

SUMMER 2005

CALLERS REPORT

Lessons From China's Revival

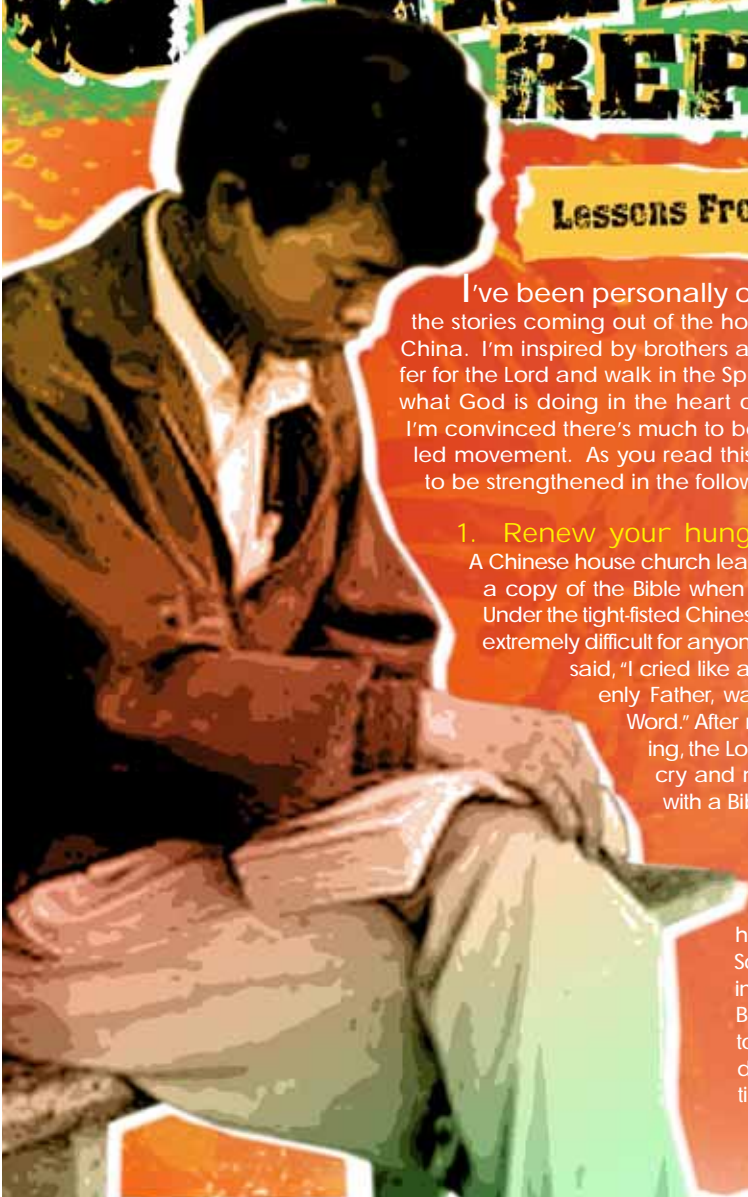
By Conrad Esh

I've been personally challenged by many of the stories coming out of the house church movement in China. I'm inspired by brothers and sisters who gladly suffer for the Lord and walk in the Spirit's power. As I reflect on what God is doing in the heart of this Communist nation, I'm convinced there's much to be gleaned from this Spirit-led movement. As you read this article, open your heart to be strengthened in the following three areas.

1. Renew your hunger for God's Word

A Chinese house church leader, Brother Yun, longed for a copy of the Bible when he was in his early teens. Under the tight-fisted Chinese government, Bibles were extremely difficult for anyone to get their hands on. He said, "I cried like a hungry child to my heavenly Father, wanting to be filled with his Word." After months of prayer and fasting, the Lord answered his desperate cry and miraculously provided him with a Bible.

Upon receiving it, how did he respond? Every day from morning to evening he devoured the pages of Scripture. Even as he worked in the fields he wrapped his Bible inside his clothing and took every opportunity to sit down and read. At night time he took the Bible with



him and laid it on his chest. Even though he had only three years of formal education, he memorized the whole Gospel of Matthew in less than a month. And from there, he proceeded to memorize the Book of Acts. He delighted himself in God's holy Word! He continually clutched his new Bible close to his heart and thanked God again and again!

What is the Holy Spirit saying to us? Do we need a fresh hunger for God's word in our lives today? My guess is we probably do. I pray that together we would be a people who are desperate for the promises laid out in the Bible! Let's read the Scriptures daily and commit entire chapters and books to memory! Meditate on the life-giving pages! Follow the example of Brother Yun; hunger and thirst after the authoritative Word.

