

Asia Harvest



'Put in the Sickle, for the Harvest has Come!' (Mark 4:29)

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An Emergency in China

Interview with Paul Hattaway, Part One

A Famine in the Land

by Wayne Graham

For years I have had the privilege of serving the church in China. The spiritual lives of these men and women have encouraged me to go deeper in my walk with God. One area in particular has impressed me—their hunger for the Word of God. Right now it can be said there is a famine in the land of China. This is ***“not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord”*** (Amos 8:11). There are tens of millions of Chinese Christians who are eager for spiritual nourishment, but are unable to feast on God’s Word.

Recently while visiting Beijing, I decided to spend an afternoon doing my own research to determine how easy it is to buy a Chinese Bible. Remember, Beijing is the capital of China, a modern, massive city with over 15 million residents. Most of China’s Christians live in remote rural areas thousands of miles away. I commenced my quest for a Bible at the huge Xinhua bookstore, considered one of the largest bookstores in the world. After speaking with several workers and the store manager, I was taken to a small section which had a few Christian books, but no Bibles. There were a few booklets about the Bible, but no complete Chinese Bible to be found anywhere. Next I went to the Foreign Language Bookstore and I found Bibles in English and several other languages, but not in Chinese.

The young lady at the store suggested I visit a local church to see if I could find a Bible there. By the time I arrived at the Wangfujing Cathedral I had been searching for a Chinese Bible for hours. I located a small bookshop operated by the church and purchased a Chinese Bible for the equivalent of \$4. I could have bought several Bibles if I had asked, but any larger order would have required permission and approval.

Can you buy Bibles in China? Yes. Is it easy? No. Imagine a Chinese house church pastor living in a small village in the remote countryside trying to get 50 or 100 Bibles for his congregation. He would face great difficulties logistically, legally, and financially. Thus the challenge is an issue of supply and demand. A limited number of Bibles are printed and sold in China, but literally millions of Chinese believers do not have access. The ‘food’ is not making it to those who are starving.

AN EMERGENCY IN CHINA

Straight Talk on the Need for Bibles

An Interview with Paul Hattaway (Part 1)

For nearly a quarter of a century, Asia Harvest has been providing Bibles to the house churches in China. In the early years this consisted of hosting many short-term teams who would come to Hong Kong and carry Bibles in their bags and suitcases across the border into China. Starting in the late 1990s, we started printing Bibles secretly inside China. This greatly increased the quantity we could supply, while sharply reducing the cost per Bible. Overall, Asia Harvest has now printed and delivered almost 3.5 million Bibles to the house church believers in China.

We recently sat down with Paul Hattaway, the director of Asia Harvest, and asked him about the current need for Bibles in China, and why so many people around the world think Bibles are now freely available. Part One of our interview is below...

Asia Harvest: *Let's get straight to the main topic of this interview. Are Bibles still needed in China?*

Paul Hattaway: Yes! But first, please let me thank everyone reading this interview who has prayed and given so that believers in China can have Bibles. On behalf of our brothers and sisters who now have God's Word to help them grow, thank you and God bless you!

Not only are Bibles still greatly needed, many Chinese church leaders are telling us the need is greater now than at any time since the 1980s. There is a growing emergency in China because of the lack of God's Word among the rural house churches. If this need is not rebalanced soon, I fear it will have dire consequences for the revival that has been burning so brightly in China for the last 30 years.

AH: *If there is such an urgent need for Bibles in China now, how come so few Christians around the world are aware of it?*

