

# Asia Harvest



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

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**MARIE MONSEN -**  
**The 'Mother of the House Churches'**

# From the Frontlines

*Often we are unaware of the origins of many of our church practices and songs. We would like to start this newsletter by sharing the background of one famous song you have probably heard many times: **"I Have Decided to Follow Jesus"**.*

*In the hills of northeast India live the Garo tribe, who number more than one million people. We have worked with Garo Christians for over 20 years. For centuries they were feared as a primitive head-hunting tribe, but in the most recent Indian census, over 95 percent of the Garo declared themselves to be Christians. Here is one reason why...*

In the late 1800s, many missionaries came to the state of Assam in northeast India to spread the Gospel. A Baptist missionary succeeded in converting a man named Nokseng, his wife, and his two children. Nokseng's faith proved contagious, and many villagers began to accept Jesus.

The village chief, angry at the prospect of losing control, summoned all the villagers. He demanded Nokseng's family to publicly renounce their faith or face execution. Moved by the Holy Spirit, Nokseng said: **"I have decided to follow Jesus."**

Enraged at his refusal to deny Christ, the chief ordered his archers to shoot the two children. As both boys lay twitching on the ground, the chief asked, "Will you deny your faith? You have lost both your children. You will lose your wife also."

But Nokseng replied: **"Though no one joins me, still I will follow."**

The chief was beside himself with fury and ordered Nokseng's wife to be shot with arrows. In a moment she joined her children in death. Now the chief said for the last time: "I will give you one more opportunity to deny your faith and live." In the face of death, Nokseng did not waver, and made his final memorable statement:

**"The cross before me, the world behind me. No turning back."**

He was killed like the rest of his family, but a miracle took place. The chief was moved by Nokseng's faith and he wondered, "Why would Nokseng and his family die for a Man who lived in a far-away land some 2,000 years ago? This God must have remarkable power, and I too want to taste that faith."

In a spontaneous confession, the chief declared, "I too belong to Jesus Christ!" When the crowd heard this from the mouth of their chief, the whole village accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior. Later, Nokseng's words became a beloved song of the Garo Christians, and was later translated into English and sung around the world.

## ***Marie Monsen: The 'Mother of the House Churches'***

In the remainder of this newsletter we would like to share an excerpt from our new book, 'HENAN: Inside the Greatest Christian Revival in History'.

*Marie Monsen, a single Lutheran missionary from Norway, was the unlikely vessel used by God to bring powerful revival to many parts of China in the 1920s and 1930s. Such was the impact of this softly-spoken woman that today, many believers in China respectfully call her the 'mother of the house churches'. We hope you will be challenged by her testimony and message, which is desperately needed in the Church around the world today.*

### ***Full Surrender***

The Norwegian Lutheran China Mission sent ten new missionaries to China in 1901–02 to reinforce their work. One of the new recruits was a single woman named Marie Monsen. Nobody would have believed that this small, humble figure would have such an impact over the next 30 years.

Monsen was trained as a schoolteacher and had just completed a year studying nursing when she felt a strong call from God to become a missionary. Just a month after arriving in China, Monsen fell down an iron staircase and lay unconscious for several days with concussion. She was afflicted with severe headaches for six years, which ended only after she received special prayer and anointing for healing.



The doctor who was responsible for overseeing Monsen's recovery strictly forbade her from both language study and teaching for two years. This was a huge blow to the fledgling missionary. Every worker she knew had been devoted to language study in order to communicate with the people, and the other deep desire in her life, teaching, had also been denied. She felt extremely frustrated—but God had other plans for this disciple.

Monsen was still struggling with the tumultuous start to her missionary career when she contracted malaria. The fever took her close to death, and the agony she experienced in body, soul and mind broke her. At the time she could see only Satan in these attacks, but years later she realized that God had allowed these afflictions so she would value this life less than eternity and would become a broken and humble vessel in His hands. Eventually, Marie reached a point where she was able to truly surrender her future to God's will. She was healed from malaria that day, and her temperature returned to normal.

