

NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES

Bill Cook, an associate missionary of Japan Mission in Thailand, recently shared of how he and his friends were able to provide Bibles to N. Korean refugees: "Some of the refugees are Christians and greatly appreciate the Bibles. The N. Koreans who cross into China often pay traffickers to smuggle them to Thailand through Laos. If caught in Laos, they could be sent back to N. Korea, but once in Thailand they can go straight to the police. The Thai police are set up to receive them. About 20 refugees arrive that way each week. The police have a special place for them to stay for a few days before turning them over to the South Korean embassy. From there they are transported to S. Korea." **Pray** for these refugees as they often face a very difficult adjustment to life in S. Korea. **Pray** that many of them would learn to put their hope and trust in the Lord.

LIFE IN NORTH KOREA

1. Half of the population live in extreme poverty. This means that half of the 25 million people struggle to find food and provide for their basic needs.
2. Arbitrary arrests, lack of due process, and public executions are the norm. The death penalty can be levied for distributing pornography, watching S. Korean movies, professing Christianity or possessing a Bible.
3. There is a **three generations punishment policy**. The offender, along with two generations have to bear the consequences of the offense. Grandparents, parents, and children are all punished.
4. There are about 200,000 N. Koreans living in prison camps. The worst of the camps are reserved for those who commit political crimes and are not loyal to the regime. As many as 40% of prisoners die of malnutrition.
5. It is illegal to wear jeans. In the cities, women are not allowed to wear pants or ride bicycles. Women's skirts must cover their knees.
6. Only 28 styles of haircuts are approved. Men can choose from 10 different styles, while women have 18 different options.
7. Government permission is required to own a computer.
8. A government-controlled radio is provided to all N. Korean businesses and households, which can only be turned down and not turned off.
9. There is no electric power available at night. Most homes only get a few hours of electricity per day.
10. N. Korean workers enjoy virtually no free time. They work six days a week, with the seventh day spent doing 'forced' volunteer work.



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HOPE IN THE GLORY TO COME

Min grew up in North Korea, was married and had two children. During 2004, there was a terrible famine and conditions in N. Korea became so unbearable that she decided to cross the heavily guarded Chinese border at the Tumen River, in search of work to support her family. "I came across a company that gave me a job with ties to South Korea," she shared. "I worked while suffering from hunger and counted the days when I would be reunited with my children.



"While working in China during 2008, an elderly Korean woman shared the Gospel with me. I began to attend a Korean church, but I had been so thoroughly brainwashed to worship our dictator that I was unable to understand the Bible.

"One day, while I was singing a hymn, I began to weep uncontrollably as I thought of my five and three-year-old daughters whom I had left behind in N. Korea. That day my heart was filled with the Holy Spirit and faith began to burn within me as I listened to the sermon. I asked God to come into my heart and forgive me for my sins. I also prayed and entrusted my family in N. Korea to Him. At that time, when my heart was so weary and I had no one to depend on, the deacons of that church showered me with the love of God. I will be forever grateful to them!

"During 2009, the Chinese security forces suddenly raided the company where I was working and arrested me. I was forcefully repatriated to N. Korea and sentenced to 4 years in prison. While in prison, I suffered in ways I cannot put into words and there were times when I complained to God about it. 'Lord, I left the family I love to risk my life in order to make money to send to my starving family. Now on top of all of that heartbreak, You have me go through this horrible punishment!'

INFORMATION & INQUIRIES

www.facebook.com/japanmission.jm/

Website: 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

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“Nevertheless, God was with me in the midst of my suffering. He helped me to sing praises to Him as I came to realize that He was always with me. The only comfort I had in prison was the hymns and prayers I had learned at my church in China.

“North Korean prisons are so horrific that words cannot describe them. The food we were given was something that animals would not even eat. At night, 50 to 60 people had to sleep on the floor in one small room that smelled so bad because of the stench from the toilet. To stave off starvation, we would pick up scraps of cabbage or grain when we found them lying on the ground on the way to work. The guards forced us to labor under terrible conditions during the day. At night we had to sit through lectures intended to brainwash us.

