

Asia Harvest



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

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Despised by Men, Loved by God
Reaching Lepers for Jesus Christ

A Living Death

by Sister Linda Ann

We would like to share the following words from Linda Ann — a dear sister in Christ who has been a blessing to the kingdom of God in India for many years....

Imagine you have just been told you have leprosy. If you are an adult all your dreams and aspirations are suddenly shattered. If you have a job, you will lose it. If you do not have an occupation, you never will. There is no social security system in place in India to pay for your disability. If you are not rich (and certainly those with whom we deal with are not), then you are doomed.

Shame, fear, and horror set in as you know that you will soon be rejected by your family and will have to resort to begging on the streets. The thought of living in a leper colony terrifies you. No one will accompany you on your journey, you are now unclean, impure, contaminated. Everyone you ever knew or cared about will never come closer to you than several feet away. Your mind jumps from one thought to another, numerous ideas on how to survive compete with one another for dominance. Everything you have always known and taken for granted is now a big question mark.

Exile is unavoidable. Not able to earn a livelihood, you will have to 'learn' how to beg on the streets. Forgotten by your family, you will live in a hut on the outskirts of your village, perhaps in a cave, or worse in a makeshift tent behind the city's garbage dump. A life of isolation will be your lot as you hide yourself from people while the disease progressively destroys your body. Patches as white as snow have already appeared on your skin. When you examine your spots you feel nothing. Your skin is numb to the touch. You will notice that your nose feels stuffy all the time. You are now facing a debilitating disease. Leprosy has been called **A LIVING DEATH.**

Front and back cover photos: Some of the 300 lepers in India that Asia Harvest is privileged to help through our 'Persecution & Relief Fund'. They get no support at all from the government or any aid agency, but our partners in India have shown the love of Jesus to these precious people, and now 272 of them have become Christians.

Reaching Lepers for Jesus Christ

Despised by Men, Loved by God

“Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” (Luke 14:12-14).

Throughout both the Old and New Testaments we can read of God’s love and mercy toward those who suffer from the horrific disease of leprosy.

You may live in a part of the world where leprosy seems like a tale from the ancient past, but we can assure you in Asia the disease is alive and well, and afflicting multitudes of new people every year.

Governments and cultures deal with leprosy in different ways. Historical records show that leprosy has been present in south China for about 2,000 years, but for much of that time the government has dealt with it by committing genocide against the lepers, with many cases of slaughter too gruesome to mention.

In India, where **130,000 new cases of leprosy are reported every year** (that’s about 350 new cases per day), the plight for lepers is extremely grim. You may have heard that low caste people in India are called “untouchables”. Well, even the untouchables consider lepers to be untouchable—lower than dogs on the social scale.

As a result, lepers are forced out of society, and many commit suicide the moment they discover they have contracted the disease. Sometimes, lepers have come together in remote locations where they huddle in makeshift shelters, despised and rejected by their fellow men, their country, and their own families and friends.

One false assumption people often make about leprosy is that it occurs because of the filth and unhygienic lives of those who contract it. In reality, leprosy strikes at all kinds of people regardless of their ethnic, educational, economic or social background. As you will read in some of the testimonies in this newsletter, leprosy can strike accountants, housewives, teachers, rich and poor, young and old. (It may surprise you to learn that an average of 200 to 300 new cases of leprosy are reported each year in the United States).



BROTHER KOTAYA — I am from the Banjara tribe. We used to worship idols made in the shape of animals. In my youth I found the stripes of leprosy on my body, and my wife also became leprous. All my family members immediately ostracized us. They even refused to provide us water, so we became street beggars. During our begging we reached a city, where one man took pity on us, gave us a piece of bread, and advised us to go to a special hospital in another town.

We had a glimmer of hope in our hearts for the first time, but we had great trouble until we finally reached the Christian Leper Hospital. There, for the first time in my life, I tasted the real love of Jesus. I came to know Jesus as my personal Savior. Until that time, I had only worshipped man-made gods. In India there are thousands of gods, but now I knew that those useless gods could not provide salvation to us. I threw out all our idols and became a Christian. Although our lives were changed we remained outcasts, so to survive we continued to beg on the streets.

After my salvation, one of my leper brothers showed me some vacant land where there were some huts for lepers. I prepared a shed for me and my wife to live in. A pastor often visited us, providing food and medicine freely, while teaching us more about Jesus. I was fully satisfied and lived in that hut for many years. Today I am spiritually nourished in Jesus' Name. I am so thankful to Jesus who saved me and enables me to live in this world through His grace. My eternal gratitude is to my Lord Jesus.

SISTER MARTHA — I am now 90-years-old. I was formerly married but my husband died long ago. When I was just 17, my family traveled to Burma (now Myanmar) for work. We traveled a lot, and when I came back to my home in India, I found a leprosy patch on my cheek. I tried to find treatment, but gradually the disease spread, and my family members kicked me out. People even prevented me from walking on the street. My life was dramatically changed, and all hope was lost. I used to worship idols of trees and animals, and I had no peace. My body and soul were taken captive, and it felt like I was trapped in a very dark tunnel with no way out.

At last, I found a Christian organization that had pity on my pathetic condition and admitted me into their leper colony. After some years I came to know Jesus as the true and living God, and I was baptized and took the name Martha.