### *A Godly Discontentment*

Toward the end of her first term of seven years in China, Marie Monsen started to feel deeply discouraged about the methods and poor results of the mission she was a member of, and the lack of power in her own ministry. She found a clue as to why the missionaries were so ineffective when the faith of an elderly, uneducated Chinese woman challenged her to the core. The old sister had moved into a room right next to hers, and the paper-thin walls meant that Marie could hear all of her prayers and petitions to God. The woman prayed loudly and frequently, and was never afraid to ask her Heavenly Father for things the Norwegian didn't dare to request because of her conservative Lutheran upbringing. She later recalled:

*"I could hear everything she prayed about, and could watch how her prayers were answered. There seemed to be a great difference between the result of her prayers and mine. More than once when I heard her pray, I thought, 'That will never happen,' but just 'that' did happen. It took some time for me to discover the explanation. She had a living, childlike faith, and to her God, difficulties were not difficulties. I had more doubt than faith, so to me difficulties were so tremendous that it would have to take time for God to answer. That is to say, I discovered that I was an unbelieving believer!"*

In 1907, news of the tremendous revival that was sweeping the Korean Peninsula reached Marie, and something clicked inside her heart. Here was New Testament Christianity being demonstrated, with similar results! She longed to travel to Korea and experience the revival for herself.



The Holy Spirit began to stir the diminutive Norwegian, and both Christians and non-believers were astonished by the power and authority with which she shared the Gospel with them. The power was spiritual in nature, for her voice was always soft and calm, and she never shouted or bellowed out her message. All traces of the fear of man left her, and Marie desired only to know Christ and to stand up for truth and for the purity of the Church.

Monsen was deeply troubled by the compromised lifestyles of many missionaries and Chinese church leaders, and she challenged them strongly. The question: **“Have you ever really been born-again?”** burned throughout many parts of China as God expanded her ministry and made it nationwide. When their faith was held up to the searching light of God’s Word, many professing Christians realized that they had never truly been born-again. Christianity may have been pasted over their lives as a veneer, but they had never been thoroughly converted to Christ, nor had they forsaken their sins.

A Lutheran missionary described Monsen’s methods in detail:

“Her plan was first to destroy the false security of the church members. She spoke of the various kinds of patches the unsaved used to hide behind when they tried to persuade themselves they were saved. She then spoke of sin, one sin at a time. It had cost her several days of prayerful struggle before she became willing, as she expressed it, to ‘descend into the miry cesspool of sin’ in connection with the sixth commandment, against adultery. It turned out that one of Satan’s nearly impregnable strongholds was at last broken into when this particular sin was brought out into the open.”

### ***Confession and Restitution***

In many places, Monsen’s messages were followed by deep confessions of sin and practical acts of repentance. People who had stolen from their neighbors were convicted by the Holy Spirit and returned the items. One man filled a wheelbarrow with things he needed to take back to their rightful owners.

Long-standing grudges between people were renounced and forgiven. Men confessed to beating their wives, and women confessed their own sins—including infanticide, which was prevalent in China then, even as it is today through gender-selective abortion. At one meeting, Monsen was taken aback when the women broke down in tears. One by one, they admitted:

“I have killed three.”

“And I five.”

“I took the lives of eight of my children.”

“And I killed 13, but they were all girls.”

Marie was horrified by the dark deeds the women had committed, but was thrilled that they had confessed them before the throne of God. She wrote:

“It was the first time...that I heard women, who knew we regarded the killing of infants as sin, confess that they themselves had committed this particular sin. They all knew, of course, of many others who had done it. This was the first time I had seen the Holy Spirit deal with a whole group—a miracle indeed.”

After the Holy Spirit had dealt with church members, there invariably followed a time of evangelism, as cleansed men and women went to surrounding towns and villages, proclaiming the life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ. Whereas previously many believers had only been able to speak of God’s transforming power, now they were able to demonstrate it in their own lives. Thousands of people, seeing the difference, put their trust in the Lord.

Monsen’s deep longing that the Chinese would experience a biblical Christianity was being answered. In one meeting, the convicting presence of the Holy Spirit was so real that a soldier who had strayed into the building knelt in repentance and received new life in Jesus Christ. The joy of being forgiven overwhelmed him, and peace flooded his beaming face. He stood up and declared:



*Crowds of eager people flocking to hear the Gospel in a Henan church meeting.*

"It will be a short life of joy for me here on earth, but I shall be saved from myself and my sins forever. Will you pray together for me until you hear a shot from the military camp? I stole some ammunition and sold it, and there is a death penalty for that. I must go back now and confess to the Captain.... We shall meet again in heaven."

The soldier had not been pushed into the kingdom of God by theological arguments or human persuasion. Indeed, he had never heard a word of the gospel until he walked into the church that day, but the presence of the Almighty God was so tangible in that meeting that he was now willing to die in exchange for the new life he had just experienced. The young man ran off, with a radiant smile on his face. Monsen recalled:

"We stood there praying in a circle, holding one another's hands. We thought it was a very long time we had to wait, praying and listening for that shot. Suddenly he was there again in our midst, smiling. He had confessed everything and given a careful, detailed account of what he had stolen. The Captain sat silent a moment, then sighed heavily and said, 'As you have now become a new man and will not steal any more, I don't see why you should die. You may go.'"

