

Asia Harvest



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

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The Ring of Fire

God's Kingdom Continues to Advance in Asia

From the Front Lines

by Paul & Joy Hattaway

In our previous newsletter we spoke about the Asian Workers' fund, and how the Lord has led us over the years to help the Church in Asia reach the lost in their own countries. We don't impose our agenda on those we work alongside. Instead, we ask church leaders to tell us the vision God has given them, and we get involved and support certain projects as God leads and provides.

It sounds like a pretty simple concept, but we have been overwhelmed with responses to our last newsletter from people who are amazed at what we wrote. Even a few missionaries who have worked in Asia for decades said they have never seriously considered that things could advance more quickly if they simply serve and equip local believers to do the job instead of trying to do it all themselves.

It shouldn't come as a surprise that many Christians have never heard of the concept of serving local believers. After all, we are taught in church every week, both with word or by implication, that 'our' Christianity is superior to that in the 'Third world'. Bible colleges and seminaries spend years telling students they need to embrace their particular set of doctrines and spread it around the globe. Old missionary biographies are studied, reinforcing the idea that we will be doing the world a big favor by going and reaching the heathen in distant lands.

The implication is that we are the masters, and the churches in Asia, Africa, Latin America or elsewhere will be greatly blessed by our coming. After all, we have more resources, programs, sound systems and money than they do. We have preachers who know how to crack jokes and stimulate listeners.

Let me share a personal experience to bring a small dose of reality! A few years ago I travelled to Heilongjiang Province in northeast China. It is the coldest part of the country, bordering Siberia, and I happened to be there in the middle of winter with temperatures around minus 25 degrees during the day.

The house churches in central China had hastily arranged the visit to Heilongjiang. The believers further south were aware of my teaching and beliefs, but those in Heilongjiang had never met me. I was taken to a small inner-city apartment where about 30 house church leaders had gathered for fellowship and to feast on God's Word. Many of these leaders had experienced severe persecution and imprisonment for their faith. They had also been privileged to spearhead much of the tremendous

revival that had swept Heilongjiang in the previous 15 or 20 years, with literally millions of people coming to faith in Christ. The growth had been greatest in and around Daqing, where one house church group had 80 believers in 1990. By 2003 they had grown to 200,000! It has continued to grow steadily to the present day.

The leader of the meeting warmly welcomed me, but before he let me speak he said he had a few questions and ushered me into a side room. He bent over and dragged a heavy suitcase out from under the bed. He popped the locks and revealed the contents — dozens of colourful, glossy Christian teaching books by Western preachers, which had been translated into Chinese.

The house church leader told me to look through the books and tell him if I approved of them. I truthfully told him that I was not familiar with many of the books, but the books I did know about I considered extreme, unbiblical and dangerous. The elderly brother smiled and said,

“Thank you for your honesty. We keep these books locked away because they are toxic. A few years ago a foreigner visited us and wrote down our address. Ever since he has been sending us large boxes of these books. We never asked for them nor do we want them. They would destroy the faith of our people if they read them. We told him to stop sending the books, but they keep coming anyway. There are so many boxes coming that we are worried the authorities might get suspicious and investigate why we are receiving so much religious material from overseas.”

The expression on his face looked pained when he told me this, but a wry smile appeared when he concluded, ***“Actually the books have been a blessing to us in one way. At this time of the year they have been a great help in starting the furnace every morning!”***

The reason we mention this story is to share a fundamental problem in missions, and in serving God in general. In order to effectively serve, we must be willing to display humility and learn how to best meet the needs of those we are serving. It is arrogant to assume we know best and force our ideas, teaching, or books down people's throats.

Note the kind of attitude the Lord Jesus told us to have: ***“You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.***



Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:42-45).

The very word “minister” in the New Testament is the same Greek word used for slaves who were chained together in the bow of a ship, and ordered to row. Hidden from sight, their job was to serve in such a way that helped the vessel move forward towards its destination, for the benefit of others. In many parts of the Christian world today, being a “minister” is the exact opposite — someone up on stage with a nice suit and a big smile. This kind of “church on a stage” Christianity automatically assumes that if something is going to get done, then it is me who will do it. If someone has to go somewhere, it is me who should be that person.

Recently a pastor in one Western nation was convicted after reading one of our books on the Church in China. His response? He arranged a trip for himself to China and told his congregation God had “called him to preach the Gospel in China.” After a few weeks of vacation he returned home.

Why do people assume they have to be the ones to do things and go places? Why do we necessarily have to be the ones up front preaching and baptizing? Wouldn't it be better if local church leaders baptized their new believers?

We believe China needs missionaries, but not the traditional kind. China needs people who are willing to come and serve the vision that God has given to His Church in China. There are at least 50,000 fulltime Chinese house church evangelists in China right now who are unable to share the Gospel among the unreached because they lack the financial support to do so. These are battle-hardened warriors, fluent in the language and completely integrated into the culture — their culture. Surely it would make more sense to spend our energy helping some of those 50,000 go out.

