

Asia Harvest



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

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Bibles for China

One Million Distributed, Many More Needed

From the Front Lines

with Paul & Joy Hattaway

“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10-11)

In this newsletter we focus on one of our longest standing and most strategic projects - China Bible printing. The above verse from Isaiah has often encouraged us over the years. On numerous occasions we have seen God's Word go forth and accomplished great things for His kingdom. There are countless good causes Christians can invest their time and resources in these days, but we can't think of any greater place to invest than in the distribution of God's Word, the Bible, especially among people who are hungry and desperate to read it.

The words “China” and “Bibles” have played a huge part in our lives and ministry. In fact, we met in Hong Kong while we were working for different Christian organizations that carried Bibles across the border to the believers in China. It was while leading a team of Bible couriers into Fujian Province that we got to know each other. The rest, as they say, is history! In the years before our marriage we each took over 150 trips into China, carrying bags and suitcases of Bibles each time. Those experiences were wonderful and inspirational. We saw God's hand helping us in very real and sometimes dramatic ways.

These experiences strengthened our faith and gave us a deeper appreciation for the power and importance of God's Word. Perhaps the thing that impressed us the most was having contact with the precious Chinese believers. We will never forget the time a group of Christians in the city of Kunming came to our hotel room to receive 30 bags of Bibles that our team had carried into China. These believers had been getting by with a few old tattered New Testaments between them for years, and now there was over a thousand brand new Bibles in front of them! They wept uncontrollably and threw themselves on the bags, praying and thanking God. Such times always challenged us to think about our own passion and attitude towards God's Word.

In the 1980s the need for Bibles in China was really extreme. There is still a great need today because demand continues to outstrip supply, but 20 years ago or more the need was much more acute, and there were still places where hundreds of Christians shared a single tattered Bible or New Testament between them.

During the 1990s something new happened which changed the Bible landscape markedly. Industrious believers found ways to print Bibles *inside* China. At the start, the quantities were just a few hundred at a time. The risk of doing this was great, but the Chinese believers were convinced it was the way forward. They appreciated the great effort that thousands of Christians had made to carry Bibles to them from overseas, but their needs had grown to such an extent that Bibles coming in bags and suitcases would never be enough. Slowly, the hundreds of Scriptures being printed inside China became thousands, and then as secure

methods were put into place, tens of thousands were being successfully printed and distributed to believers throughout the whole country.

Looking at things from a purely statistical point of view, we are amazed at how things have progressed. As mentioned before, during the Bible-carrying days Joy and I made a total of approximately 300 trips into China with Bibles, about two-thirds of which were successful. If we carried an average of 40 Bibles with us on each successful border crossing, that means over several years we were able to carry a total of 8,000 Bibles into China. These days, as the Lord provides the grace and funds, the house churches are able to print and deliver 8,000 Bibles every week. Hallelujah!

In this issue we would like to examine the overall story of Bibles in China. We hope it will be helpful and informative to you.



A Chinese pastor clutching his Bible.

Bibles for China: One Million Distributed, Many More Needed

*On the 25th of May, 2007, Asia Harvest received a medium-size donation, placed over our website. It was designated for our China Bible fund. That donation, from a couple who live in the US state of Oregon, allowed us to reach the one-million Bible mark for China since 2001. Since that milestone was passed more gifts have come in, and the total number of Bibles printed and distributed to the Chinese Christians now stands at **1,085,558**.*

We want to thank every person who has prayed or given to this project over the years. We know that for many people, giving so that the Chinese Christians can have God's Word has been a sacrifice. We think of one elderly lady who for years knitted sweaters and sold them at the local flea-market each Saturday, and sent the proceeds so that the Chinese might have Bibles of their own. We think of Sunday school children, businessmen, home groups, and even people in prison who have given to the China Bible fund. We know that each gift is precious to God.

The shortage of Bibles for Christians in China goes back many years, and has continued to this day for a number of different reasons.