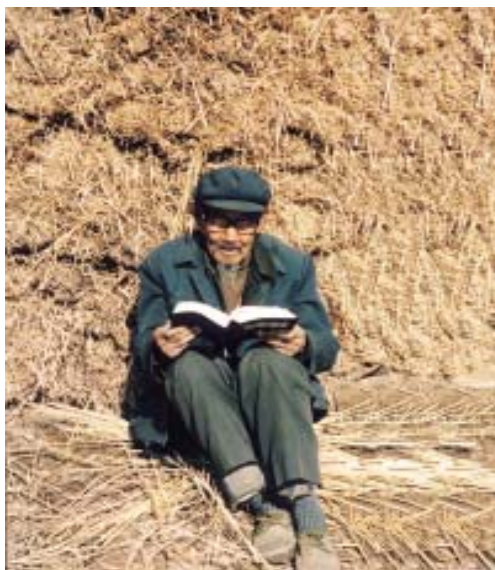
PH: There are several main reasons for this. The first is that providing Bibles for China (and many other countries) seems "out of fashion" in many churches today. Someone recently told a friend that helping get Bibles to China's Christians is "so 1990s!" It seems to no longer be the "in thing." If providing God's Word to hungry believers who can't access it is no longer a priority, may the Lord have mercy on us!

Another misconception is that many people believe China is now a rich country, so they no longer need our help. One American Christian recently told us, "We owe China billions of dollars, so they can take care of themselves."

The first thing to say to this statement is

that the Chinese government owning American debt does not mean the average person in China benefits in any way! About 90% of China's house church Christians live in rural areas of the country, often thousands of miles away from the glistening skyscrapers of modern cities like Beijing and Shanghai. The revival in China at the moment is burning brightest in remote provinces like Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Gansu and Qinghai. Thousands of people in these regions are coming to Christ daily, and they are among the poorest of the poor in China.

I wish I could take people who think China is now swimming in wealth to some of the areas we go. They would get the shock of their lives! The recently updated *Operation World* book lists the average annual US income at \$47,000 per person. The UK and Australia are slightly lower. China's average per-capita income is just \$3,200 per year, but there is a massive division between what those in major cities and those in the countryside earn. Many of the Christians



we provide Bibles to are among the poorest people in China. They are burdened by grinding poverty and struggling to survive on just a few hundred dollars a year. For most, even if they were able to access a Bible, they would struggle to afford one.

AH: *Most Christians have heard that Bibles are now legally printed inside China, so hasn't that taken care of the need?*

PH: You have raised the main reason why people are confused about the current need for Bibles in China. For years there has been a concerted attempt by the government-approved church to convince the world that Bibles are now freely available in China. They have successfully launched a global offensive via Christian radio, television and magazines to announce the "good news" that China no longer needs Bibles. Can you imagine any other country in the world saying they have no need for more Bibles? Yet the government church leaders in China—home to one-fifth of the world's population—say this with a straight face and many Christians foolishly believe them.

Some high-profile Western Christian leaders have joined in the chorus of support, reinforcing the false notion that China has plenty of Bibles. The propaganda campaign has been so successful that we regularly receive letters and emails from around the world, informing us that we are so out of touch we haven't realized that China is now "awash with Bibles."

It is true that for many years the government has allowed the printing of a limited number of Bibles in China. These are all produced at the Amity Press in the city of Nanjing, and each Bible has an official permit number.

I am thankful for every one of them!

These official Bibles are printed primarily for members of the state-sanctioned churches in China, known as the 'Three-Self Patriotic Movement.' There are approximately 20 million Christians in these churches. It is usually not difficult for Christians living in most major urban centers to buy a Bible at one of these churches. However, if you want to buy more than five or ten Bibles you will probably find it difficult, and questions may be asked about who they are for.

For the last 23 years we have been serving the unregistered house churches in China, who number more than 50 million believers. I can tell you that it simply isn't true that the official Bibles are freely available inside China for all Christians. It would be wonderful if it were true, but it is not the case.

Each of the house church networks we serve have verified needs of hundreds of thousands of Bibles just to provide God's Word to their new converts!

AH: The Amity Press, which prints Bibles with government permission in China, report to have printed tens of millions of Bibles in China since its inception. Surely many of these find their way to the house churches too?

PH: The numbers of Bibles reportedly produced by Amity Press are impressive. What they fail to mention, for some strange reason, is that two-thirds of the Bibles they print in China are for EXPORT! Amity Press has become one of the largest commercial printers in the world, and two-thirds of the Bibles they produce are in other languages and are exported out of China. If you have



a look at an English NIV Bible, for example, don't be surprised if it says it was printed in China.