The crucial question anyone wanting to serve God should ask is this: are you willing to be behind the scenes and let others get the credit, or do you have to be the one doing the upfront work? The Lord Jesus said, ***“He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him”*** (John 7:18).

The person who is willing to work for the benefit of other Christians, regardless of whether or not anyone finds out what they are doing, is an important member of the Body of Christ. Indeed the Bible teaches the whole reason God gives various ministry gifts (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) is not so that people can become famous and enjoy their moment in the limelight! No, these roles of service exist ***“to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ might be built up”*** (Ephesians 4:12).

I recently read a book by a Christian journalist who reported on a powerful revival more than a century ago. Compare his words to today's prevailing Christian culture of self-promotion and self-importance. He wrote: ***"The fact is that when a man gets to the place where he really loves obscurity, where he does not care to preach, and where he would rather sit in the back seat than on the platform, then God can lift him up and use him, and not very much before."***

Many churches today don't hesitate to help send a foreign missionary family somewhere with \$4,000 per month support, where they struggle to learn the language and they stand out like a sore thumb, but they turn their noses up at the idea of investing the same money to support 160 Asian evangelists at \$25 each per month, who are already part of the culture, speak the language, but just don't have the resources available to go.

We are thankful for the many Christians around the world who understand they can make the greatest impact for the kingdom of God in Asia by helping Asian believers get the job done. Instead of viewing themselves as the great Prophet Elijah, they see their role more like the desparate widow of Zareptath. Despite her own poverty, she served Elijah by providing food for him (see 1 Kings 17:7-24). In a similar way, we are thankful for those who help us and other ministries provide real food, the Word of God, to His people in China, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and other countries where Christians are starving for their daily bread.

As the widow continued to serve Elijah, God blessed her and her son, so that their jar of flour and jug of oil never ran out. Some Western church leaders have told us how their congregations used to be stagnant and in spiritual decay. They didn't know how to turn the situation around until they started to provide Bibles to the persecuted Church. Over time the Christians in those fellowships stopped grumbling about one another and started focusing their energy on helping God's kingdom grow.

One day tragedy struck, and the widow's son died. The widow complained bitterly to God. Elijah ***"stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the Lord, 'O Lord my God, let this boy's life return to him!'"*** ***The Lord heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived. Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, 'Look, your son is alive!'"*** (1 Kings 17:21-23).

There never seems to be a shortage of believers putting their hand up to have a powerful ministry like Elijah. Not so many, however, are willing to be like the widow of Zareptath.

Has your life or church become dry, or even spiritually dead? The good news is that God can raise the dead. Make a commitment to serve God and His people, in completely anonymity if necessary. If you do this, especially if you focus on helping an unreached people group know Christ, you will be aligning yourself to God's purposes. You may even find that the Holy Spirit breathes life back into you and your church.

COUNTRY UPDATES FROM THE RING OF FIRE

Scientists have labelled the countries surrounding the Pacific Ocean 'The Ring of Fire' because of the large number of earthquakes and volcanic activity there. Many of the Asian countries in the Ring of Fire are at the heart of the ministry efforts of Asia Harvest. In the following pages we would like to give a brief overview of how the Gospel is advancing in 7 of the countries we work in, along with vital data. In many places the kingdom of God has been advancing strongly, and **the region is gradually becoming home to a Ring of Holy Spirit fire!**

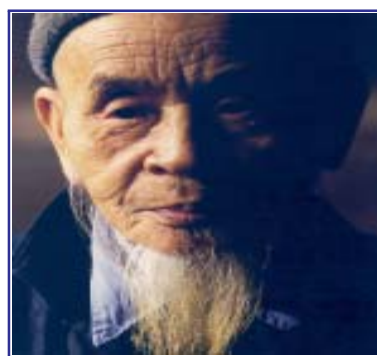
For consistency, the statistics come from the last three editions of *Operation World* (1993, 2001, and 2010). Please use the following information to pray for each country as the Lord leads you.

CHINA

Population: 1,330,584,000
Unsaved People: 1,225,284,000
Capital: Beijing
People Groups: 490
Main Religion: Non-Religious 44.4%
All Christians:
 2010 - 105.3 million (7.9%)
 2001 - 91.5 million (7.2%)
 1993 - 72.2 million (6.1%)

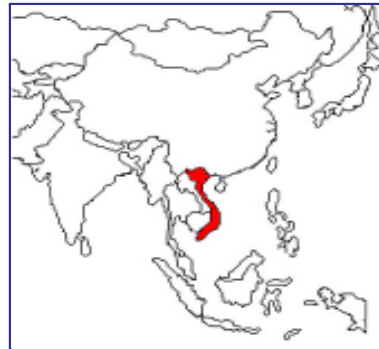


God continues to move powerfully throughout China, with constant growth in many parts of the country. More than 30 million people have been saved since 1993. The greatest need is for Bibles and discipleship materials to match the tremendous zeal for evangelism the churches possess. Most of the ethnic minority groups, however, remain unreached. The Gospel has spread rapidly among the Han Chinese majority, but has encountered many difficulties penetrating across the ethnic, cultural, geographical and language barriers to the more than 450 distinct (non-Han) minority groups in China. Of these, no more than 100 groups have a consistent Gospel witness capable of impacting a significant proportion of the population.