2. Be willing to follow Christ in His suffering

Brother Shui has inspired many with his joyful attitude in the face of suffering. During the Cultural Revolution, Chinese Christians were often forced to parade in public wearing a large, cone-shaped dunce's cap with their crimes written on it. Townspeople would come and mock the Christians who were wearing the caps. But God used this "form of punishment" to strengthen His church. Amazingly, some Christians were heard saying, "When we embrace this pain and humiliation, there is nothing the world can do to affect us!"

Brother Shui was among that number. When the time came for him to be paraded in public, the police couldn't find a dunce's cap for him to wear. He was forced to walk the course without one, which deeply upset him. He wanted to wear the hat that proclaimed his crime: "This person believes in Jesus." Like many, he considered this label as a badge of pride, rather than humiliation.

The next day, a dunce's cap was found. And Brother Shui was on top of the world! His face shone with joy as he paraded through the streets! He was now considered worthy to suffer fully for the name of Jesus! Other Christians gained much strength when they saw the joy of the Lord on his face. And it was also a powerful witness to unbelievers who came to mock and ridicule!

This inspiring account leads us to a place of reflection. Are we willing to follow the lead of Brother Shui, joining the multitudes who have walked the path of suffering? Are we willing to embrace pain and humiliation? It's important to realize that as we embrace suffering, there's nothing the world can do to affect us. We are free!

3. Stay passionate for world missions

In house churches throughout China, people are constantly talking and strategizing and breathing world missions. It's becoming a passion in many lives! Chinese Christians long to be used by God to pull down the world's last remaining spiritual strongholds – the house of Buddha, the house of Mohammed, and the house of Hinduism. Their vision is known as *Back to Jerusalem*. This simply refers to a call from God to penetrate all the countries between China and Jerusalem. It is a Spirit-led passion to help fulfill the Great Commission in many resistant nations!

Chinese Christians believe the past fifty years of suffering and torture under their own oppressive government is all part of God's training for them as effective missionaries. Now they're ready to win the lost and suffer for the Lord beyond China's border. Brother Yun confirms this by saying, "The worst they can do to us is kill us, but all that means is we will be promoted into the glorious presence of our Lord for all eternity." That's an awesome perspective, is it not?

In speaking to the western church, leaders in China wrote the following challenge: "If you are willing to spill your blood and die for a vision, you are truly a partner with

us as we march on the strongholds of Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism."

Let's take a moment and allow God to search our heart. Do we still have a growing passion for the Great Commission? Are we talking and strategizing and breathing world missions? Are we ready to partner with the Chinese church in the global harvest, even if it means giving our lives?

I pray that we will all be challenged by the stories coming out of the house church movement in China. May God prepare our hearts for the persecution – and at times humiliation – that awaits us as Christ-followers!

Conrad Esh is the SEND Department's short-term missions director and the pastor of Crossway Community Church. He and his wife, Vicki, have two daughters.

The following websites have more information about China's house church movement: www.backtojerusalem.org, www.chinasoul.org, www.cclife.org.

REACH Update

By Michael Weaver

Our house is above average by Ugandan standards, but it sits on the edge of a slum area. There are over 20 people lodging within the walls, now that the Discipleship Training School is in session. There are students from Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, and Congo, and even one brave Canadian, besides our team and the staff. Just outside of the gate is a maze of dirt alleys and rustic looking brick or concrete houses, with an occasional tavern, a shoeshine booth, or a hole-in-the-wall general store. We can get some cold passion fruit juice at somebody's hole in the wall for about 6 cents. Or we can walk a few minutes further to the highway, where we can check our email, shop at an impressive supermarket, or browse through the "real" market for fruit, fish, or secondhand clothes

It was here that the local church people took us on door-to-door evangelism. They marched us through the neighborhood and proselytized in a way that would have yielded nothing but door slams, were this America. But in Uganda, people actually listen. Sometimes you don't even have to go to them; they come to you.

I was going around with this African guy, who talking in his tribal language with someone that didn't understand English. I was wondering why I even bothered getting out of bed that morning. All of a sudden this guy came up, handed me a stool, and motioned for me to come over and sit down with him. He introduced himself as Waswa. He asked me where I was from and if I had come to Uganda to preach. I told I was not much of a preacher, but had I come to help the churches here. It turns out this guy was a Muslim. Before I could think of what to say next, he asked his next question. "I'm not saved, but I'd like to be. Could you tell me how?"

Yikes...okay, umm...I gave him a rundown of the basic differences between Christianity and Islam. I don't know how much sense I made, but I got a break. He said he had to go back to work, but he wanted to talk with me the next day. I spent a lot of time that evening planning what I was going to say to him. The next day, I went back to the same place, and there he was again, ready to listen. I said what I planned to say, and right then and there I prayed with him to accept Christ. I don't want to say that I led him to Christ. I think God led him there before we even met. He said that he had been raised as a Muslim, but he didn't think Muslims would ever see the prophet Muhammed again. He felt that Islam wasn't the way to God. Christians, on the other hand, believe that they will see Jesus again. I still don't know exactly what his reasoning was for his conversion, but I know he understands it now.