The bottom line is that the Chinese Bibles that do remain inside the country are for distribution among members of the Three-Self churches. The more than 50 million house church Christians struggle to pick up more than a few crumbs that fall from the table of the registered church.

My heart breaks for these believers, and the way they have been neglected by much of the Body of Christ. More and more mission groups are signing up to work with the Three-Self Church in China, because it is safer for them to do so. What about the 50 million precious followers of Jesus among the "illegal" and despised unregistered house churches? Should we just ignore them and let them waste away without access to God's Word?

Although they wouldn't say so publicly, I know how painful it is to house church leaders when yet another big-name Western Christian comes to China and saddles up with the government. One world-famous preacher, convinced he was an expert after a week or two in China, even had the audacity to rebuke the house churches for their refusal to register with the Communist government. Such statements show a complete ignorance and disrespect for our brothers and sisters who have suffered so much for their faith and the principles they have taken a stand for. After 50 years of persecution, the house church Christians in China do not need further wounds at the hands of ill-informed Christians from other nations.

Many house church leaders have shared with us that they consider being deprived of Bibles as another form of persecution.

We are not ashamed to say how privileged we are to serve the illegal and increasingly-neglected house churches of China. We aim, by God's grace, to provide as many Bibles to our dear brothers and sisters as the Lord grants us the resources to print and deliver.

AH: What do you say to those Christians who say we must obey the laws of the land, and the laws of China right now say you can not print Bibles except through the Amity Press?

I agree that we should always obey the laws of governments and those in authority, as long as those laws do not go against the higher law of God. Jesus commanded us to go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to all of mankind.

About 60 countries in the world today do not allow missionaries and are hostile to the message of Christ. Should we obey the laws

of the land and forget about the hundreds of millions of people who live in those countries? Should we let them go to hell without hearing about Jesus?

Was Daniel misguided when he refused to obey the law of the land to bow before an idol? Were Peter and John sinning when they defied orders to stop telling people about Jesus? Peter and John replied, **"Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we can not help speaking about what we have seen and heard"** (Acts 4:19-20).

I suspect many Christians today use the "obey the laws of the land" verse as a self-righteous excuse for doing nothing.

Jesus commanded us to feed those who are hungry, and in China today there are multitudes of His children spiritually starving because of a lack of God's Word.

We look forward to a day when Bibles are freely available to all people in China—including house church Christians. In the meantime, we continue to print as many Bibles as God grants us the ability to do.

AH: Some people say the house churches should get their Bibles via the government churches. Is this possible?

Some well-meaning missionaries have told me that official channels in China will provide Bibles to the house churches if we ask. I reply, "Great! We need 50,000 Bibles delivered here, and 35,000 delivered there," and so on. Immediately my friends' eyes look down, as they realize they can't help with so many. If we needed 50 or 100 Bibles it could be arranged, but such a tiny trickle of Scriptures is like trying to put out a raging forest fire with a garden hose!

Even if the house churches were able to access large quantities of Bibles that have been printed for the registered churches, this might temporarily alleviate some of their needs, but doing this would not add a single Bible to the total number available in China. In a way it would be like taking a bucket of water from one end of a swimming pool and pouring it into the other end.

AH: *How can people reading this interview respond?*

PH: On behalf of the Christians in China, I would firstly ask you to pray. The structure is already in place to supply many millions more Bibles to the house churches than are currently being provided. Please pray that the most basic need every Christian has—access to God’s Word—would not be hindered.

There is no point us trying to persuade people to get involved with this need by mere human strength or reasoning. Please ask the Holy Spirit to reveal God’s heart on this matter, so that more people and churches might respond to this need from a position of understanding and because they see a God-given opportunity to make a strategic difference in the lives of many.

Part of the problem is a lack of support. Quite simply, the more funds come in, the more Bibles we can print and deliver for \$1.80 each.

