

Asia Harvest



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

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The Asian Workers' Fund

The Heartbeat of Asia Harvest

Love Never Burns Out

by Elijah Gergan



In this newsletter we are honored to share a guest message by **Elijah Gergan**, whom we first met at a conference in the Himalayas 25 years ago. Gergan is a Tibetan word meaning “teacher”. If you have read our book, **“Tibet: The Roof of the World,”** you may remember the first ever Tibetan to have contact with missionaries was Elijah’s great-great grandfather Sodnam Wangyal (Tempu Gergan) in the 1850s.

We have also shared the epic story of how Elijah’s grandfather, Yoseb Gergan, completed the first translation of the Tibetan Bible in 1948. In an amazing testimony of God’s grace and preserving power, Elijah has continued his family’s wonderful Christian heritage that stretches back over 150 years. Next month, he will celebrate the milestone of 40 years of faithful ministry among Tibetan people. He recently shared this word of encouragement with us:

“Elijah was afraid and ran for his life... He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. ‘I have had enough, Lord,’ he said. ‘Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors’” (1 Kings 19:3-4).

Burnout is one of the most prevalent social diseases of our time. It occurs when someone feels overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and is unable to meet constant demand. It takes all joy out of a person’s career, friendships, and family.

When Elijah was burnt out, he felt like he had nothing left to give and was pessimistic toward life. The Apostle Paul was no stranger to sacrificial service and hard work. His work for God’s people was relentless, and he outdid all of the other apostles, saying, ***“I worked harder than all of them”*** (1 Cor. 15:10).

Unlike Elijah, and despite his physical limitations and severe opposition, Paul was able to write from prison: ***“Rejoice in the Lord always”*** (Phil. 4:4). He described his life as being ***“poured out like a drink offering”*** to God (Phil. 2:17). Paul held nothing back from the Lord. For him, ***“to live is Christ and to die is gain”*** (Phil. 1:21).

Paul’s complete existence was only for the Lord Jesus. His willing “giving away” of his life meant that everything he did was with the mindset of Jesus. Such “poured out” lives can never be “burned out” lives. People with no hidden selfishness are on sure footing. Their hearts are not divided, and they are able to rejoice always in God’s will, praise and prayer. Paul was often alone, but never lonely, isolated, or out of step! Those whose poured-out lives are constantly replenished by the Holy Spirit will never be “burned out”!

The Asian Workers' Fund

The Heartbeat of Asia Harvest

Recently, quite a few people have asked us about the Asian Workers' Fund and how it operates. As it is one of our foundational projects that we have run for decades, we thought it would be a good idea to share the principles of the Asian Workers' Fund, and explain why we consider it the single most important project we do. Paul has often said that if the Lord appeared and said we could only keep one project, he would choose the Asian Workers' Fund, for it is at the very center of God's purposes in the world today. We would like to take this opportunity to answer some of the common questions we are asked about the project:

What is the Asian Workers' Fund and why is it important?

The project supports Asian church-planting evangelists who are serving among the most unreached and unengaged people groups in Asia. We deliberately choose workers among obscure groups that others consider difficult or impossible to reach. In Asia, this often means we are trying to reach Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu groups. Our thinking is in line with the Apostle Paul, who said: ***"It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation"*** (Romans 15:20).

Let us not forget that today there are still thousands of unreached people groups in the world (mostly in Asia). Until each group has received a clear presentation of the Good News about what Jesus Christ has done for them on the Cross, He will not return. It was the Lord who told us: ***"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations [ethnic groups], and then the end will come"*** (Matthew 24:14).

We do not support evangelists in "easier" places or among people groups that already have strong churches, even though there would be many more individuals saved. Our focus is not only on reaching individuals, but on penetrating entire ethnic and language groups that have never heard the Gospel. In this regard, a key aim of the project is to help start movements to Christ, rather than to maintain a work that is already underway.

Cover photo: Hundreds of ethnic minority people in southwest China listening to an evangelist supported through our Asian Worker's Fund. This meeting took place several years ago, before the intense persecution commenced. Unfortunately, meetings like this are not possible in China at the moment.

Subsequently, we are not looking simply to support as many workers as possible. Rather, we are selective, and most applications we receive are not approved. We also regularly evaluate those we are supporting, to ensure the project remains “cutting edge” and strategic for the kingdom of God.

