

# North Korea: Why Are Christians So Brutally Persecuted?

by Eric Foley

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*North Korea is a country where Christianity is seen as a threat to the state, and Christians are persecuted and executed to maintain the power of Juche ideology.*

**Duration:** 45:28

**Scripture:** Esther 4:14, Matthew 6:25, Romans 8:28, Romans 8:38-39

**Topics:** "Persecution", "Sovereignty Of God"

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## Description

This sermon by Eric Foley shares the incredible journey of serving underground North Korean Christians. It highlights the dream that led to giving up everything to serve, the miraculous regeneration of the North Korean church, the challenges faced in smuggling Bibles into North Korea, and the importance of trusting in God's sovereignty and provision even in the face of persecution and adversity.

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## Transcript

I'm Eric Foley and for those of you in the back, I am not Korean. I married into the country. My wife is originally from South Korea.

She came to the US in 1984 to study for her MBA and got waylaid and married and we have four children and the youngest of which, excuse me, the youngest of which is 20 and we were living a pretty good life pastoring. My work as a Christian has been as a pastor and then also in doing large events around the world. I got to do stand in the gap in Washington DC, promise keepers.

Is anybody there in Washington DC with the million men gathered there? One guy, a whole group of mission people, one guy. Yeah, I thought I recognized you too, actually. Yeah.

A lot of large events, worked with Tommy Barnett doing Adopt-A-Block 500 for the LA Dream Center in Southern California and I was minding my own business, kind of doing my thing in ministry. Kind of like you maybe. And one night, about 15 years ago, I was asleep and I had a dream and I don't normally get dreams.

I haven't had one before or since like this. But in this dream, the Lord showed me that we would give up everything we had and everything we owned in order to serve underground North Korean Christians. Now, I've consulted with more than 1,500 different ministries and none of them had anything to do with North

Korea.

I didn't know anything about persecuted believers around the world at all. But I knew just from some of the data that I saw in the news that North Korea was a place that no one would really want to be. And so from this dream, I woke up just like in the movies.

I sat up, sweating, shaking, and I woke my wife up and I said, sweetheart, sweetheart, told her about the dream. And she's a very smart woman. She said to me, you know, if it's the Lord, the Lord will bring it to pass.

All you have to do is be willing. If you try to force it to come true, then you'll end up with an Ishmael. You understand? And so that was 15 years ago.

Fast forward to today and we oversee the largest ministry focused on evangelism and discipleship of North Koreans in partnership with the North Korean Underground Church. We live in South Korea. And as you may know, South Korea is the heart of Christianity in Asia.

It's the country that has the highest percentage of Christians. About 25% of people in South Korea are believers. We have 10 of the 11 largest churches on the planet in the same city of Seoul.

You know, after working with promise keepers for several years, I can tell you that going to church anywhere in South Korea is like being at a promise keepers rally. You know, we have the largest church in the world, the Yeouido Full Gospel Church, over a million members. And the other nine aren't that far behind.

We send out more missionaries per capita than any other country in the world, this small country of South Korea. But always the heartbeat of Christianity in Korea has never been in the South. It's in the North.

It always has been and it continues to be today. North is in North Korea, which you may know from seeing on the news is probably not a place that you think many people would ever want to be. And that's why I came to talk to you about North Korea today and to talk to you in a way maybe that you haven't heard people talk about it before because I think you're expecting maybe that for the next 45 minutes, I would share stories that make you cry and make you very sad and feel like you should do something to help those poor people.

And that's my thought too of when I started in ministry because 15 years ago when the Lord called me, the first opportunity I ever had to meet an underground North Korean believer. And I remember that was an interesting story how that happened in and of itself, but we don't have time for that. But I remember saying to the man because I'm an American pastor, you know, so American pastors just have this way, you know, of being.

That's why people like you Canadians more than us Americans. And so I said to the underground believer, how can we pray for you? And he said, you pray for us? We pray for you. And I said, well, why would you pray for us? I'm from the land of the free and the home of the brave.

I got a truck out back. I get as many Bibles as you need. You need food, you need money.

I got it all, baby. And he said to me, he said, yeah, that is the problem with you American Christians and South Korean Christians is you tend to put your faith in your money and your freedom. In North Korea, he

said, we have neither money nor freedom.

And as a result, all we have is God. And we found that God is sufficient. I was really moved by that.

I was stuck because I had a truck with a bunch of stuff in it up back, you know. But it changed my understanding about Christians in North Korea. I've never had a Christian in North Korea say to me, help, get me out of here.

I want to live a life like you live. Hot dogs, apple pie, baseball games. I want it all.

Never once in 15 years have I had an underground North Korean believer say that to me. And the reason why is because they have an understanding of what it means to be a Christian that would be good for us to have as well. Now, there are a lot of places in the world that are worth caring about.