The response of people to the conviction of the Holy Spirit was not always positive. Occasionally people fled in terror when the terrible power of God descended upon them, including some church leaders and elders. People often said to Monsen, "Your words are like knives," or, "Your words strike me like thunderbolts." One elderly Christian lamented, "All my wrong-doings have been spread out before me like wares piled up on a counter."

Once, a mob of vicious bandits invaded the town where Monsen had been sharing the Word of God. Dozens of people from the neighborhood climbed over the walls of the mission compound, clutching little bags of valuables, as they thought there was less chance of being attacked and robbed at the mission than in their homes. Bullets whistled about the heads of the people



*Monsen with the widow of a key Chinese church leader.*

gathered there, and gunfire and loud explosions were heard for several hours as the bandits plundered and killed. Throughout the ordeal, the Christians calmly prayed for God's protection.

The next day, neighbors from across the street visited Monsen and the other believers and told them that from time to time, when the firing was less intense, they had poked their heads out of their front doors to see what was going on. One non-Christian family asked whether they could come into the compound next time there was such an attack, "since you have protection." Marie asked them what they meant, and they explained, "Three soldiers stood on guard up on the high roof of the Gospel Hall, one at each end and one in the middle. A fourth was seated on the porch over the main gate. These soldiers had kept watch in every direction.... They were taller than any soldiers we have ever seen."

### ***'My Father Runs the Trains'***

At the height of her ministry in China, Monsen was in great demand. From her base in Henan she travelled widely to more than a dozen provinces, sharing the message God had placed on her heart. Everywhere, both individuals and entire churches were transformed, and many sinners repented and pressed forward into the kingdom of heaven.

In one town, she planned to leave by train on a Saturday afternoon after the meetings concluded. She had an appointment at a town some distance away and needed all the connecting trains to arrive on time. As she was praying that morning, however, the Lord clearly told her that she should not leave the town until Monday.

When she told this to the senior missionary, he replied that it couldn't be God telling her to stay, for there were no trains on Mondays and she would surely miss her appointment. She returned to her room and again asked God for guidance. Again, the words came: "Leave on Monday."

Her colleague became increasingly agitated, but the peace of God filled Marie's heart and she was assured that all would be well. She told the senior missionary, "My Father runs the trains," but he angrily expressed his displeasure.

On the Sunday evening, the local Chinese pastor asked Monsen if he could talk with her. He admitted that he had never experienced the inner peace of God in his life, and asked how he could be saved. She led him to true faith in Jesus Christ, and he received the Lord with great joy. Marie realized this was the reason why God had delayed her departure.

At breakfast on the Monday morning, she asked the missionary whether he would be kind enough to drive her to the station. He protested and said there was no point,



because trains didn't run through the town on Mondays. After some discussion, however, he agreed to her request—perhaps to show her how foolish it was. They made their way through the narrow streets, and just as they pulled up outside the station, there was a train on the platform, preparing to depart! Marie later recalled:

*"In the few seconds before the whistle sounded for departure, I heard that the provincial Governor had telegraphed for the new carriage he had standing there, and it had to be sent immediately at express speed to the capital—the very city I had to reach that Monday in order to catch a north-bound train. We flashed past every station. Never before nor since has it been my lot to travel in such a magnificent carriage."*

### ***An Enduring Legacy***

In the early 1930s, Marie Monsen received news that her elderly mother in Norway needed care. She was torn between continuing the fruitful ministry God had given her in China and returning home, but over time the Holy Spirit showed her that her service in the Orient had reach its conclusion. She returned to Europe in 1932, leaving behind thousands of new believers, and hundreds of zealous churches that had once been full of lukewarm Christians.

Today, the entire Nanyang Prefecture where Monsen spent most of her time has grown to contain over 10 million people, and the number of Evangelical Christians living there is estimated at 3.2 million, or nearly one-third of the population.

Many key house church leaders have emerged from this blessed part of southern Henan, including Brother Yun. God has made the area a powerhouse of revival throughout China. For this reason, many Christians in Henan today, more than a century after Monsen began her ministry in China, continue to fondly refer to her as "the mother of the house churches."



**To order a copy of the HENAN book, please fill out and return the enclosed form or visit our website ([www.asiaharvest.org](http://www.asiaharvest.org)) for details. An e-book version is also available online.**

*Alternatively, if you send a donation to any Asia Harvest project, please indicate that you would like a complimentary copy of the Henan book and we will gladly send you one.*

## CHINA BIBLE FUND



*Current Total: 14,556,121  
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 1,525 Asian evangelists  
among 1,150 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 **600,622 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: 1,306,535 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 **1,749** 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 **179,319** 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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