Amid all the talk of millions of Bibles needed, let’s remember that each individual person is precious to God. These Bibles go to real believers, young and old, who have been saved by the grace of God, and who desire to know more of the Lord Jesus. For this reason, every single Bible is precious and life-changing. Every donation to this

project is important and strategic, whatever the amount. Please also consider sharing the need for Bibles in China with your Christian friends and relatives.

In our next newsletter we continue our interview with Paul Hattaway on the need for Bibles in China. He shares new research on just how many Bibles are needed right now, and the impact the Scriptures are making in China today.

Letter from a House Church Leader in Shandong Province

“You may have heard about recent drought in our area and how we will likely not have a wheat crop because the drought is so severe. What is not being reported is the spiritual flood we are experiencing at the same time. Many souls are coming to the Lord every day. Our churches have targeted specific regions and groups within our province with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, so we can get the message out to as many as possible.

Many souls are coming to the Lord. We are even seeing God work through the drought, as many farmers have lost confidence in their own abilities and have opened their hearts to Jesus Christ.

We urgently need 589,812 Bibles to provide one for each person in our fellowships. With a Bible, they will be more effective in explaining the Christian faith to the farmers who are seeking and turning to the Lord. We ask God to pour out a special spiritual blessing on you for providing these precious Bibles to us.”

Japan's Triple Disaster



No doubt you were as shocked as we were to see the images of the massive earthquake and tsunami which struck Japan on March 11. Tens of thousands of people were swept to death by the huge wall of water as it moved inland. The third part of this disaster, and potentially the most fatal, is the ongoing nuclear reactor meltdown. Within hours, Asia Harvest and our ministry partners were in contact with church leaders in Japan, who asked for prayer and help.

We immediately sent a message out to people on our email list, and many responded generously to our Asia Disaster Relief fund. We have so far sent \$51,000 to Japan, as well as connecting our coworkers with other churches and organizations that have given directly. The help we provided was initially used for basic necessities like food, water, medicine, and stretchers. Stretchers were required because many people, including the elderly, were sleeping on the floor in shelters, which added to their stress.

With an estimated 400,000 people staying in 2,200 shelters, the needs were huge. One group we sent funds to visited Miyagi, where they fed 3,000 desperate people. Many sobbed with gratitude, saying it was the first hot meal they had eaten since the tsunami.

The second stage of the assistance enabled 30 local churches to help people in the affected area. Purchases included hundreds of blankets and bicycles, several thousand adult and baby diapers, and 1,000 hygiene kits (containing soap, towels, face cloths, tooth brushes, toothpaste, etc.). The 200 bicycles we provided were specifically requested by Japanese Christians because there was no gas available, and many areas remain inaccessible to vehicles because of destroyed roads. Our colleagues have used the bicycles to deliver relief supplies to families. We also provided eye-glasses, because many people lost theirs during the commotion of the quake and tsunami. This was especially demoralizing for the elderly, as not being able to see clearly increased the trauma of their ordeal.

Our coworkers in Japan report that many people in the disaster zone are now open to the claims of Christ on their lives, and are appreciative for the loving help they have received from Christians both in Japan and from all around the world.

...and an Unreported Earthquake



The Lord Jesus foretold that there would be an increase in natural disasters in the world, including earthquakes, as we draw closer to His coming. We are certainly experiencing this at the moment!

Another huge earthquake, measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale, struck northeast Myanmar (Burma) on 24 March. It was largely unreported by the world media, which was focused on the disaster in Japan and unrest in the Middle East.

The quake struck in the 'Golden Triangle' region where the countries of Myanmar, Thailand and Laos meet. Dozens of tribes inhabit this dense jungle area. The worst-affected communities were in Myanmar, where at least 400 people died.

Whereas Japan is a wealthy nation where people have insurance and the government has the resources to help with long-term rebuilding, Myanmar is a desperately poor country. Most people's homes are simple structures made of bamboo or flimsy wood. Thousands of such homes were destroyed in seconds by the earthquake. As the affected region has a long history of conflict with the Burmese military, the national government has refused to help them. The people have been largely forced to care for themselves the best they can.

