

Asia Harvest

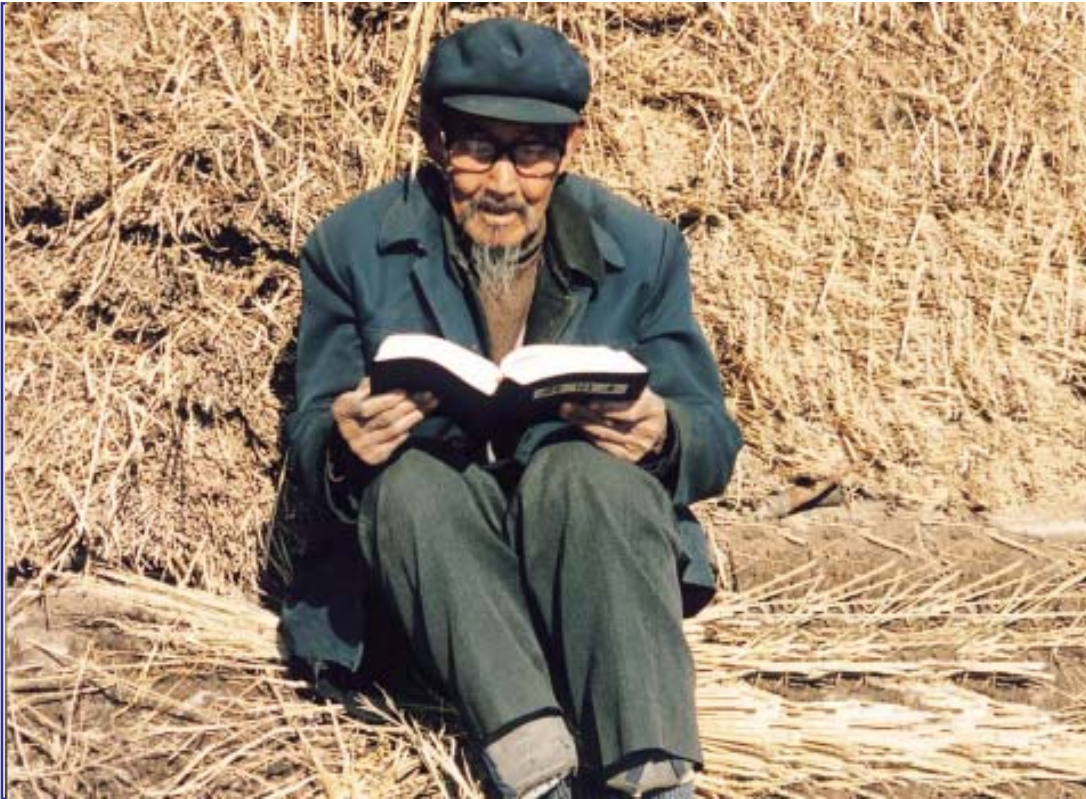


‘Put in the Sickle, for the Harvest has Come!’ (Mark 4:29)

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The China Bible Deception

From the Frontlines

with Paul & Joy Hattaway

"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:12-13).

Over the years as we have met Christians in many parts of the world, we have been asked this question: "Before the Lord Jesus returns, do you think the world will see a great, sweeping revival, or do you think there will be a mass falling away from the faith?"

After thinking long and hard about this question in light of the Scriptures, we answer, "Yes!" We believe both are true, and each scenario is taking place simultaneously right now.

On one hand there is no doubt that God is doing an amazing work in many parts of the world that had never previously heard the Gospel. Tens of millions of people have been swept into the kingdom of God in recent decades in some of the countries we are privileged to serve in, such as China, India, Nepal, Laos, Vietnam and Indonesia. Similar reports come in from nations in Africa and Latin America. These are truly amazing times for the Gospel, especially in places where it had never taken root in the past.