I mean, all of the booths talk about all of the places that need us and all the places where we can make investments. And so you may be asking the question, well, why North Korea? What difference does North Korea make? And you may know that North Korea is the most persecuted people in terms of Christians on the face of the earth. It's been that way for many years.

But that's not the reason I think you should care. I think you should care about North Korea because there's something peculiar about North Korea that makes it so that Christians understand it in a way that nobody else can. And what I'm going to tell you is verifiable through multiple independent sources of information.

This is not just my strange perspective on the matter. North Korea is the only country in the history of the world intentionally created as a distortion of the Christian faith. Let me say it again just to make sure that I didn't mess up.

North Korea is the only country in the history of the world intentionally founded as a distortion of the Christian faith. In North Korea, every week, people gather together in buildings that look like, oh, I don't know, this one. And sit in seats just like you're sitting in.

And someone comes up to start the time. And they open from the hymnal that contains 600, oh, just for just a second, young people. A hymnal is like a, it's like if you have like a pastor or a PowerPoint in a book, see? It's like, like if you take the, anyway.

So they open up the Kim Il-sung hymnal with 600 songs of praise to Kim Il-sung. You would know many of the songs because guess where they got them from? Yeah, they're Christian songs, the lyrics of which have been changed to praise Kim Il-sung instead of the God that we praise. And so then after they're done singing, and somebody comes up and they stand up and they read from the writings of Kim Il-sung.

And you would be surprised what you might know from those writings as well. If I said, for example, Kim Il-sung's 10 principles, does that ring a bell? The first of which, you shall have no greater loyalty than the loyalty you have to Kim Il-sung. And then after the scripture is read, then someone stands up and exposit it.

Interestingly, it's not a man with torn jeans and sitting on a stool like we sometimes have here in the US. But anyway, if that sounds familiar to you, it is because they got it from us. Kim Il-sung grew up in a Christian family.

He is the founder of the North Korean state. He's dead, but he remains the president of North Korea. North Korea is the only necrocracy on earth.

It is a country ruled by a dead man. And Kim Il-sung remains the only president, the eternal president of North Korea. North Koreans pray to Kim Il-sung.

And they believe that he watches over them. And he was the founder of North Korea, which came into existence at the end of World War II and then into the Korean War. When Korea was divided up, it had previously been occupied by the Japanese and was divided up.

The southern half fell under the oversight of the Allies and the northern part of Korea fell under the oversight of the Communists. And the Communists faced a unique problem among Korean people. In Korea, anything that is new is considered by definition inferior.

You know, we love new in our culture, right? I mean, everything's got to be new. But in the Korean or in any kind of East Asian or Confucian culture, things that are new are inferior. And that was a problem because communism is by definition something new.

It is a new development in economic or world history according to Marx. And so the Communists had a challenge in North Korea they didn't have anywhere else, which was how to take something new and make it appear very, very old. And so as a result of that, the Soviets together with Kim Il-sung created what today is called the Juche ideology.

J-U-C-H-E is the way we spell it in with Roman characters, Juche. And the Juche ideology, which is also called Kim Il-sungism, is about the worship of Kim Il-sung. That's why today in North Korea, it's not the year 2014.

It is the year Juche 102. 102 years since the birth of Kim Il-sung. So time is kept in a different calendar than it is for us because for them, what marks the birth of modern history is the birth of Kim Il-sung.

So Kim Il-sung grew up in a Christian home and he was well positioned to help the Soviet Union with this particular problem that they had of needing something old, not something new. He used to go to church every weekend every week with his mother. She was a very devout believer.

In fact, Kim Il-sung had many deacons, elders, and even a pastor in his own family line. And so he would go to church every week and the interesting thing was his mom would always fall asleep in church every week. You know, she'd be there.

And so Kim Il-sung said to his mother, mother, why is it that you go to church and you fall asleep? And she said, it is the only place I can relax. But Kim Il-sung took that and he twisted that, which by the way, mothers, is a reason you should never fall asleep in church because we have enough dictators already. So please stay away.

And if you see a woman sleeping, just nudge her in the ribs really hard. But what Kim Il-sung said was he said that was the problem with Christianity is it puts you to sleep. He said we need something that wakes you up and helps to raise your awareness of the importance of the defense of the Korean nation.

And so he and the Soviets put together three strands, a little bit together, a cord of three strands is not easily broken and this one has lasted now more than 70 years. They combined Christianity, which Kim

Il-sung knew from his birth, with communism, you know, traditional Marxism, Leninism and Confucianism, which is the philosophy of Confucius, which is what runs all of East Asia in terms of social structures. It's what makes East Asian people think that they need to be obedient, especially to their parents.

They have certain responsibilities to their rulers and so forth. And so from that, then this philosophy called Juche was born. Something new, which was communism, was made something very old, which was Confucianism, built together with the Korean history and so forth and Juche was born.

