

Asia Harvest



Swing the Sickle for the Harvest is Ripe! (Joel 3:13)

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November 2004 - Newsletter #76



Hainan Island

(Part 2 - The House Church Revival)

From the Front Lines

with Paul & Joy Hattaway

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:1-2)

We heard a story recently of a Christian pastor who had several theological degrees and awards for various achievements. He proudly displayed all his certificates and trophies on the wall of his basement, and many friends who came to his house often remarked on them.

One day a flood engulfed the area where the pastor lived, and he and his family were required to evacuate their house for a few days. When they returned they found the flood waters had swamped the basement and all his certificates, trophies and degrees had been completely destroyed.

Distraught, the pastor complained to the Lord about his great loss. The Lord replied to him, “Don’t worry, I was going to burn them up anyway!” ***“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.”*** (2 Peter 3:10-12)

This reminds us of the story of the great Chinese evangelist, John Sung. He studied in America and became a qualified doctor. Everyone presumed he would follow in his father’s footsteps and become a doctor back home in Fujian Province, but God had other ideas. During the long boat trip back to China, God called John Sung to preach the Gospel as an evangelist. Sung accepted the call, and before the boat docked in Shanghai, he threw all his worldly achievements overboard into the sea. John Sung went on to become one of China’s greatest ever evangelists, leading tens of thousands of people to faith in Christ.

It is good for us to be reminded that our life in this world is transient. We do not belong here, we are just passing through. It is spiritually dangerous when we live like we are going to be here forever. The Bible asks, ***“What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”*** (James 4:14). May our prayer be, ***“Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”*** (Psalm 90:12).



CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please note that the main United States contact address for Asia Harvest has changed! It is now:

**1903 60th Place
Suite M1204
Bradenton, FL 34203
USA**

Our phone number and email address remain the same. Please update your records. If you have recently sent a letter to our old Texas address, please don't worry as that mail will be forwarded to us for some time to come.

Hainan Island - The House Church Revival

In the last issue of Asia Harvest we examined the missions history and work among the Three-Self churches on Hainan Island in south China. This month we shift our focus to the house churches on the Island, and take a look at how God has brought a tremendous revival to most parts of Hainan in recent years.

Exponential Growth

Although a small house church movement existed on Hainan Island throughout the 1980s, it lacked the organization and leadership needed to impact a large number of people. Most of the house churches were small, localized fellowships with no cohesive leadership or structure.

In 1993 one Christian leader was used by God to start a training program which resulted in a rapid multiplication of house churches throughout the Island.

The whole training process began with just three house churches, totaling under 100 members. The leaders were trained in evangelism and spiritual mapping (that is, new plans and workers were directed to strategic areas where there were no existing churches), while pastors were trained to train other new shepherds.

By 1996, the number of house churches affiliated with this movement had grown

to more than 100, with a combined membership of over 16,000 Christians.

As a result of this amazing growth, by 1996 each of the 19 counties on Hainan Island contained at least two reproducing churches, and every Chinese language group and minority group except the Utsat Muslims had at least two churches from this movement in their midst also.

The timing of this training program coincided with the arrival of a number of Chinese house church evangelists from the Mainland, who had received clear calls from God to reach out to people on Hainan. The result was that within a short time there was an explosion in the number of house churches on the Island.

Practically all of the members of these churches were the result of new conversions, and not the transfer of members from existing churches.

Because of the focus on evangelism and training, growth continued to be exponential. By 1998 the number of Christians on the Island had mushroomed to more than 80,000; and by the middle of 2000 a thorough survey conducted by local leaders put the number of all Christians on the Island at 360,000!

The approximate doubling time for Christians on the Island at the time was seven months. That is, every seven months the number of believers doubled!