After praying with Waswa, I told him I'd like to give him a Bible. He eagerly agreed, then went off to work again. The following morning, I delivered the Bible. He received it gratefully and then once again ran off to work. I wondered if I just met him at the worst times, or if he was too nervous to talk to me. The next day I found him in his small one-room house with his brother. They were cutting meat to make kabobs to sell at a nearby market. He had read the Bible, and had several questions. He grew up in a village, but moved to Kampala to make money. Now he knew the reason he moved to the city was so he could meet with me and find the way to God. I was convinced that Waswa was genuine. He said even a couple days after getting saved that his attitudes and actions had changed for the better. I'd appreciate it if you'd remember him in prayer.

If you think that's amazing, wait 'til you hear what happened to Joanna that same week. Joanna was on her way to the church one evening, passing a tavern. The patrons called to her and invited her in. They must have seemed friendly enough, because she accepted. Incidentally, going into a bar is even more taboo for

African church people than for American ones. I didn't witness any of this myself, but apparently they came right out and asked her if she had anything to share. She was like, "yes, I do, as a matter of fact" and went right into her testimony. And the next thing you know, one guy becomes saved, and a bunch of others want to hear more. The following evening, the whole crew shows up at church, and five more get saved, just like that. They were all given Bibles, too. Next week, when we get back here, we're planning more meetings at the tavern for Bible study and such. (How's that for irony?) I told Joanna that if we were going to be here longer, I'd want to start a church plant in the neighborhood. How does a Mennonite church made up of ex-Muslims and ex-bar hoppers sound? I don't know who the owner of this tavern is, but we couldn't have been good for his business.

Intercessor's Corner

Praise God:

- Believers who have been led to Christ through the REACH teams
- The many applications for SWIM and REACH

Pray for:

- Physical and spiritual health for the REACH teams
- Continued growth in their relationships with the local people as well as within the teams
- The ability of REACHers to focus on the last few months in their respective countries rather than thinking about home
- Re-entry in June for 4 of the 5 REACH teams
- The SWIM applicants as they prepare for training and outreach in June and July
- Staff at the SEND house as they prepare for SWIM training and for youth groups to come throughout the summer for City Challenge

Between You and Me...



Davy Slabaugh
Director of the
SEND Ministries
Department

After a time of worship, I was given the rest of the morning to teach on global realities and the state of missions today. The 19 participants listened intently and asked numerous questions regarding the challenge of taking the gospel message to the remaining 1.6 billion who have never had an opportunity to hear it. The class could have been an average REACH or SWIM training. The setting, however, was a hot, dusty classroom on the edge of Kampala, Uganda. The program was not REACH, but Discipleship Training School Uganda (DTS Uganda), a program REACH is mentoring through the GDT Alliance.

During the five days I spent with the program, I was again amazed and inspired by the new wave of messengers God is raising up from some of the least expected places. These participants from Uganda, Kenya, and Sudan who have been so accustomed to receiving missionaries and assistance from the North and the West are beginning to realize that they have something to give to the unreached nations around them. They are uniquely positioned to take the gospel to some hard-to-reach places like Somalia and northern Sudan.

To see this new wave of missionaries move out will take creativity and non-traditional means of sending. While they have been presented with a model of missionaries coming with a lifeline of funding from their home churches, they will need to explore more creative models of support. As DTS Uganda director, Anne Mwangi, told the class, "We are Africans; we can live with much less. We can sleep on the floor. We don't need to be as comfortable as the Mzungus (whites)."

Praise God for this new crop of missionaries He is raising up. They are coming not only from sub-Saharan Africa but from Asia and Latin America as well. Let us embrace our brothers and sisters who are willing to give their lives for the sake of the Kingdom and challenge them to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Alumni Happenings

1996

Dave & Amy (Hostetler) Yoder announce the birth of their son, Christopher Shane, on April 14, 2005. He was welcomed by big sister Juliana.

Tom & Candice (Rhodes) Mast gave birth to Eliza Grace on April 26, 2005. Eliza was welcomed by big sister Claire.

1997

Jeff & Ruth (Yoder) Ebersole announce the birth of their daughter, Evelyn Grace, on November 24, 2004. She was welcomed by big sisters Felicite, Cassidy & Katelynn.

1999

Jon Ebersole & Denise Cannella were married on March 5, 2005.

Abigail Rose Miller was born on February 5, 2005, to **Nate and Suetta (Schmidt) Miller**.

2000

Keith and **Cheryl (Stahl) Lehman** and big brother Stephen have been blessed by the birth of Autumn Nicole on November 14, 2004.

2001

Anita Kauffman & Keith Martin were married on April 30, 2005.

2002

Oleda Miller and Keith Miller were married on April 2, 2005.