

# Asia Harvest



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

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## China's Precious Children

THE CHINA CHILDREN'S PROJECT

# From the Frontlines

by Paul & Joy Hattaway

Over the years we have heard and recorded hundreds of remarkable testimonies from Chinese Christians telling of the wonderful works the Lord has done throughout their nation. Here is one of our favorites:

In the early 1950s as persecution swept through the Chinese church, a pastor named Li lived in Guangdong Province in southern China. Li had a wife and five children, aged from twelve to a newborn baby. The authorities arrested Li for 'counter revolutionary' activities, and sentenced him to prison with hard labor in an iron mine in remote northeast China.

Li was ordered to take a train more than 2,000 miles to Heilongjiang Province, where he was to begin his sentence of many years. Li's wife was understandably devastated. She had five children to take care of including a newborn, and now their only source of income was taken from them. They had nowhere to turn except the Lord. The Lis decided they should travel with their father all the way to Heilongjiang, hoping they would be allowed to visit him in the prison from time to time, and if a miracle happened and he was released early they would be near him. They sold most of their possessions and made enough money to purchase seven train tickets for what in those days was a week-long train journey. During the trip their hearts were heavy. Pastor Li prayed for his beloved wife and children, exhorting them to follow the Lord at all costs and praying earnestly for them, hoping to somehow compensate in a short period of time for what would be years of silence to follow.

The Li family finally arrived at their destination. Many tears flowed as Pastor Li entered the prison. His destitute family found some wooden planks and bits of canvas, and constructed a makeshift hut on the side of the road not far from the labor camp. The icy winds and winter temperatures of minus 20° cut like knives through the hut and thin clothes of the abandoned family. The children cried night after night, especially the newborn baby who could not get enough nourishment or warmth. Their existence was so miserable that words cannot adequately describe the inner and outer pain this family went through – all because they loved and served the Lord Jesus Christ.

Life inside the labor camp for Pastor Li was intolerable. He and the other prisoners were forced to work 14 hours per day, seven days a week. The backbreaking work of hauling heavy loads like a pack animal, coupled with the putrid and meagre food rations, quickly caused his health to deteriorate. The worst pressure of all for Pastor

Li was the knowledge that his beloved family were suffering in freezing conditions just outside the prison gates. Three months after entering the prison, Pastor Li died.

When the news was passed on to Mrs Li and her children, all hope was lost. The family plunged into deep depression and despondency. Mrs Li could see no way out, and longed to die. The children were miserable beyond words. Mrs Li told them she would have to find a job in order for them to survive. Her eldest child, a daughter aged twelve, said, "No mama, you cannot work. Our little brother needs you. He cries all day for you and there is no-one else to help him. I will go and look for a job." The little girl entered the prison office and requested to see the director. She said, "My father was put in this God-forsaken place because of his love for Jesus Christ. That is the only crime he ever committed. He was a good man who loved and helped people. Now he is dead. We have nothing. We have no money, no place to live, and no food. We cannot even return to our home in the south. I want to know if there is any job at all in this prison that you can give me."

The prison director knew about Pastor Li's death and, realizing that his little orphaned daughter was now speaking with him, a slight tinge of compassion welled up in his heart. He told her, "I have a job, but it is not interesting and pays very little." She exclaimed, "I will take it!"

The prison director took her outside to an area above where 3,000 prisoners worked below the ground in an iron mine. He said, "Do you see this red button? Your job is to stand next to this pole all day, every day, and when someone tells you to push it, you must push it straight away. This button is the emergency button and when it is pushed a siren is triggered deep below the ground that makes the men evacuate as fast as they can. This button should never be pushed by accident, or without us telling you to push it." For day after day, week after week, young Sister Li stood next to the pole with the



red button. When she received her first pay—just a few dollars—she and her family were overjoyed.

One afternoon, as she was standing next to the pole, she suddenly heard a voice say, “Push the button!” She spun around to find no-one near her, and was confused. A few moments later she heard the same voice again, this time louder: “Quick! Push the button now!” Sister Li again turned but saw no-one. She thought she was losing her mind and just stood there confused. She couldn’t push the button unless there was a major emergency, and nothing looked any different from normal. A few seconds later she heard the voice for the third time, but on this occasion it was with great authority: “Sister Li, push the button now!”

