibility for **justice** in their districts.