

Asia Harvest



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

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‘The Least of These’

Helping Christian Widows in India

“Others Can, You Cannot”

To start this newsletter, we would like to share a wonderful quote we came across by a Wesleyan minister named George Watson (1845-1924).

His words resonate with us, and we hope many serious Christians who read them will be encouraged to continue to stand for Christ against the increasingly strong flow of the world, and of the worldly church. Watson wrote:

“If God has called you to be really like Jesus, He will draw you into a life of crucifixion and humility, and put upon you such demands of obedience that you will not be able to follow other people, or measure yourself by other Christians. In many ways He will seem to let other people do things which He will not let you do.

Other Christians and ministers, who seem very religious and useful, may push themselves, pull wires, and work schemes to carry out their plans, but you cannot do it, and if you attempt it, you will meet with such failure and rebuke from the Lord as to make you sorely penitent.

Others may boast of themselves, of their work, of their successes, of their writings, but the Holy Spirit will not allow you to do any such thing, and if you begin it, He will lead you into some deep mortification that will make you despise yourself and all your good works.

Others may be allowed to succeed in making money, or may have a legacy left to them, but it is likely God will keep you poor, because He wants you to have something far better than gold, namely, a helpless dependence upon Him, that He may have the privilege of supplying your needs day by day out of an unseen treasury.

The Lord may let others be honored and put forward, and keep you hidden in obscurity, because He wants to produce some choice fragrant fruit for His coming glory, which can only be produced in the shade.

He may let others be great but keep you small. He may let others do a work for Him and get the credit for it, but He will make you work and toil on without knowing how much you are doing; and then to make your work still more precious, He may let others get credit for the work which you have done, and thus **make your reward ten times greater when Jesus comes.”**

‘The Least of These’ — Helping Christian Widows in India

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’ (Matthew 25:40).

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (James 1:27).

If you have received our Asia Harvest newsletters for a while, you will know that we have seven main categories that people can give to as the Lord leads them. However, beneath these seven broad categories we have many other initiatives that help advance the Gospel among Asia’s unreached people groups, and establish believers in the faith.



In this newsletter we would like to share about one of our most important projects that you may never have heard of before.

Throughout Asia, **we currently support more than 1,000 Christian widows** with monthly assistance. The majority of those we are privileged to help are in India, and we consider it a great blessing and honor to be involved in their lives.

The Living Dead

Life for widows in India can be very rough. Today, there are an estimated 34 million widows in India, or 8 percent of the entire female population.

You may have read how, in the past, Hindu widows in some regions would burn themselves alive by leaping into the flames when their husbands were cremated,

rather than face life alone in a male-dominated society, where older women still do not generally work in paid jobs and where no government or assistance is provided.



As a result, widows in India have been described as **“the living dead.”**

Although the dreadful practice of ritual suicide is now outlawed, widows still encounter massive challenges in India, and without an income many fall prey to evil men. For these reasons, we believe that Christians taking care of widows in India is of utmost importance in the eyes of God.

We have known the Indian leaders who oversee and implement this project since meeting them on a visit to India almost 30 years ago in 1991. Since that time, God’s hand has been on their ministry in a mighty way, and the number of churches has grown exponentially as their movement has spread to many parts of the nation.

While their focus has been on discipleship, evangelism and church planting, their churches also came to contain large numbers of Christian widows, who were without any human support in this world.

When forming a strategy to help these dear sisters, **the church leaders took the Bible literally, and have carefully implemented** the list of requirements that the Apostle Paul laid out to Timothy. We would like to share some of these verses, along with additional comment...

“Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God” (1 Timothy 5:3-4).





The first step is to identify those widows in the churches who are in genuine need; those who live alone without support, and who would struggle to survive without extra help.

Each case is considered carefully, and if any widow has family members or relatives, they are encouraged to take care of their own flesh and blood. That way, the burden for caring for the widows is not simply rolled onto the churches, and only those in the greatest need make it onto the list.

“No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the Lord’s people, helping those in trouble and de-

voting herself to all kinds of good deeds” (1 Timothy 5:9-10).

