

## Finding a Bride in Kyrgyzstan

In the mountains, hills, valleys, cities and villages of Kyrgyzstan many young women suddenly and unexpectedly find themselves married. This happens in a way which needs to change. Just as many Western, African, and Asian societies need to be freed from their pornographic addictions and sexual promiscuity, Kyrgyzstan has a significant social problem in the area of marriage.

About 40% of the brides in Kyrgyzstan are simply kidnapped and married by force. This is a tribal custom from many generations ago, so for many it is “traditional”, but it actually breaks one of the ten commandments “You shall not steal.” During the Soviet era the practice was suppressed but not altogether eliminated, however, it has grown in scale in recent decades. Happily, a small majority of marriages are arranged, negotiated and mutually agreed upon. Bride kidnapping is illegal, but most violators are not prosecuted. Islam is also against forced marriages.

In most cases the young girls do not consent to the kidnapping and often the “marriage” is consummated by simple rape. Some give their consent to avoid difficulties, others genuinely decide to simply accept their “destiny,” their families are invited and a marriage takes place. Many girls stay with their new husband but

others seek to escape, a minority of young women commit suicide or are simply murdered if they do not cooperate. The psychological trauma is significant.

Typically a young man may make efforts to “date” girls although typical “Western dating” is practically impossible in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>1</sup> Kyrgyz society greatly limits the amount of time that young men and women may spend together. Perhaps a family will seek to negotiate a match. Sometimes this works, and a marriage is arranged. However, many young men find themselves in difficult circumstances where they are not able to get married for various financial, family, social or personal reasons. In those cases they will often kidnap with the active participation of their friends (80-90% of the cases) and their extended families (parents, siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins). The good and bad qualities of the perspective brides are debated and plans are devised.

Young women are abducted just about anywhere or anytime. It can happen at home, in public or even while working in the fields. The kidnapped bride is often brought to her future husband’s family and his women relatives are enrolled to seek to persuade the girl to accept her destiny and joyfully receive her new husband. Many will say “I too was kidnapped, we all were kidnapped. This is our way.”



*The couple above was featured in an advertising campaign urging people to marry by mutual consent.*

### ► Prayer REQUESTS

- Many Kyrgyz Muslims are involved in seeking to change this situation by various means. Ask God to bring the Kyrgyz people to a real heart change in this area.
- Pray for healing for those who have suffered.
- Ask the Lord to bring further revelation to the Kyrgyz people about the true nature and meaning of marriage (Ephesians 5:21-33).

*<sup>1</sup>One could question whether or not typical “Western style dating” is actually a better solution to the problem of finding a mate!*