Having been based in northern Thailand for many years, Asia Harvest has many contacts in the area. This latest disaster provided another strategic opportunity to help those in need. For \$120 per family we have provided shelter, food, medicine, and clothing to those with nothing. Thanks to the generosity of many people who read of this need on our website, we have so far sent \$45,000 in assistance.

Please pray for the tribes of the Golden Triangle, many of which remain unreached by the Gospel. Pray this disaster will open hearts and thousands will not only find physical comfort, but salvation in Christ.

There is an ongoing need to help the victims of this "unreported" disaster. If you would like to give, please use the enclosed Response form and indicate your gift is for the **Asia Disaster Relief fund. 100% of donations received go directly to the need.** Nothing at all is deducted for administration or any other expense. We cover all such costs ourselves.



A small boy in Myanmar having bamboo splinters removed from his face after the earthquake.

CHINA BIBLE PRINTING



Current Total: 3,468,121 Bibles printed and delivered.

We are partnering with house churches in China in a long-term goal to provide Bibles for Christians. We receive countless requests for God's Word from church leaders throughout the country. These Bibles are distributed free of charge, equipping the believers and helping add fuel to the fires of revival in China. **Each full Bible costs just \$1.80 to print and deliver.**

Asia Harvest is able to print and distribute 200,000 Chinese Bibles per month depending on incoming funds. So far this year we are operating at 18% capacity.

ASIAN WORKERS' FUND

Thanks to your gifts we are currently able to support 398 Asian evangelists working among 140 unreached tribes and ethnic groups.



The **Asian Workers Fund** assists church-planting evangelists who are involved in strategic ministry in Asia. These servants of the Lord have committed their whole lives to the Gospel but are hindered by lack of finances. We only support evangelists/missionaries and not pastors, as we believe pastors should be supported by the flocks they shepherd. Please pray about whether you or your church could help support these dedicated workers, at **\$25 per month** each. A prayer card is sent to all regular donors.

SOUTHEAST ASIA BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 214,874 Bibles Printed in 34 languages

The Communist nations of Laos and Vietnam are home to more than 250 different tribes, dozens of which had full Bibles or New Testaments translated into their languages prior to the arrival of Communism in 1975. Since then, these believers have been deprived of Bibles by the authorities. We are also providing God's Word to tribes in Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, and other Southeast and South Asian nations as the need arises. **Each Bible costs \$2.70 to print and deliver.**

CHINA LIVING MARTYRS' FUND

Because of your partnership we are supporting 645 living martyrs.



"A martyr is a Christian who chooses to suffer death rather than deny Christ or His work... One who sacrifices something very important to further the Kingdom of God and endures great suffering for Christian witness." (The Voice of the Martyrs)

The **China Living Martyrs Fund** assists pastors and evangelists who are unable to work because of injuries or illness caused by persecution. They and their families face extreme poverty and hardship. Through a gift of **\$35 per month** you can help support one of these living martyrs. A prayer card is sent to every regular supporter of this project.

PROJECT SMILE



Your generous gifts have so far helped bring a smile to the faces of 9,651 children in Vietnam.

Project Smile helps children from poor families in Vietnam who were born with disabilities such as cleft palates, cleft lips and club feet, as well as others who need operations for burns, cancerous growths and other conditions. The cost of helping a child varies depending on the kind of surgery required, but each gift received of **\$60** helps a child have a better life. A laminated prayer card of a child helped through Project Smile is sent to all donors.

ASIA DISASTER RELIEF FUND



Transforming lives from ashes to beauty with God's love.

Over the years Asia Harvest has provided relief assistance to the victims of natural disasters such as the earthquake in China and cyclone in Myanmar (Burma); the Tsunami, and a host of other disasters in India, Afghanistan, Vietnam, and elsewhere. In addition to providing aid through medicine, tents, blankets, food and water, rebuilding homes etc., the Christians we partner with take every opportunity to share the Gospel, and thousands of people have come to know Jesus Christ. This long-term fund helps us respond immediately whenever a disaster strikes.



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