Some people have doubted that the house churches on Hainan have had such a large revival. The old Three-Self church figure of 37,000 Christians on the Island is still quoted by some sources. These figures ignore the fact that revival has taken place on Hainan completely independent of any of the efforts of the official church. This has led to jealousy and some

mocking from some Three-Self Church leaders, as well as an increase in persecution of house church Christians.

We have personally investigated the phenomena that has happened on Hainan Island, and are completely convinced that the claims of 360,000 Christians are accurate. In fact, we spoke with one brother who has been heavily involved with the training of workers. When we told him that some sources claim there are still just 37,000 Christians on the Island, he laughed out loud and said, "That is stupid! I have personally met at least 150,000 of them."

While we should praise God for what he has done among the house churches on Hainan in the past ten years, before we get carried away we should realize that 360,000 Christians still represents less than five percent of the Island's population.

By 1998 every part of the Island had been impacted, but the highest concentrations of believers remained in the north, south and eastern areas. The areas with the weakest influence of Christianity could be said to be Baisha, Dongfang, Ledong and Changjiang counties - all located in the western part of Hainan.

How Did the Revival Start?

What events unfolded to trigger this startling growth on Hainan Island? Some people assume an ingenious methodology must have been employed, but the truth is the training given was extremely simple, and Biblically-based.

Firstly, existing house churches on the Island were encouraged to send evangelists to those areas and people groups who had

never received a Gospel witness. Many of these churches were filled with second, third, or fourth generation believers who had lost all passion and vision for the lost. Most pastors were fully occupied with the immediate needs of their own flocks, and had no time or strategy to look beyond their own backyard. When these churches were organized to systematically go into other parts of the Island, they were empowered and motivated to do whatever it took to see Christ glorified among all people on Hainan.

Secondly, short-term overseas Chinese church planting teams greatly added direction and solid foundational teaching to the fledgling churches. These missionaries helped lay a theological foundation for the new believers, so that the great majority of converts who have been led to Christ through this movement remained faithful to the Lord.

From the start, "modeling" was used as a key to the movement. That is, instead of just preaching to the leaders and new converts, the trainers were required to teach by the example of their own lives. In this way good and wholesome attitudes, strategies, and motivations were modeled for the Hainan Island Christians to copy. In short, the trainers were required to live what they taught. If they taught people in village evangelism, they were required to have successfully done what they wanted others to do.

Some other important principles that laid the foundation of the revival included 'shared leadership' (i.e. leaders were not allowed to become dictators to their flocks, but were required to enter into mutual accountability with other leaders). In this way, each cell remained healthy because of

the input of new ideas, fresh teaching and a balanced reception of different Spiritual gifts.

Teaching patterns were required that were appropriate for poorly educated and illiterate people, so that they would not feel left behind. Pastors were required to be unpaid volunteers, and meetings were to be solely based in believers' homes. Consequently, despite their meager salaries, money was freed up to send evangelists and church planters to other parts of the Island, and to help the needs of people in the churches.

All believers were expected to be engaged in preaching the Gospel; there was no division of ordained clergy and laymen. This way, all new believers were soul winners, and the church grew quickly. In a sense, because the church on Hainan had been so small before this movement commenced, the new believers did not have a bad example to learn from. Because this training was given to new believers, they had no reason to doubt that this pattern was anything but normal for Christians.

The believers love for each other, and for non-believers, was a powerful testimony to people everywhere. Christians even shared their financial resources with people in need, something rarely seen in modern, materialistic China. This stark contrast and display of practical selflessness attracted many to the Gospel.

Whenever new churches were planted, multiple leaders were raised up from the very start. This enabled the churches to grow without excessive outside influence, and also prevented a leadership vacuum from taking place should one leader be arrested.

Quite often the new churches wrote their own original hymns and worship songs which expressed their personal faith and Christian experience. This music became a

strong encouragement and influence toward solidarity and a rallying point in difficult circumstances.

