

becoming increasingly wary of Christians gathering and declaring their allegiance -- not to the Communist Party, but to the Cross.

So what about the need for Bibles? Many say that the government allows Bibles to be printed and there is no need to deliver them from the outside. This is unfortunately not the case. Even today, Chinese Bibles can only be legally printed at one printing plant, and this is for 1.3 billion people! The government decides the amount that can be produced as well as how they are distributed. They are only for sale in selected, registered churches and not in bookstores. In most places, there are severe restrictions and believers can only buy limited quantities.

We have received reports of some printing companies in China that print poor quality Chinese Bibles for the black market. They operate under the constant threat of being shut down and prosecuted. We believe that there are millions of believers who do not have access to God's Word.

Paul Hattaway, who knows China better than most, recently wrote the following: "While the economy is growing in many parts of China, all Bibles printed outside the control of the government-approved church are considered *illegal*. Those involved with their production or distribution, continue to risk arrest and imprisonment without trial. Despite the economic boom in other parts of China, people in rural farming communities remain extremely poor, and their plight has been exacerbated by the soaring cost of living. Millions of house-church Christians remain unable to afford Bibles, even if they were able to access them. These factors have resulted in millions of believers being starved of God's Word. They are forced to survive on the few crumbs they are able to gather from beneath the table of the registered churches."

Roald Lidal who heads up **New Life Ministries** recently wrote as follows: "We continue to receive more requests for Bibles than what we are able to meet and continue to hear of the tremendous value of each and every copy of God's Word being sent to those who need it. We have recently completed the printing of 50,000 regular Bibles and need to order paper and print another 100,000 copies. One full Bible costs US\$2.50."

Pray for the necessary funds to make Bibles available to the many that hunger for the Word of God in China. **Pray** for wisdom and protection for the intricate network of printers, distributors and couriers who are involved in a process, which is at times very dangerous. **Pray** for those who are being persecuted for their faith.

SURRENDERING TO GOD - Part I

Melanie Peter was born in 1984 and grew up in Vernon, British Columbia -- which is 400 km east of Vancouver in a beautiful part of western Canada. She was raised in a Christian home, where she learned early in life about how Jesus came into the world to save us from sin. She was involved in church and felt the support of a large extended family of committed Christians who nurtured her and were the backbone of her upbringing. They helped her realize the importance of following God and what it meant to have a strong faith.



Melanie Peter

"When I entered high school, many of my friends started drinking and partying. I was faced with some tough decisions and realized that I had to make a clear choice as to who my friends were and what was important in life. Even though I did not have a personal relationship with the Lord at the time, I believe that He answered the faithful prayers of my grandmother and parents and protected me from making foolish choices.

"People in school used to call me a 'good girl', but I knew that being good was not enough for God. When I turned 15, I found myself feeling empty as I struggled to make the right choices. I found myself going through the motions of attending church and doing what was expected of me, but I started to yearn for more. I longed to find something that would give my life true meaning and purpose."

"As I sought answers, I found myself in awe of those who spoke with

INFORMATION & INQUIRIES

Website: www.japanmission.org
E-mail: jm@japanmission.org

JAPAN

Japan Mission
7-40 Monzen Cho
Ikoma, Nara, 630-0266
Tel: +(81) 743-73-1754
Fax: +(81) 743-73-1681

AUSTRALIA

For Gifts:
Payable to: 'Japan Mission'
23 Carbine Court,
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Canada for Evangelism' and send to:
#30, 1601 Cloverbar Road,
Sherwood Park, AB T8A 5Y8

conviction and had a personal relationship with Christ. People around me were serving God wholeheartedly and I wanted to be like them, but I realized that I could not do these things in my own strength. I then asked the Lord to forgive my sins and accepted Him as Lord of my life.

"I started to read the Bible and discovered many great truths. I had read the Bible before, but now it was as though I was reading it for the first time. It became so real and applicable to every situation in my life. I was baptized shortly thereafter and began my journey as a newly proclaimed child of God.

"After high school, I started to attend a local university. This plunged me into a world that challenged everything that I believed in. I faced various temptations and found myself drawn to a non-Christian boy who paid attention to me and made me feel that I was special. It was subtle at first, but I eventually realized that the deep feelings I developed for him caused me to take my eyes off of God.

I tried to bring him to church, but he was not interested. I found that our connection was having a negative effect on my relationships with my family and close Christian friends. As I continued to go to church, three of my close Christian friends warned me about the choices I was making. I realized that I was on the wrong track and decided to break up with my boyfriend and put Christ first in my life.

"It was difficult at first. I struggled as Paul did with sin when he said, ***For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do -- this I keep on doing*** (Romans 7:18-19, NIV).

"Thankfully, my grandmother, parents and church family were praying for me and the Lord helped me to overcome my struggles.

"One day while talking with my cousin, I remember saying, 'Wouldn't it be wonderful if I could be a missionary and an English teacher at the same time!' I didn't know if it could even be possible, but for me, combining my two passions seemed like the perfect job.

"I now realize that God was guiding me while I was at university. Even though I didn't know what I wanted to study, He provided me with opportunities to meet international students and created a desire in me to go to Japan. I also took an ESL course and the teacher encouraged me to pursue a profession as an English teacher. Before graduating, I applied for a secular English teaching job in Japan, but God closed the door. I was disappointed, but not without hope.

"One day my pastor asked if I was still interested in going to Japan. I said yes, so he put me in touch with someone from my hometown who was working with Japan Mission. I applied and was so amazed and excited when I was accepted!

"Meanwhile, as I had been

working at McDonald's for a number of years, a private investor took notice of my managerial skills. He raised my salary and even offered me an opportunity to run my own McDonald's. It was a true temptation to just settle for this life, but I felt that God had something far better in mind for me.

"After my acceptance to Japan Mission, I faced many uncertainties, but my mind was made up because I

was assured that I was in the center of God's will. The Lord encouraged me by saying, ***'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future . . .'*** (Jer. 29:11, NIV).

Read the next issue to find out how the Lord used Melanie to reach many in remarkable ways.

UPDATE - ENGLISH EVANGELISM

Japan Mission is in search of a dedicated and well-qualified English Teacher / Missionary. Please make the need known and **pray** that the Lord would provide the missionary of His choice to join our team to build friendships and reach out to the Japanese with the Gospel.

We continue to be encouraged by the many who are reached through the English Evangelism Program. A former English student recently told of how her life was very troubled as she was faced with divorce and the task of raising two small children alone. She did not have the courage to go to church, but decided to go when she found out that the church offered English classes. There she made friends and came to know the Lord as personal Savior. Praise the Lord!

UPDATE - BIBLES FOR CHINA

One of the ministries Japan Mission continues to be involved in is the printing and distribution of Bibles in China. We recently received a number of updates about the situation in China.

The number of Christians in China is on the increase. Just months ago, the mainstream media reported that "China was on course to become the world's most Christian country within 15 years." What an incredible statement!

Over the past 60 years, China has seen some of the most brutal and systematic persecution of Christians. Countless followers of Jesus have been beaten, imprisoned and suffered all kinds of terrible consequences for their faith. Many have spent years in inhumane labor camps and prisons, and many thousands have died as martyrs.

Today, the situation is better. China is changing. Government-orchestrated persecution of Christians is decreasing, although it still persists -- especially in rural areas away from the public eye where local governments are