In the 1950s and '60s, when the Communist authorities launched a series of severe persecutions while attempting to wipe Christianity from China, it was a crime to own a Bible. Tens of thousands of copies were burned in large public bonfires, as the government sought to obliterate all thoughts that did not align with Chairman Mao's teachings.

Rather than be arrested, multitudes of Christians decided to hide their Bibles until a day when they could openly read the Word of God. In many cases it was 15 years or longer before that day came.

Bibles were buried in the ground in places known only to the owners. Others were concealed in walls, floorboards, and ceilings.

In the late 1970s the long season of persecution that had forced the Chinese church to go 'underground' slowly started to draw to ease. China had been completely shut off from the outside world for more than twenty years. No Bibles had been printed inside the country, and none had been taken in from the outside. Every church had been shut down, almost all pastors thrown in prison, and Bibles had become as scarce as hen's teeth.

Many outsiders thought the Church in China had been totally crushed, but as

the mist cleared, the world was amazed to find that not only had the Chinese Church survived, in many locations it had grown five to ten times larger!

This growth created a sudden and acute shortage of Bibles throughout China. In many places there were thousands of believers without a single copy of the Bible. In those places where there was a Bible, Christians began to carefully copy it by hand, verse by verse. This laborious process often took two years to complete.

Brother Yun recently shared with us the drastic measures some Christians took in a bid to read even a few pages of God's Word:

"Many believers in the past had been buried with their Bibles inside their coffin, and we were so desperate for God's Word that many graves were dug up in order to retrieve what we could of the precious

Bible. In most cases the paper had been worn away by moisture and time, but the opportunity to recover even half a page of God's Word was worth the effort. Other Christians lovingly placed their Bibles inside clay pots and buried them deep in the ground. Years later, when the persecution eased, they dug them up again.

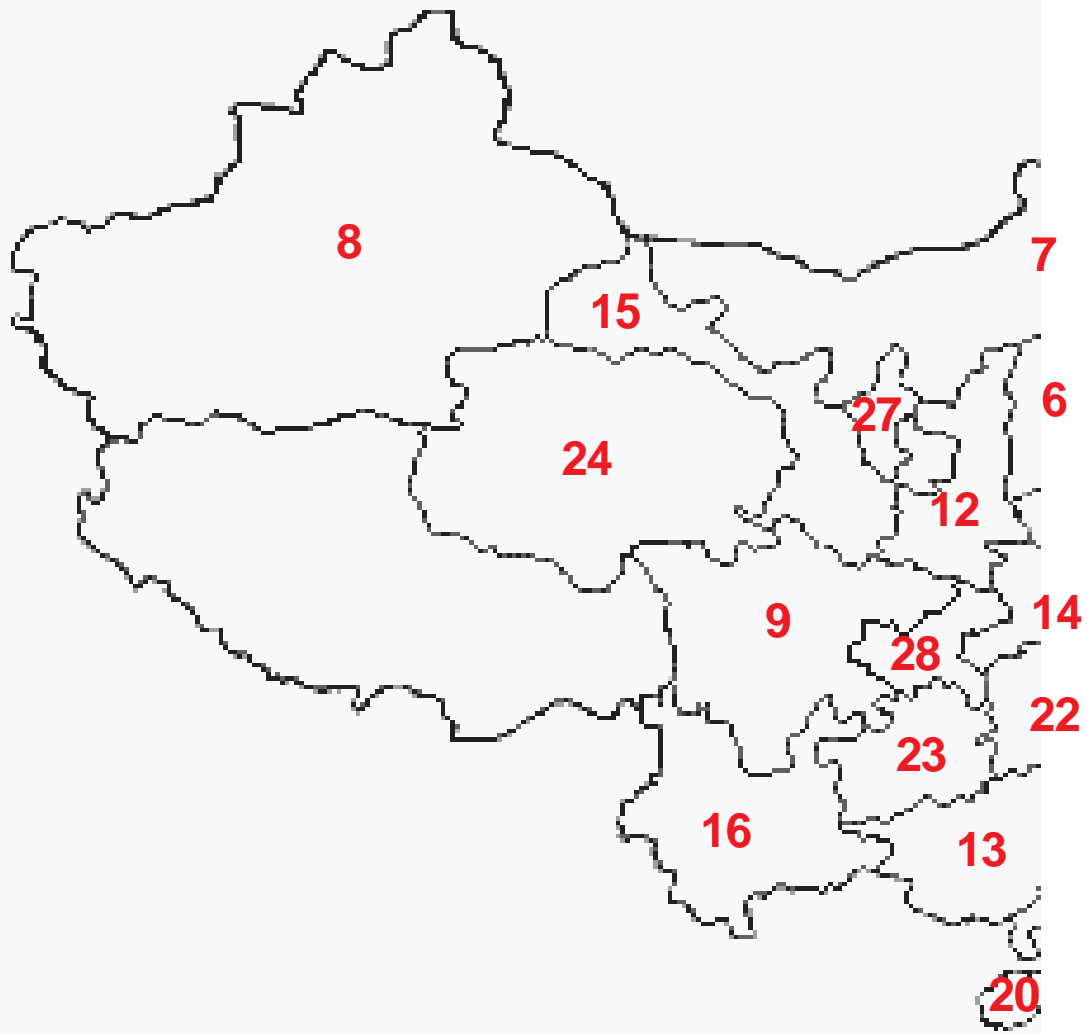
After I first met the Lord in 1974 I was so eager to read God's Word that I prayed and fasted for 100 days, eating just one small bowl of rice a day. My parents thought I was losing my mind because of desperation and despair, but finally the Lord miraculously provided a Bible for me." (from 'Living Water' by Brother Yun with Paul Hattaway, due to be published in August 2008).