Little Wang Beaten to Death

When talking of the marvelous strategies and events that has led at least 360,000 people on Hainan Island to Christ in recent years, it is sometimes easy to forget the tremendous cost and commitment that believers made. The Gospel did not always spread easily. Often it came at great personal cost to faithful believers. Some on Hainan Island have paid for their faith with the ultimate cost – their own lives.

The following story from Hainan is one testimony of a faithful martyr.

In 1994 a small group of men traveled to a town to conduct evangelism in an unreached area primarily occupied by members of the Li minority group. The first Li church had been successfully planted in another area, but in this new place things did not go as planned.

Let's continue the story by quoting from a confidential report from a Christian worker on Hainan Island:

Old Wang winced in pain as the creaking bus bounced along the dirt road. His broken ribs were excruciating but he was better off than his coworker Cai Wen. He looked at Cai, weak from blood loss, who had his eyes closed and was cradling his broken arm.

The ten-hour trip would seem much longer but Wang wasn't eager to get home. He would have to face Little Wang's wife, Liang, and her ten-year-old son. He wondered how he would break the news to her that her husband had been killed by an angry mob of Li people the evening

before. He could still hear the accusations: "The spirits of the Mountains rule our land. You Chinese dogs have only been here five hundred years and you know nothing. You have stolen our land and now you wish to steal our gods as well. You will pay for this!"

The mob had then beaten Old Wang and his companions with sticks and farm implements. A particularly fierce young man had continued to beat Little Wang. When the crowd dispersed, Little Wang didn't move. He had paid the ultimate price. He and his family had only been believers for five months.

After Old Wang and Cai returned home and had seen a doctor they began to arrange with the other church members to help Liang with the farm and arrange for some help in providing some meat and eggs.

The following Sunday the church determined to send Old Wang and Cai Wen back to the same Li village to evangelize again. There were no churches in the entire county. Someone had to take the message of salvation to them. The church grew strangely silent when Liang requested to accompany Old Wang and Cai Wen on their return trip.

The Christians worshipped for hours that day, praying fervently for the trip and for the salvation of the Li villagers. The other house churches in the county were also notified to pray and fast for the first three days of the evangelistic effort to the village.

When the trio arrived in the Li village it was evening. They slept beside a pig pen outside the village. Whether due to discomfort or busy minds, none of them slept well that night. The next morning they went to the market. Quite soon the word spread of their return and a mob quickly formed again and a few people began to yell threats.

Old Wang felt fear sweep over him.

Suddenly Liang stepped to the front and spoke up: **"I am the widow of the man you killed less than three weeks ago. My husband is not dead, however, because God had given him eternal life. Now he is living in paradise with our God. My husband came here to tell you how you could have that same eternal life. If he were here he would forgive you for what you did. I forgive you as well. I can forgive you because God has forgiven me. If you would like to hear more about this God then meet us under the big tree outside of town this evening."** The crowd grew suddenly quiet and gradually broke up.

That day Old Wang instructed Liang as to what she should say that night. Most of the village gathered under the big tree to listen to her.

After a week and a half, a large number of the villagers decided to follow this God. Old Wang stayed behind to baptize them and to teach them how to serve God while Cai Wen accompanied Liang back home.

Two months later Old Wang returned home with two leaders and a young man from the new Li church. During the Sunday worship the two Li leaders brought their greetings and expressed their appreciation. Then the young man stood up to speak. **"I am the man who murdered Little Wang. The Lord has graciously forgiven me and I ask for your forgiveness as well. I, and our entire church, owe an eternal debt of gratitude to Little Wang and Liang for bringing us the message of life. We want to give this love offering to help support Liang and we wish to pledge monthly support of 50 Yuan. This is the least we can do to show our appreciation."**

Four months later word came from the Li church that they had planted another Li fellowship, two mountains away in the same county. When he heard this news Old Wang silently mused over the truth of the hymn that Liang had recently written:

“It is through difficulty and suffering that we must follow.

Our Lord has prepared the way, and it leads to glory.