This time she realized it was no less than the voice of the Lord that had been speaking to her. She didn’t understand why He was telling her to push the button but she knew she had to obey. She immediately pushed the red button and the emergency alarm sounded deep underground.

Three thousand men emerged to the surface as quickly as they could, confused and eager to learn what emergency had taken place. The prison director came running from his office and demanded to know why Sister Li had pushed the button and brought production to a halt. Then, just moments after the last man had evacuated from the mine, the ground started to shake violently. A strong earthquake struck that lasted for about 20 seconds, completely collapsing the mine to such an extent that nobody has been able to enter again to this day. When the shaking stopped an eerie silence came upon the gathered mass. Every eye was fixed upon the tiny frail figure, still standing next to the pole and the red button she had so jealously guarded.

The terrified prison director asked in a stammering voice, “Comrade Li, how...how did you know that you should push the button when you did?” She was given a fruit-box to stand on so that she could be seen just above the heads of the gathered men. In the loudest voice she could muster she said, “It is the Lord Jesus Christ who told me to push the red button. He told me to do it three times and finally I did. Jesus Christ is the only way for you to know the true and living God. He loves you, as seen by the fact he saved all your lives this day. You need to repent of your sins and give your lives to him!”

Immediately all three thousand men, including the prison director, knelt down and prayed with great sobs, asking Jesus to come and forgive them and live in their hearts.

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In this issue we introduce to you a new, strategic long-term project, which we are calling the China Children’s Project. Working in cooperation with several other organizations and friends, this project has the potential to impact hundreds of thousands of Chinese children with the Gospel, and in fact has already seen tremendous fruit wherever it has been implemented. Please take the time to learn about this important need, and please pray for God’s hand of salvation to be upon the children of China.

## CHINA'S 500 MILLION CHILDREN: Precious in God's Sight



It is now almost twenty years since we were first involved with mission teams coming to China. Almost without exception we have seen people's hearts touched by their interaction with the Chinese children. We have even witnessed hardened men who rarely show emotion reduced to tears as they helped out in orphanages.

Perhaps one of the reasons so many feel compassion for the children of China is because they are so cute and innocent. Another reason is that Christians often feel a tremendous spiritual burden for China's youth.

Did you know that children in China are not allowed by the Chinese government to hear the Gospel? Indeed, it is against the law in China for anyone under the age of 18 to be baptized, and the authorities come down hard against any Christian ministry attempting to reach children; even ministry done by the government-sanctioned Three-Self churches.

In Patrick Johnstone's most recent edition of *Operation World* (p.165), he makes the following poignant prayer point for China's children: **"The churches are not allowed to run Sunday Schools or youth**

groups - most have forgotten how or are afraid to minister to children and young people, but some are quietly doing more to disciple them. One of the great needs of China today is for teaching materials and the know-how of Christian ministry to this group."

In China today there are more than 400 million children aged under 15, and over 500 million aged under 18. This means there are almost twice as many children in China than the entire population of the United States, or twenty-five times more than Australia.

In recent years the Chinese Christian leaders have become increasingly aware of the need to have specific, targeted programs to reach the children in their nation. A few years ago they asked if Sunday School materials from outside China could be shown to them, with a view to translating and using those materials inside China. After carefully studying them, the pastors made an interesting observation. They said: "Most of these books and materials are very good, but there is one major problem. They seem to have been written for children aged from six upwards. We need materials that target younger children. Here in China it is too late to start reaching six year-olds with the Gospel! By then the job of reaching them is much harder because the government has already spent one or two years brainwashing the children into believing there is no God."

The pastors were referring to the government's Young Pioneers program, which every child in China is expected to join. Visitors to China may see groups of children marching together or standing in line, each child wearing a white shirt and

red handkerchief tied around the neck. In some regards the Young Pioneers are similar to Boy Scouts in Western nations, but in China the Young Pioneers is used as an opportunity for the government to promote Communism to the youth, targeting children as young as four.

The devil knows that if he can influence young children away from God he will likely take them captive later in life.

## THE PROJECT

Asia Harvest director Paul Hattaway recently travelled to China to learn about the China Children's Project and how it operates among the house churches. He came away impressed and convinced that we should do all we can to pray for and help this strategic need. The China Children's Project is led and operated by Chinese house church Christians, and is not a Western-led initiative at all. The books and all materials are produced by the Chinese, in the Chinese language.