This criterion is adhered to, and only widows aged over 60 are considered for our support. Those with a track record of serving God’s people and displaying the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their lives are helped.

The Impact on the Churches

“If any woman who is a believer has widows in her care, she should continue to help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need” (1 Timothy 5:16).

First and foremost, it is the local Indian Christians who take responsibility for the widows in their midst. They receive love and honor from other members of the

Body of Christ, who spend time with them and bring them food and essential supplies. In return, these elderly sisters have much wisdom to share with the younger Christian women, and in this way the family of God is built up in a beautiful way.

By strengthening God's people first, they in turn can take His blessings and reach many who have yet to believe the Gospel. Despite being among the poorest of the poor, many of the widows lovingly share their meager supplies with their non-Christian neighbors. As a result, **their selflessness has attracted many Hindus, Muslims and others to bow their knees to Jesus Christ.**

The project is making a great impact both directly in the lives of the widows and indirectly to the churches. For example, the funds we provide to the widows helps free up resources for evangelism and church planting, to buy Bibles and discipleship materials, and other crucial needs.



The Role of Asia Harvest

Although most of our activities are focused on expanding God's kingdom among lost people groups, the Bible teaches that we should first take care of our fellow Christians: ***"As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers"*** (Galatians 6:10).

In addition to monthly support, a few times a year we also provide special blessings to the more than 1,000 Christian widows we help. For example, in India a woman's sari (garment) is particularly important and is considered a cultural icon, as you can see from some of the photos in this newsletter. Every year we help our colleagues provide new saris, towels and other items to each of the widows. They are received with great joy and gratitude.



Some of the ways we help widows includes providing new saris (above) and towels (below) to each recipient. We also fund literacy programs and Bibles, sewing machines, eye glasses, wheelchairs, blankets and sheets, and aid for medical emergencies and funeral expenses. Some widows have proven to be effective soul-winners in the Indian Church, and the kingdom of God has grown through their labors.





We hope you have enjoyed this pictorial journey into part of Asia Harvest's work that we rarely share in our newsletters. **Please pray for the precious widows of India**, as the Lord works in them and through their brokenness to bring glory to God.

If you would like to help support widows in India and other parts of Asia, please note that we include this project under the umbrella of our **Living Martyrs' Fund**, which raises funds in increments of **\$25 per month**. All donations received go directly to the project. Nothing is taken out for administration or any other expense.

Donations can be made by mailing a check with the enclosed yellow Response form, or by giving either one-time or monthly support via our secure website: **www.asiaharvest.org**

CHINA BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 13,326,249
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 WORKERS' FUND



***We currently support 1,471 Asian evangelists
among 1,072 unreached people groups.***

The **Asian Workers' Fund** supports indigenous church-planting evangelists among unreached Asian tribes and ethnic groups. These disciples have committed their whole lives to the Gospel but are hindered by lack of finances. To date, the evangelists we help have reportedly led **539,481 people to faith in Jesus Christ**. You can help support these dedicated workers for **\$25 per month** each. A prayer card and occasional updates are sent to all regular supporters of this project.

ASIAN BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 1,149,066 Bibles printed in 125 languages.

The **Asian Bible Fund** provides the Scriptures in numerous languages in Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and anywhere in Asia that God's people need His Word.

Each Bible costs an average of \$2.70 to print and deliver. We also print millions of Gospel booklets for evangelism through this project.

LIVING MARTYRS' FUND

*Because of your partnership we are supporting **1,531** 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 Christian widows and church leaders and their families throughout Asia 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 **\$25 per month** you can help support one of these living martyrs.

THE CHILDREN'S FUND



*Your generous support has so far reached **170,155** children throughout Asia.*

The **Children's Fund** introduces children to Jesus in India, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, and a host of other Asian countries. Activities include printing and distributing Gospel literature designed for children, funding Sunday school training classes, providing free surgeries for those with special needs, and generally lifting children out of spiritual and physical poverty. It costs an average of just **\$10 to reach a child for Christ**.

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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