He is glorified in our obedience, so take courage.

He will be glorified in all the earth, and we will be glorified in Him.”

When God Would Not Let His Name Be Defamed

A remarkable testimony occurred when new house church believers traveled to a Hainanese village in Lingao County, in the northern part of the island, in November 1995. The church planting team arrived in one village to preach. The local people said there was no way they would believe in the Christian God because they already worshipped the most powerful spirits.

The locals gave a stern warning to the evangelists. They said that the village shaman (witchdoctor) had, six years previously, received a vision that Christianity was the one true religion. This man was so convinced that he immediately burned all his spirit charms and other paraphernalia, even though he had not yet heard the Gospel and was not a believer.

As soon as he did this, the people said, the shaman started to have visions where he saw many demons flying at him to eat his internal organs and completely destroy him.

He was so scared that he tore his clothes off, ran around naked, and went insane. He also lost the ability to speak. The shaman would pick up stones and throw them into the air, throwing the stones at the demons that were tormenting him. He lived in a hut with a thatch roof and walls so soon his rock throwing and other antics had completely knocked away the roof of his home. His life had become pitiful. He was exposed to the elements, naked, unable to speak, and completely tormented by demons.

The shaman was only kept alive by the kindness of the local people. Every night they would place some rice and other food outside his door for him to eat.

The villagers said that the shaman's experiences were proof that their local spirits were more powerful than the Christian God, so they told the evangelists not to waste their time, for they would never believe in the Christian God. They said if the Christian God was truly able to heal and deliver this man, then they would all know that Jesus is the true and only God.

The evangelists were new believers. When they heard this story they didn't know what to do, so they returned home.

Over the coming weeks the church started to pray and fast for this village and for the shaman, asking God to glorify His Name among the villagers because His Name was being defamed.

The evangelists were taught how to cast out demons. They then returned to the village and cast the demons out of the man. Immediately he regained his speech. They clothed him and helped him rebuild the roof of his home.

After hearing the Gospel, the ex-shaman became a Christian. When they saw the

tremendous change in the man's life, almost the entire village became Christians.

The new believers then took the Gospel to the neighboring village and the vast majority of that village also believed.

As a testimony to God's power over the forces of darkness, the Christians began to meet for worship and Bible study in the home of the ex-shaman! He was not the church leader himself, but his powerful life-changing experience was the catalyst for many to come into the Kingdom of God, and for the Name of Jesus Christ to be rightfully honored among the people in that area.

"We Just Prayed!"

One of the most remarkable stories of how God is using humble, simple-hearted Christians to build His kingdom on Hainan Island was related by Carl Lawrence in his book "The Coming Influence of China."

Lawrence recounts how, in the mid-1990s, two young women came to faith in Christ in another Chinese province after hearing the Gospel via shortwave radio broadcasts.

The two new believers received Bibles and immediately wanted to serve God with all their hearts. A Hong Kong-based pastor met with the two and tried to teach them that they should remain where they were and minister to their neighbors. The girls protested, "No! The Bible you gave us says Jesus told us to go into all the world. We want to go." Finally the pastor, feeling ashamed at his own comparative lack of zeal, relented and told the girls there was a need for workers on Hainan Island.

The duo had never heard of Hainan Island before but were certain God wanted them to preach the Gospel there.

Two years later the girls returned to the Chinese mainland where the pastor met with them. He had not heard any news since their departure. The Hong Kong pastor used the meeting to introduce the girls to several visiting Western church leaders. After introductions, the girls were asked how their work had been and whether or not they had been able to start any churches.

Lawrence explains, "The women put their heads down and answered, 'Oh pastor, we have only been there two years...yea, two years. Not many. Not very many'. Their voices were apologetic. 'We have only been there a short time. The people were not very friendly, no, not very friendly. Sometimes they became very vicious. Yes, sometimes they told us they were going to drown us in the ocean. Several men threatened us. Oh my, and because we were so young, even some of the ladies did not like us. Yes, some even called us terrible names... so not many churches... no, not many'."