On the other hand, the church in "Christian" lands is struggling both spiritually and numerically. In some places the situation is dire. Pulpits are full of smiling preachers giving watered-down presentations of the Gospel, which inoculates unbelievers against the claims of Jesus and hardens the hearts of the listeners. Deception is rampant, and the faith of many is being found wanting as society disintegrates around them. Those nations with spiritual life are being given more, while those who refuse to abide in Christ and have rejected God are shrivelling on the vine. Perhaps this is what was meant by the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 25:29: ***"For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them."***

Our Lord spoke much about the end times and the conditions in the world before His Coming. One of the main warnings he gave was of widespread deception. Believers must guard against it and warn others not to fall prey to false doctrine and practice.

In relation to work in China, it's not difficult for us to see how deception has already gained a major foothold in much of the worldwide church. Take the matter of Bibles in China for example. In our experience we would say a clear majority of Christians in Western nations are "certain" that Bibles are freely available to all Christians in China today. They have read articles about it, or heard some ministry leader on radio or television saying there are now plenty of Bibles. There are even Chinese officials who travel around the world extensively, proclaiming this lie.

Friend, have you believed such a thing? If so, please let us tell you in love... don't be deceived! It is simply not true. We think this lie is one of the biggest deceptions in the Christian world in the past 50 years.

Some of the biggest names in Western Christianity are vocal in telling believers everywhere that China has all the Bibles it needs. On this matter, these people are "deceiving and being deceived" as Paul's letter to Timothy stated. We would like to see some of these people sit face to face with house church leaders—like the ones whose letters are interspersed throughout this newsletter—and repeat to them what they so confidently proclaim to Western Christians. The Chinese leaders would look upon them with deep pity and disbelief.

You probably know there are two main types of Protestant churches in China today—those belonging to the government-approved Three-Self Patriotic Movement, and the illegal house church movements. Most experts agree that about one-third of China's Christians attend the government churches, while two-thirds remain outside state control. Bibles are meant to be readily available to believers in the Three-Self churches, but in recent years even the official supply appears to have dwindled in a number of regions.

*"Our fellowships are in the countryside and we have been attempting for many years to get enough Bibles so that all believers in our churches could have their own copy. We previously tried to get Bibles from the government-controlled Three-Self Church, but we became frustrated with their many unfulfilled promises to deliver Bibles. Sometimes a few would come; but normally there would be none or many less than we ordered. We travelled from fellowship to fellowship collecting eggs, rice or whatever people could afford to donate to raise funds to purchase these Bibles, but we were cheated many times. **We currently need 184,234 Bibles** so that every believer in our fellowships can have their own copy. Your delivery of God's Word to us is an answer to prayer and we thank you beyond what words can express!"*

— A Regional Church leader, Heilongjiang Province

Some church and mission leaders around the world claim China's house churches are also able to obtain large quantities of God's Word through the government channels, but this is nonsense. In the past, they have been able to pick up a few crumbs that fell from the table of the government churches, but that supply has been cut off. The house churches, who number at least 60 million believers throughout China, have been deliberately starved of Bibles in a bid to force them to register with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Most refuse to do so regardless of the pressure and manipulations.

Some people have contacted us over the years, asking why Asia Harvest continues to print Bibles for the house churches in China. Some have made a few trips to major cities like Beijing and Shanghai, where local believers tell them they have enough Bibles. Others have contacts in Guangdong Province, where Bibles have been more accessible for decades due to its close proximity to Hong Kong. Many foolishly think that what they are told in a few major cities must also apply in all of China's 31 provinces, and they zealously report it back in their home countries.

Others claim they can help us order as many Bibles as we need for the house churches, and that once paid for, the Bibles will be printed and delivered without complication. These people seem sincere, and whenever we are told this we reply, "Great! Let's start by ordering 20,000 Bibles, please." On every occasion, the truth soon emerges that the person's confidence was misplaced. When they attempt to place a large order, they invariably find they are unable to secure more than a small number of Bibles, perhaps only 20 to 50 copies, when the house churches need tens of thousands each month just to keep pace with the new believers coming to Christ.

The claims that Bibles are freely available to all Christians in China is a big deception, designed to trick Christians around the world. It has largely been effective. The tragic reality is that the house churches in China are experiencing a massive famine of God's Word.