As the 1980s got underway, the church in China to increase in number but Bibles



A hand-copied Chinese Bible from the 1970s

CHINA BIBLE MAP



Thanks to the grace of God, and your prayers and support, Asia Harvest has now printed and delivered more than one million full Chinese Bibles to Christians in China since 2001. On behalf of all the believers in China, thank you and God bless you!

Bibles Delivered by Province:

1	Zhejiang	142,714
2	Anhui	138,202
3	Heilongjiang	96,776
4	Henan	88,150
5	Shandong	60,854
6	Shanxi	51,802
7	Inner Mongolia	50,030
8	Xinjiang	45,450
9	Sichuan	42,670
10	Jilin	38,420
11	Liaoning	35,680
12	Shaanxi	34,282
13	Guangxi	32,500
14	Hubei	30,586
15	Gansu	30,410
16	Yunnan	27,730
17	Jiangsu	24,650
18	Hebei	19,346
19	Shanghai	15,272
20	Hainan Island	15,214
21	Fujian	14,440
22	Hunan	11,640
23	Guizhou	9,680
24	Qinghai	7,786
25	Beijing	6,184
26	Jiangxi	4,290
27	Ningxia	3,900
28	Chongqing	3,790
29	Guangdong	3,110
TOTAL		1,085,558

were still rarer than fine gold. In response, God raised up a group of courageous missionaries, led by Brother David.

After a Chinese house church leader requested one million Bibles to meet their immediate needs, Brother David gathered a group around him and prayerfully launched a secret project, code-named Pearl, to deliver one million Bibles by boat to the believers in China.

Although to begin with they had no money or resources at all, God provided what they needed and on the evening of 18 June 1981, their specially-constructed tugboat and barge laden with 232 tons of Bibles slipped through Chinese naval vessels and delivered the precious cargo to thousands of Christians waiting on a beach near Shantou in southern China. The twenty foreigners on board the vessel had signed their wills before the delivery, and risked their lives for the sake of the Christians in China. They realized if they were caught the Communist authorities would not accept the invasion of their territorial waters lightly.