Finally, after being asked again by the frustrated pastor, the girls apologized that they had been only able to start 30 churches since their arrival on Hainan Island!

The pastor and his Western friends were taken aback by the news. They asked how many people attended their new churches. After again going through a process of apologies and self-effacing comments, they answered, "Two hundred and twenty." The listeners presumed that meant the girls had won a total of 220 converts in their 30 churches, but 220 was the number of members in the smallest of their churches!

"How many people do you have in the largest of your churches," the pastor

demanded to know. "Oh...not many.... Less than five thousand. Only four thousand nine hundred. Yes, less than five thousand. We have just started."

The Western visitors were so touched by the humility and zeal of the two young ladies that they began to weep. One of the visitors told the pastor to ask the two ladies how they managed to achieve such great results.

"What did we do? Why nothing. Yes, we did nothing, nothing." The amazed onlookers protested, "You did nothing? You have thirty churches – the smallest with two hundred and twenty people, the largest with almost five thousand new Christians! And you did nothing?"

The two evangelists simply said, "We just prayed.... After we prayed, the Holy Spirit would tell us exactly what to do. We would keep praying and He would tell us what to do, we would do it. Then we would pray again and he would tell us what to do again."

Note: When we first read this story of the two faithful girls, we were not sure of the story's accuracy, as it almost sounded too good to be true. We sent the story to a friend who is an expert on the church in Hainan Island. Somewhat surprisingly, our informant responded that indeed the story is true, these two young women had done great exploits and planted many churches in the face of great opposition and struggle. They primarily worked in southern Hainan Island, including several counties around Sanya City. However, our friend also added that because of a lack of follow up and discipleship, that much of the fruit had been lost to cults, and that by 1999 perhaps "only" 5,000 of the duo's converts remained true believers.

PRAY FOR THE CHURCH OF HAINAN ISLAND

- Praise God for his mighty works on Hainan Island! Pray He would continue to be glorified through the lives of the Hainan Christians.
- Ask God to protect His children from cults and heresies that seek to deceive and divide them.
- Pray Christians in your part of the world would boldly go back to the simple pattern of the New Testament, as the believers on Hainan have done.

We appreciate your prayers and support of the work of Asia Harvest. If you get a chance, please write to us. We would love to hear from you and receive your feedback.



PROJECT SMILE



Your generous gifts have so far helped bring a smile to the faces of 1,836 children in Vietnam.

Project Smile helps children from poor families in Vietnam who were born with cleft palate or hare-lip disabilities. The average cost to help a child is just \$ 60. This will help one child to have a better life, and an opportunity for his or her family to hear about Jesus Christ for the first time.

CHINA BIBLE PRINTING



Current Total: 444,032 Bibles printed and delivered.

We are partnering with six large house church networks in China in a long-term goal to print Bibles for the church. These Bibles are distributed to all parts of China, equipping the believers and helping add fuel to the fires of revival that are burning throughout the world's largest nation. **Each Bible costs just US \$2.25 to print and deliver.**

CHINA LIVING MARTYRS FUND



Because of your prayers and support we are currently able to support 650 living martyrs.

The **China Living Martyrs Fund** assists many pastors and evangelists who are now unable to work because of their injuries. They and their families face extreme poverty and hardship. You can support one or more of these living martyrs with a gift of **US \$25 per month each**. A prayer card will be sent to every regular supporter.

ASIAN WORKERS FUND



We are currently able to support 206 Asian missionaries.

We are in contact with the leaders of thousands of workers who need support. These servants of the Lord have given their whole lives to the Gospel. The **Asian Workers Fund** assists workers who are doing strategic ministry in Asia. Please pray about whether you, your family, or church could help support one or more of these workers with a gift of **US \$25 per month each**. A prayer card will be sent to every supporter of this project.