Friends, the situation in China is increasingly desperate, and the revival fires that have burned throughout the world's most populated country for the past 40 years have started to dim. Please remember to uphold the Chinese house church believers in prayer.

A decade ago we knew of at least a dozen different mission organizations that were providing God's Word to the house churches in China. Today we are aware of just three or four. The remainder stopped this crucial ministry for a host of reasons, from financial hardship to scandals in their organizations. Others found it is politically incorrect in the Christian world to help the house churches in China, because they are illegal entities. Those organizations found it more comfortable to align themselves with the Chinese government and the official church. Ministries like Asia Harvest that continue

to supply Bibles to the house churches have been increasingly marginalized and placed under pressure, and security has been tightened as China seeks to block the flow of God's Word to churches that refuse to submit to their control.

In this newsletter we celebrate Asia Harvest recently passing the milestone of 9 million Bibles printed and distributed in China since we began many years ago.

If the day truly comes when Bibles are freely available to **all** Christians in China, we will be the first to rejoice! In that day we will gladly step aside and encourage the house churches to access God's Word through normal channels like bookstores. Unfortunately, that day seems far off. As long as the need remains and millions of God's children hunger for the Bread of Life, by God's grace and providence we plan to continue printing Bibles for the house church believers in China, whether it is politically correct to do so or not.

We understand how the subject of Bibles in China must seem contradictory and confusing to people. Let us try to summarize it with this little illustration:

Imagine there are 100 Christians living in your town. Seventy attend your church, and 30 another. The smaller church has agreed to come under the control of the atheistic government, but your church refuses, believing the Church should only be under the headship of Jesus Christ. As a result, the government permits the church of 30 people to have Bibles, but your church of 70 are barred from accessing God's Word. Those who attempt to illegally produce or distribute Bibles risk arrest and three years in prison without trial. Furthermore, imagine if the smaller church uses political power to convince the world there is complete religious freedom in your town, and that Bibles are freely available to everyone.

The above illustration, in a nutshell, is the ludicrous and unjust situation that tens of millions of Christians in the Chinese house church system find themselves in today. As long as the Lord Jesus Christ continues to give us breath and the need for God's Word remains among China's house churches, we plan to continue supplying as many as we can as the Lord provides the resources to do so.

"Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, thank you so much for providing the Bread of Life to the new believers in our fellowships! There is an old saying that if you give someone a fish you feed him for a day; but if you teach him to fish you feed him for a lifetime. I believe that by providing these Bibles you are feeding us for a lifetime. We use these Scriptures every day to learn more about our Heavenly Father's plan for our lives and to become more effective in sharing the Gospel with seekers and those that have never heard the Good News. May the Living God bless you!"

— A House Church leader, Shaanxi Province

CHINA BIBLE MAP



Thanks to the grace of God and your prayers and generous support, Asia Harvest recently passed the milestone of **9 million** Chinese Bibles printed and delivered to the house churches in China. Our co-workers provide detailed reports, allowing us to keep track of every Bible we print and to create this distribution map. On behalf of all the grateful believers in China, thank you and God bless you!

Bibles Delivered by Province:

| | |
|------------------|---------|
| 1 Anhui | 910,611 |
| 2 Heilongjiang | 861,926 |
| 3 Inner Mongolia | 807,782 |
| 4 Shandong | 697,013 |
| 5 Henan | 695,974 |
| 6 Zhejiang | 661,679 |
| 7 Jilin | 475,022 |
| 8 Shanxi | 387,472 |
| 9 Gansu | 337,531 |
| 10 Jiangsu | 318,260 |
| 11 Sichuan | 290,481 |
| 12 Liaoning | 278,983 |
| 13 Guangxi | 262,305 |
| 14 Shaanxi | 255,553 |
| 15 Hebei | 248,463 |
| 16 Jiangxi | 243,336 |
| 17 Hubei | 222,972 |
| 18 Qinghai | 210,212 |
| 19 Xinjiang | 200,599 |
| 20 Shanghai | 195,218 |
| 21 Chongqing | 190,691 |
| 22 Fujian | 131,083 |
| 23 Hainan Island | 127,855 |
| 24 Guangdong | 77,178 |
| 25 Beijing | 69,932 |
| 26 Yunnan | 31,566 |
| 27 Guizhou | 13,693 |
| 28 Hunan | 12,764 |
| 29 Tibet | 5,637 |
| 30 Ningxia | 5,594 |
| 31 Tianjin | 4,989 |