In our experience, much missionary activity begins with a vision to share the Gospel with those who have never heard, but ends up evolving into “Christians helping Christians.” This in itself is not a bad thing, but it is not the objective of the Asian Workers’ Fund.

We also do not support pastors through this project. We believe the believers in each congregation—no matter how small—should be responsible for supporting the needs of those who shepherd them. If an evangelist’s role evolves into being a church pastor, we allocate their support to someone new, while encouraging them to train up their church members to take the Gospel to unreached people groups.



An evangelist in Indonesia preaching the Gospel to attentive fishermen and their families.

Despite the strict parameters we apply to the project, we are currently supporting **1,544 frontline Asian missionaries in 21 countries, who share the Gospel among 1,197** different people groups (many workers are reaching multiple groups).

To Serve and not to be Served

At the time of writing this newsletter, **we are partnering with 70 different Asian church and mission groups, who oversee the 1,544 field workers.**

Some people have wondered how Asia Harvest is able to “take care” of 1,500 missionaries spread over 21 countries. The answer is: we don’t! That would be impossible. The real work is done by the leaders of the 70 Asian missions we partner with.

They oversee the courageous individuals who have given their lives to serve in far-flung parts of Asia, from the frozen mountain passes of the Himalayas, to the grasslands of Mongolia and Central Asia, to the humid jungles of Southeast Asia.

Each missionary must be a member of a good Christian fellowship in their country, and be commissioned and sent to the field by their home church. We have developed partnerships with many church and mission leaders, and we send all support through them. They are responsible for mobilizing, training and placing each worker. The leaders also distribute the resources we send, provide reports and accountability, and take care of each individual missionary on their team.

Every mission organization says they are serving the local Church in each country. However, in reality Asian believers often end up serving the vision of the foreign mission, and not the other way around. We don’t care if none of the individual workers have ever heard of Asia Harvest. In fact, we prefer it that way.

You won’t find a single building anywhere in Asia with “Asia Harvest” above the door. We have no interest at all in promoting ourselves, and if we did put our name on things it would quickly attract persecution and be shut down anyway. Our relationships are with the Asian ministry leaders we support. If the evangelists on the field ask where the funds come from, their ministry leaders often tell them: “It comes from God and His people”.

From the time the Asian Workers’ Fund began, we have been careful not to create “dependency”, so there are several non-negotiable principles we adhere to. By giving through the leaders of existing Asian churches and missions, the support we provide is not seen as “foreign” money, which can attract persecution and create problems in certain countries. Instead, by giving through existing, God-anointed leadership structures, we help strengthen the Body of Christ in Asia.



Evangelists in India preparing to ride their bicycles to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the lost in their district.

How is Each Worker's Support Made Up?

Each missionary is first and foremost required to be supported by their local church, and by friends and family members. This way, they do not rely solely on the funds we send.

Missions history is full of examples of local church movements collapsing when missionaries were expelled, and their funds dried up. We are determined not to be in that position, so what we provide should never be considered a "salary". Rather, it is a special blessing for the workers, but not the main part of their income. What we give does make a huge difference to the workers and their families, however. We also help with needs such as travel assistance, so that evangelists can travel widely to proclaim the Gospel, without the burden of having to pay for bus or train tickets from their limited personal income.

The Lord Jesus said: ***"Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him"*** (John 7:18). In a similar way, the approach of Asia Harvest over the years has helped develop many healthy relationships, as key Asian leaders have come to trust that we are there to serve them with love and respect, and not to be served. We truly come alongside them to help them get the job done more effectively, and we never interfere or impose a hidden agenda on them.

How Much we Give, and why we Raise support in \$25 increments

Our decision to raise support for the Asian Workers' Fund in \$25 increments dates back about 20 years, when we used to match each donor to a specific worker. We soon found that system didn't work, as when people stopped or changed their giving, we were left scrambling to try to find another donor for the next month's support. This created uncertainty and stress for the workers on the field, as they and their families were never sure if they would still receive support the next month.

Instead of evangelists receiving their help from one source, the Lord led us to restructure the project so that different donors essentially take a "part share" in one worker's support.