This extraordinary delivery, which must surely rate as one of the most audacious act of faith in Christian history, brought immediate relief to many Chinese believers who had prayed for years that they might see a copy of the Bible. It also caused a huge spike in growth, as believers better understood God's Word and were more motivated to reach the lost. *(This inspirational story, told in a new book 'Project Pearl: The 1 Million Bibles that Changed China,' by Brother David with Paul Hattaway, will be available early next year).*

Two other key events took place in the early 1980s. The Chinese government, partly

because of the shock they received from the Project Pearl boat delivery, gave permission for an official Bible printing press to be established in the city of Nanjing. The Amity Press was launched, but for the first number of years Bibles were difficult to obtain for Christians belonging to unregistered house churches, where at least 80% of Chinese Christians worship.

The second key event that took place was that a number of 'Bible smuggling' ministries commenced work in Hong Kong. These ministries invited Christians from around the world to come and carry Bibles across the border into China. Thousands of couriers came during the 1980s and 1990s, carrying bags and suitcases of Scriptures with them. In total, the number of Bibles carried into China this way was in the millions.

In the early to mid-1990s a new dynamic entered the China Bible scene. Enterprising believers found ways to print Bibles inside China for the house churches, and the need to carry Bibles in from Hong Kong gradually diminished.

The Amity Press in Nanjing continued to print many Bibles, and the house churches found creative ways to get their hands on some of them. We thank God for every single Bible the Amity Press has printed in China! The supply, however, was never able to catch up with the demand among the house churches.

Today there continues to be a great need for Bibles in China, especially among house churches in rural parts of the country. While most believers living in major cities today have access to Bibles, in the rural farming areas (where the majority of house church

believers live), the revival continues to burn brightly and large numbers of new believers have no access to Bibles. Our friends at China Harvest recently told of a meeting they had with a house church pastor named Brother Shu. He told them: "I used to think that Chinese could get all the regular Bibles they needed nowadays. But I was humbled to find out I was so deceived! I've lived my whole life in the big cities, but then as I began to work more and more in remote rural areas, I found there are many hundreds of thousands of believers in those places without access to any Bible!" (*China Harvest, July 2007*).

As mentioned earlier, a few months ago we passed the milestone of one million Bibles printed and delivered to Christians in China since 2001. We are thankful for this, but there are so many more needed! Our coworkers regularly receive requests from China from leaders needing tens of thousands of copies urgently just to equip new believers. Here are a few recent letters we have received:

"In Heilongjiang Province we have sent Bibles to many counties. We recently preached to policemen and to farmers, and 500 received baptism! We also sent workers to Shandong Province, and hundreds of workers there are waiting for Bibles and teaching materials."

"We held revival meetings in Gansu Province, and each believer shared the Gospel with 10 people. Now we need 2,400 Bibles."

"We received the 4,100 Bibles and 650 study Bibles from your contact. Praise the Lord! In the past twelve months the Lord has graciously enabled us to reach more than 60,000 souls for Christ, and

we are now praying and striving to nourish these newborn babes in Christ. Without God's Word this is impossible. The Scriptures you sent us were received like hungry children longing for good and lasting food. Please pray that we will be able to receive at least 50,000 more Bibles from the hand of the Lord, so that none of our new believers would be without a copy of God's holy Word."

Good News!

In 2001 we started our China Bible fund with an average price of US\$2.00 per Bible. In 2003 rising costs caused us to raise the price to \$2.25.

Recently, our coworkers inside China discovered a way to print Bibles in a more economical way, without changing the quality at all! **From this month on we are glad to announce that we can provide full Bibles to the believers in China for US\$1.80 per Bible, including delivery.**

For less than the cost of a cup of coffee, a Bible can be produced and delivered to a Christian family in China, making a huge impact both in their lives and in the lives of those they reach. You may never have the chance to meet the family your gift has helped in this life, but you surely will in heaven!

If you, your family or church fellowship would like to participate in giving to the China Bible fund, please fill out and return the enclosed response form. Every gift is acknowledged, and donors from the U.S. will be sent a tax-deductible receipt. God bless you!