Now Jesus is my Savior. Our beloved pastor provides me with food and medical aid, and he prays for me.

Although I am a poor widowed leper with no value in the eyes of the world, I have joy and peace with Jesus, and I am a daughter of God who will live with Him forever!





BROTHER GANESH — I was raised in a Hindu farming family. After years of hard work, I bought some land near to my house and was happy to earn a living by working hard. Some years later, I was shocked and horrified to find white patches on my left hand which I used for plowing. While I was suffering with this patch, a Christian evangelist came to our village and preached about a man named Jesus who called sinners to Himself. I heard the message, but my heart was hard and I didn't care. Although I was hiding it to my family, my condition deteriorated as the disease spread to other parts of my body.

Sometime later, I again heard words being proclaimed about Jesus. This time I reached out to the preachers, who gave me a recommendation letter and advised me to go and get help at the Leper Hospital. When my family learned that I had leprosy they completely ostracized me, saying I was now disqualified to live among them. I had no other place to go except the leper community, where I met the pastor. He provided me a vacant place to live, where I built a little shed for my wife and me.

Although I was from an idol-worshiping family, I committed my life to Jesus and promised to serve Him. The believers are using my wife and I to help dress the wounds of our fellow lepers, I am also cleaning our church. Because of your generosity, we now have food, shelter, and medicine, and we have experienced the amazing love of Jesus Christ and His Church. I feel great joy, and I am deeply grateful to the Lord Jesus that He cares for lepers like me, even though everyone else in this world despises us and are terrified by us.

Hearts of Thankfulness to the Lord

As you can imagine, most lepers are amazed when they are first exposed to the Bible to discover that lepers are mentioned many times in both the Old and New Testaments. Feeling rejected and hated by both God and their communities, they are speechless when they learn that Jesus Christ, the Creator of the Universe, not only cared about lepers, but he touched them, loved them, and healed them! It's hard for us to imagine the depth of emotion lepers must feel when they first meet the reality of Jesus. No wonder so many willingly surrender their broken lives to Him!

Of course, one of the main stories about lepers in the Bible is told in Luke's Gospel, when ten lepers were healed by Jesus. Luke records:

"One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, 'Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?' Then he said to him, 'Rise and go; your faith has made you well.'" (Luke 17:15-19).

Not wanting to be like the nine lepers from long ago, the leprous believers we are privileged to help in India go out of their way to express their heart-felt gratitude to God for every mercy and provision in their lives, and they are also very gracious to Christians who minister to them. A few of them recently said:

"Thank you Asia Harvest, and all your supporters, for your loving help is beyond our greatest expectations. We feel the Lord is doing miracles through you!"



“Because of your love in Christ Jesus, we have tasted the goodness of God and we can now proclaim this promise of God with joy: *“Even to your old age and gray hairs I am He, I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you”* (Isaiah 46:4).

“We are so thankful to God for your generosity! Although we have been rejected and discarded by our own families and we live with a miserable condition, the Living God shows that He loves the weak and downtrodden like us! He saw us in our desperate state and did not leave nor forsake us. He raised up Asia Harvest to help us and to provide food, medicine, and the Word of God to us in our great need.”

Life-Changing Sandals

Although at first it may sound ridiculous to say that we are providing footwear for people whose toes and sometimes their whole feet have been eaten away by leprosy, our co-workers are doing just that, and it is making a huge difference in people’s lives!

In India rough, stony ground, mixed with human and animal waste is common. The lepers who are still able to walk found their wounds were easily infected because they could not wear normal footwear, and going barefoot was not an option. In response, hand-crafted sandals are made to fit each leper. The sandals have been specially fitted to hundreds of appreciative people. The sandals provide support and protection, and bring a great improvement to lepers’ lives, as many who previously stayed in their huts are now able to get around without the excruciating pain and risk of infection they once had. Each pair of sandals costs just \$10 to produce.



Dear friends, we didn't write this newsletter just to share the gruesome reality of the horrendous affliction of leprosy, but we wanted to tell you some wonderful news! If you have known us for a while, you will be aware that proclaiming the Gospel is at the heart of everything we do. **It would be a crime if we only ministered to people's physical needs and they ended up in hell for eternity** because we failed to clearly present the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ to them.

Because of the grace of God, hundreds of lepers have responded to the Gospel, and they will be counted among the redeemed around the throne of the Lamb, where they will be completely restored, and the memory of their years of misery on this earth will be forgotten. Hallelujah!



REACHING LEPERS THROUGH THE PERSECUTION & RELIEF FUND

We are blessed to be currently helping 300 lepers with food, medicine, sandals, Bibles, and in many other ways. It costs an average of \$20 per month to minister to each person's spirit, soul and body. **Of the 300 lepers, amazingly 272 have given their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ** and have been baptized. They come from a variety of different tribes and unreached people groups.

Please pray for this strategic work, and if you would like to support our brothers and sisters in leper colonies, 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 **Persecution & Relief Fund** or our other projects can be made via our secure website: www.asiaharvest.org

CHINA BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 17,368,982
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 1,593 Asian evangelists among 1,221 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 **939,561 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: 1,536,303 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 **194,788** 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 lepers, communities and families throughout Asia who are in desperate need.



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