VIETNAM

Population: 89,028,000
Unsaved People: 80,628,000
Capital: Hanoi
People Groups: 139
Main Religion: Buddhist 52.4%
All Christians:
 2010 - 8.4 million (9.4%)
 2001 - 6.5 million (8.1%)
 1993 - 7.0 million (9.8%)



Most professing Christians in Vietnam are Catholics. Protestants make up only about 2% of the population. The Gospel has spread inconsistently, with most churches in the south and central provinces, but there are fewer believers the further north one travels. Dozens of tribes remain completely untouched by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Please pray every segment of this nation will soon hear the Good News of the Living God.



LAOS

Population: 6,436,000
Unsaved People: 6,218,500
Capital: Vientiane
People Groups: 145
Main Religion: Buddhist 57.2%
All Christians:
 2010 - 217,500 (3.4%)
 2001 - 100,500 (1.9%)
 1993 - 64,000 (1.5%)



Laos is one of Asia's forgotten countries. Because of its small population of just 6 million, many organizations do not consider it a priority for action. Yet Laos is one of the most ethnically-diverse countries on earth, containing 145 distinct tribes. Only about a dozen have significant Christian presence, and more than 130 tribes remain untouched and unevangelized. Please pray for their salvation.



MYANMAR (Burma)

Population: 50,500,000
Unsaved People: 46,000,000
Capital: Naypyidaw
People Groups: 135
Main Religion: Buddhist 80.0%
All Christians:
2010 - 4.5 million (8.9%)
2001 - 4.0 million (8.7%)
1993 - 2.9 million (6.5%)



The spread of Christianity in Myanmar is uneven, with some areas in revival and other regions and tribes full of dead religion. There is a great need for the Scriptures. Please pray that revival might come again to those tribes that have experienced moves of God many decades ago. Pray many of the 31 million Buddhist Bama ethnic group will soon know the Living God.



INDONESIA

Population: 232,500,000
Unsaved People: 195,700,000
Capital: Jakarta
People Groups: 750
Main Religion: Islam 80.3%
All Christians:
2010 - 36.8 million (15.8%)
2001 - 34.0 million (16.0%)
1993 - 23.8 million (12.5%)



Indonesia is a paradox. There are more Muslims here than any other country on earth, spread across 6,000 inhabited islands and more than 750 distinct tribes and ethnic groups. God has been moving powerfully, with 13 million new Christians since 1993. Most believers, however, are ethnic Chinese and hundreds of ethnic groups remain unreached and unevangelized. Please pray for the Name of Jesus Christ will be glorified throughout this large and important country.



INDIA

Population: 1,214,464,000
Unsaved People: 1,143,464,000
Capital: New Delhi
People Groups: 2,500
Main Religion: Hindu 74.3%
All Christians:
2010 - 71.0 million (5.8%)
2001 - 25.0 million (2.4%)
1993 - 23.1 million (2.6%)



India is the most complex challenge for the Gospel on earth. Home to more than 2,500 distinct tribes, castes and languages, the Gospel has recently flourished in some areas, while others remain completely devoid of spiritual light. India will soon surpass China as the world's most populated country, but about 94 out of every 100 people remain unsaved, hell-bound, and in need of salvation in Jesus.



NEPAL

Population: 29,852,000
Unsaved People: 29,002,000
Capital: Kathmandu
People Groups: 323
Main Religion: Hindu 75.0%
All Christians:
2010 - 850,000 (2.8%)
2001 - 452,000 (1.9%)
1993 - 112,000 (0.6%)



Living among the highest mountain range on earth, more than 300 distinct tribes and castes inhabit Nepal. Today less than 3 out of 100 people are Christians, but the growth has been staggering. There were just 25 known Christians in Nepal in the 1950s, compared to 850,000 today. Many tribes have experienced revival in the past 20 years, but dozens more remain relatively untouched by the Gospel. There is much work left to do in Nepal.



CHINA BIBLE PRINTING



Current Total: 5,773,027 Bibles printed and delivered.

We are partnering with house churches in China in a long-term project 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 230,000 Chinese Bibles per month depending on incoming funds. So far this year we are operating at 62.0% capacity.

ASIAN WORKERS' FUND

Thanks to your support we are currently able to support 534 Asian evangelists working among 173 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 and occasional worker updates are sent to all regular donors.

SOUTHEAST ASIA BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 282,853 Bibles printed in 40 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.**

LIVING MARTYRS' FUND

Because of your partnership we are supporting 722 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 **Living Martyrs Fund** assists pastors and evangelists in China and Vietnam 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 11,095 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 changes a child's 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 Tsunamis of Southeast Asia and Japan, 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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