There are two essential things we can help with, however. The first is prayer:

- Please ask God to glorify His Name through this project, and to protect and bless the work of all the people involved.
- Pray millions of Chinese children would soon believe the Gospel and become bold and fearless disciples of Christ.
- Ask the Lord to provide every need for Sunday School teachers in China to be effective and fruitful in the ministry He has called them to.



The second thing we can help with is to provide financial help for the Chinese Church to print, produce and distribute the materials inside China. This has been a burden for the Chinese believers, as most of them live in poor rural areas where the cost of obtaining a set of training materials (US\$47) is much more than they can afford.

The China Children's Project has already been operating among many different house church networks in China with tremendous results. Here is a summary of how it works:

Firstly, Christian leaders are asked to send people who feel they are called by the Lord to children's ministry. These workers receive thorough training in how to teach the Bible to children from the age of four and older.

Each person attending the training has their travel costs covered, and a set of

materials is given to them for free. This set of materials includes:

- 1 Children's Bible
- 1 Teacher's Manual
- 1 The 'Most Wonderful Story' book (a good tool for evangelizing children)
- 18 teaching books with visual aids, providing creative Bible teaching for children between four and eleven years of age.
- 15 hours of VCD (video cassette-disk) teaching. The topics include The Biblical basis for children's ministry; How to effectively present the Gospel to children; How to care for new Christians, etc.
- 6 CDs containing 'Children's Heavenly Songs.'

**The total cost of US\$47 per set includes printing and production, storage, and transportation. It also includes the cost of bringing each teacher to the training course.**



*Some of the materials in the China Children's Project curriculum.*

We have been impressed by the accountability and reporting that has been established for this project. Indeed, even though Asia Harvest has not given any help for this project yet, the leaders have already provided several detailed reports to us of the impact the project has had in different parts of China. One of the reports summarized the tangible results that have been seen so far:

**"Thousands and thousands of new Sunday Schools have started and tens of thousands of children and young**

people attend them. Their lives have changed and they want to serve the Lord."

China needs 10,000 sets of training materials at the moment. The 10,000 Christians who receive training are then expected to lead Sunday Schools with an average of 100 children in each. That means the China Children's Project has the potential to directly impact the lives of one million children in China!

It is hard to explain the excitement the Chinese believers feel for this project. They see it as the answer to years of prayer, asking God to help them reach the precious children in their nation. One of our close coworkers has received the following two letters of thanks from two different networks of house churches that received the Sunday School training and materials:



#### **LETTER #1:**

"Thank you for your help. We are so grateful that you gave us the material we need. Those materials helped us to set up many Sunday Schools. All of our Sunday School teachers say thank you! We bless you from our hearts. May the Heavenly Father remember the price you have paid! God's Word says, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35).

Because of your support, many children now have teachers to guide them. The children can grow up happy and healthy, because the teachers can now feed them by the Word of God. Some children are able to preach the Gospel to the adults and even explain the Bible. This is all due to you.

May our God, who is merciful and is willing to bless, shower your life with his presence! We pray that God gives you as many children as grains of sand on the seashore, and as numerous as the stars in the sky. We will keep you in our hearts forever. Let's pray for each other. Hallelujah!"



**LETTER #2:**

“May God bless you with new fields and new strength! Everything in this world passes away, but God’s plan in our lives will never change. We all have the same heart, same mission, and the same burden. It’s to bring the children of China back to God.

Huge fields need to be harvested here, but the laborers are few. We continually plead with God, asking him to raise up more Sunday School teachers so that many children could be brought to God and their lives changed.

You brought such good blessings to us in our time of desperate need. The materials you gave us not only helped the teachers, but also met the needs of the children. More and more children have changed and their spiritual lives formed and shaped by the Lord. All the Sunday school teachers here want to thank you for your support and help. What you have done means the children will not perish, won’t remain hungry, and won’t grow up bound by sin.

May God use you powerfully in China and give you more resources to meet the needs of the Chinese children! Let’s bring revival to the Chinese children together, so that God’s heart will be pleased and not sad any more.”



If you or your church would like to support the China Childrens' Project, please fill out and post the yellow Response Form inside this newsletter. Alternatively, secure one-time or recurring monthly donations can be made by credit card or check over our website: [www.asiaharvest.org](http://www.asiaharvest.org)  
All gifts will be receipted and updates will be posted periodically.