By spreading the responsibility for one worker's support among different donors, we have found that if someone stops giving, we can quickly reallocate that portion to a new donor, or we make up any shortfall from "where needed most" donations. By restructuring the project this way, we have not missed a single commitment to the many hundreds of workers we support in the past 20 years.

Therefore, as we collect funds in \$25 increments, if someone starts giving \$50 per month to the Asian Workers' Fund, we allocate two workers to them and send two prayer cards. If someone gives \$100 per month, we send four prayer cards, and so on. This also encourages more prayer for those on the field, as supporters around the world intercede for the evangelists and for a breakthrough among the people group they are engaging.

We send every dollar of what comes in for the Asian Workers' Fund to the frontlines in Asia. Nothing is deducted for administration or any other expense. The amount we give each worker depends on a number of factors, including what country they are in, if they live in a city or village, whether they are married or single, how many children they have, etc. Generally, most workers receive an average of \$75 to \$100 per month from us, **plus many other resources to help them do their work more effectively**. We will share more about those in a moment.

A Birds-Eye View of God's Work in Asia

We require regular updates from all workers we support. A few of their reports and photos may end up being featured in our newsletters, unless they work in a sensitive country where publishing their information might lead to persecution.

By overseeing the Asian Workers' Fund, we get a sense of what the Lord Jesus is doing as He builds His Church throughout Asia. We get to see and hear about the ebbs and flows of the harvest field. For example, right now we can tell you that the Gospel is thriving strongly in parts of Indonesia, India, Laos, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and among various people groups in the Himalayas.

On the other hand, the worst persecution in 40 years in China has caused a rapid deterioration in the work with China's 400 ethnic minority groups. The same could be said of Vietnam. We still support many Chinese missionaries, but the situation there has become so grim that many of the same workers who used to report leading 30 or 40 people to Christ in a six-month period are now reporting between zero and a few salvations. This is happening as President Xi ramps up his efforts to obliterate Christianity from China and replace it with his peculiar blend of God-hating, power-hungry, money-making Marxism.

Other Resources that Help Get the Job Done

While the Asian Workers' Fund provides a base of support for individual evangelists, each year we actually give much more by equipping them with the resources they need to get the job done. In this respect they are like soldiers in an army,



These women in Bangladesh are now Christians after they completed a literacy class led by local missionaries we support through the Asian Workers' Fund. In many cases, the first words they ever read is the Gospel. Often, by the end of a course, two-thirds of the women have repented of their sins and follow Jesus. This is just one example of the many ways we help the Good News spread among the unreached in Asia.

where the equipment they carry determines the success of their mission more than just the compensation they receive.

Apart from the basic worker support, over the years we have been honored to supply numerous resources to those on the frontlines, including hundreds of thousands of Bibles, millions of Gospel tracts, hundreds of bicycles, motorcycles, electronic equipment, warm weather gear, and travel assistance. We also fund seminars and conferences that bring the workers together to pray, fellowship and strategize.

Through other projects such as the **Persecution & Relief Fund**, **Living Martyrs' Fund** and **The Children's Fund**, we strengthen the workers and enhance the fruitfulness of their ministries by supporting orphans, widows, sewing centers, literacy classes, children's ministry, digging fresh-water wells, and numerous other initiatives.

None of these are mere social works. They are done to help share the gospel with the lost, and over the years they have been the catalyst for drawing many tens of thousands of people into the kingdom of God.

We currently have dozens of unsupported Asian missionaries among unreached people groups, especially in India, Nepal, Laos, Bhutan, and Indonesia. If you, your home group or church would like to support one or more of these workers, we invite you to do so through our **Asian Workers' Fund**.

For each \$25 per month committed, we will allocate an evangelist to you, and will send a laminated prayer card with information about the worker, and a profile of the people group they are targeting, to help you pray for them. For those who continue to support the project, written updates from the field are provided every six months.

If you would like to help partner with strategic Asian missionaries as they fulfill the Great Commission, please fill out the yellow response form in this newsletter and send it back along with your gift. Alternatively, one-time or monthly donations to the project can be made via our secure website: www.asiaharvest.org

CHINA BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 16,829,351
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 \$3.00 to print and deliver.

ASIAN WORKERS' FUND



We currently support 1,544 Asian evangelists among 1,197 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 **922,302 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: 1,461,133 Bibles printed in 146 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 **2,096** 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 **188,912** 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 help 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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