“I became weaker as I lost weight and felt as though I was on the verge of some kind of breakdown. I was filled with sorrow and anguish and was losing all hope. I became so sick that I was able to get medical leave from the forced labor in the fields.

“When I went to my room and sat down with my tired body leaning against the wall, I noticed that there was someone lying on the floor under a worn-out blanket that was moving up and down slightly. There were a number of people in the room at that time who were also sick. None of them knew what the person under the blanket was doing, but I did. I was sure that she was praying.

“I was shocked to realize that there was someone else in the prison who

believed in God. Her body was black and blue from being beaten by the guards. Despite this, she continued to lift up her prayers to the Lord. I felt that she was in danger, but didn't approach her that day for fear that someone might find out that I was a Christian.

“A few days later, on New Year's Day in 2011, I noticed her praying under her tattered blanket and I went up to her and said quietly, 'I pray in Jesus name.' She was surprised by my words and we began to talk quietly.

“Her name was Kim and she was a N. Korean evangelist. She had trusted the Lord in China, was arrested by the Chinese security forces while studying the Bible and was forced to return to N. Korea. She had received a 5-year sentence for defecting to China.

“After a short time of fellowship, we held hands, wept together and thanked the Lord for allowing us to meet and encourage one another in the midst of so much darkness.

“Kim was very weak when I met her. Although she wasn't able to work, the guards would often kick and beat her because she was not able to walk straight. During those times, all she could do was to cry out to God. She would ask me to pray with her while telling me that if we prayed without ceasing, God would help us overcome this evil.

“It strengthened my faith to see that, despite the horrible suffering that Kim endured, nothing could rob her of the joy in her heart. In the midst of her pain and suffering she never once moaned or groaned, but

endured it all through prayer. Kim continued to witness for Christ in that dangerous and evil environment where no one could be trusted.

“The most shocking thing I witnessed in prison was to see Kim come back into the room after being tortured for sharing her faith with someone, and then without any fear she would again pray and boldly continue to share of God's love with another prisoner.

“Only a few prisoners seemed to accept the Lord, but she continued to faithfully pray and share the Gospel. Other prisoners would coldly stare at her and spread wicked rumors about her. I noticed how dangerous things were getting for Kim, so I spoke to her in secret. 'Kim, things are really bad now, so I'd like you to stop sharing the Gospel for the time being. If you don't, you'll be killed. Let's just serve out our sentences and leave this place and escape together to China.'

“'I still have work left to do in this place where God has sent me,' Kim replied. 'If we are not discouraged and endure to the end, our Lord Jesus will surely protect us and save us.' She took both of my hands in hers and sang the chorus of a hymn, **Do not fear, be strong and courageous. Do not be discouraged and do not despair. The Lord is near.**

“In the end, Kim was accused of being a **Christian spy** and sent to a concentration camp for political

prisoners, from which it is said that no one ever gets out alive.

“Through the things I suffered, and through the blessing of meeting Kim, my faith was able to grow and I was able to experience and understand anew the grace that God shows to us by always being by our side. I came to understand what Paul meant when he said, **For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us** (Romans 8:18). I learned to put my **hope in the glory to come.**

By God's mercy, Min's 4-year sentence was reduced to 2 years. After her release, she escaped once again to China across the Tumen River. From there, she eventually made her way to Thailand and then to South Korea. She left her husband, two daughters and a mother behind in N. Korea. She has not been in contact with them since and all are unsaved. **Pray** for their salvation.

Min now lives in S. Korea and is involved in helping ministries that seek to spread the Gospel to N. Korea. **Pray** for Min and the workers who are reaching out to the destitute people of N. Korea.

Min and Kim's names have been changed and some details left out in order to protect their identity. □

NEW WEBSITE

Japan Mission has launched a new website. Please visit us and stay up-to-date with the **most recent news and prayer requests** at:

japanmission.org