TOTAL 9,232,375



*"Over the years since I first heard the Gospel and became an evangelist I have often cried out to the Lord about our need for Bibles so that our new Christians can be strong and fruitful disciples of Jesus Christ. Tragically, many times when we have led people to the Lord and failed to provide them with Bibles, some have given up the faith or lost focus. As of our last count **we need an additional 389,339 Bibles** for everyone in our churches to have their own copy. The Bibles you provide have been an answer to our prayers and we thank the Lord for you. We appreciate that you have allowed yourselves to be used by the Lord in this important work! We are glad to now also support the Bible fund from our own fellowships. Although the amount we can give is small we feel honored to be involved in this important ministry."*

— A Regional Church leader, Inner Mongolia

We thank God for every person who has prayed and given to help get God's Word to hungry believers in China. Occasionally people ask us what our annual budget is for the China Bible Fund. This question always makes us smile, because **we have no budget**. A budget implies that we have fixed expenses to meet. We don't. Our method all these years has been much more simple. We have never fretted about provision.

If a million dollars comes in for China Bibles, we can print and supply a million dollars of Bibles. If a hundred dollars comes in, we provide \$100 of Bibles. That is our budget. Apart from sending out free newsletters like the one in your hands, we do no fund-raising whatsoever. **The Lord Jesus is our fund-raiser**. His Spirit moves on believers' hearts and leads them to get involved with this project and others. Incredibly, He has so far provided 9.3 million Chinese Bibles through Asia Harvest.

For years we have printed full Chinese Bibles for just \$1.80 each. This price is kept low because the rural Chinese house church Christians, despite their poverty, insist on covering all the considerable transportation and shipping costs of the project. Some house churches also now donate whatever they are able towards the cost of the Bibles.

By the grace of God we plan to continue until every single Chinese Christian who hungers for the Word of God is able to access it. Please pray for everyone involved with this crucial project, both inside and outside China. Without the protection of the Holy Spirit this whole initiative would fold in an instant. Thank you.



ASIAN WORKERS' FUND



We are currently supporting 1,001 Asian evangelists working among 642 unreached tribes and ethnic groups.

The **Asian Workers' Fund** assists indigenous church-planting evangelists who are involved in strategic ministry to unreached people groups in Asia. These servants of the Lord have committed their whole lives to the Gospel but are hindered by lack of finances.

You can help support these dedicated workers for **\$25 per month** each. A prayer card and occasional updates are sent to all regular donors of this project.

CHINA BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 9,232,375 Chinese Bibles printed and distributed.

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 Body of Christ and helping add fuel to the revival in China.

Each full Chinese Bible costs just \$1.80 to print and deliver.

ASIAN BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 594,136 Bibles printed in 68 languages.

Asia is home to many ethnic groups where people have been deprived of God's Word, sometimes for decades. The **Asian Bible fund** provides the Scriptures in numerous languages in **South-east Asia, North Korea, the Indian subcontinent, and elsewhere.** In China our China Bible Fund functions as a separate project.

Each Bible costs an average of \$2.70 to print and deliver.

LIVING MARTYRS' FUND

*Because of your partnership we are supporting **398** living martyrs.*



"A martyr has been defined as "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 **Living Martyrs' Fund** supports pastors and evangelists in China, Vietnam and North Korea 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 supporter of this project.

PROJECT SMILE



*Your generous support has so far helped bring smiles to the faces of **14,564** 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 of **\$60 changes a child's life**. A laminated prayer card of a child helped through Project Smile is sent to all donors.

PERSECUTION & RELIEF FUND



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

Over the years Asia Harvest has provided assistance to the victims of natural disasters that have struck Asia. 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 many people have come to know Jesus Christ. This project also provides physical and spiritual relief to Christian communities and families throughout Asia who have been affected by persecution.



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