And so at the time that Juche came into existence, most of the Christians who were in Korea didn't live in South Korea. In fact, when the gospel first came to Korea, it was rejected in the South. It was received warmly in the North.

In fact, Pyongyang, which today you might hear it pronounced as Pyonyang in the West, but it's Pyongyang. Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, was known as the Jerusalem of the East. If you were a missionary and you were going to serve somewhere in Asia, almost certainly you would have spent some time in Pyongyang.

It's where Billy Graham's wife, Ruth Graham, grew up in Pyongyang. And so that is where the heart of Christianity was and it's where Kim Il-sung came to power. And so in 1907, when the Great Pyongyang Revival came, and this, of course, precedes Kim Il-sung by a good 30 or 40 years in terms of his coming to power.

And so when it came, it swept across Korea from North to South and the North Koreans sent out missionaries into Northeast China and in fact, many spots across Asia. And so when Kim Il-sung came to power, there were a lot of Christians that he had to deal with. Now, many escaped and went South and they crossed into South Korea when the country was partitioned.

And something that very few people know is of those 10 of the 11 largest church in the world, two were founded by North Koreans. Did you know two of the largest churches in the world were founded by North Korean believers and continue to be among the most robust today? So Kim Il-sung had a country which was very aware of the Christian faith. He took and he used that to create an ideology that could cause all of the things that he saw in worship, the strength of people singing from the hymnal, everyone gathering together at a weekly basis and scriptures and everything.

And he could take that and use it and the only thing he had to do was to remove the God that was being worshiped and he had to replace him with himself. Well, you say, that thing I can't figure out though, that you're saying Pastor Floyd, is that if that's the case and there were so many Christians, then wouldn't they have known and wouldn't, and now you understand, don't you? You understand why Christian persecution is different in North Korea than it is in Muslim countries or why it's different in North Korea than it is in other former communist countries? You see, Christians are executed in North Korea. They are eliminated in North Korea mercilessly because if Christianity were to spread, it would create a huge problem for North Korea because the spread of Christianity would expose Juche as a fraud.

All of the things that North Koreans know to be true about Kim Il-sung would be exposed not to be true because they would be exposed to have been borrowed from the Bible. So when I tell you that North Korea has a trinity, you should not be surprised. It's Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il who is the son of Kim Il-sung who passed away a couple of years ago and Kim Il-sung's first wife, Kim Jong-suk.

A trinity, a hymnal, scriptures, the ten principles. All of it meant that Christians had to die. Every last one of them, every Bible had to be burned.

Every church had to be repurposed into what today are called Kim Il-sung research centers. Every building that used to hold the church now holds what is called a self-criticism meeting where every week 100% of the North Korean population gathers to worship Kim Il-sung. And so when you are told that North Korea is an atheist country, you're told something that is not true.

North Korea is the most religious country on the face of the earth. It's 100% of its population is required to worship Kim Il-sung. They say, well, people don't really believe that, do they? They don't believe he's a god.

Well, in order to be able to not believe something, there has to be somewhere else that you can stand in order to look at that and say, I don't believe that, do you understand? But in North Korea, there is nowhere else to stand other than in a country built on the worship of Kim Il-sung. In North Korea, there are more than 40,000 statues of Kim Il-sung. 40% of North Korea's gross domestic product is spent on the worship of Kim Il-sung.

Every national monument in North Korea is filled with beautiful mountainsides and waterfalls and every one of them that you go to, every one of them has in letters 12 to 20 feet high slogans of worship and praise to Kim Il-sung. There's simply nowhere else that you can look in North Korea and not see Kim Il-sung. That is why if you see North Koreans on the news, you'll see almost invariably they're wearing two buttons on their lapel.

One of them is a button of Kim Il-sung's face, another one a button of Kim Jong-il, the son of Kim Il-sung's face. Why? Because Kim Il-sung knew that it was important to be able to teach everyone that they were created in his image. And so North Koreans are taught from birth that they are created in the image of Kim Il-sung.

And so it is impossible to look at another living being or to look at a waterfall and not see praise to Kim Il-sung. When it is that you're born, or when you were born, maybe you were taught to say mama or dada, but in North Korea doesn't work that way because that would imply that there was someone in the home who was more important, more central and more talked about than Kim Il-sung. And so that's why children from birth are taught slogans of praise to the great leader.

It's why it is that when you go to math class, they don't have common core curriculum in North Korea. They have Kim Il-sung curriculum in North Korea. Everything including math.

Typical math problem in North Korea would be a story problem like this. Comrade Kim had nine bullets in his gun. He used two bullets to kill the American interlopers.

How many bullets remained to kill the South Korean running dogs? That is how North Koreans learn math. See, it's not just that it's a facet of life. It is life.

And it is the only way to exist in North Korea is in that life. Even if you do a PhD thesis, interestingly, one third of your PhD thesis, even if it is in rocket science, one third of your PhD thesis has to be on the greatness of Kim Il-sung. There's simply nowhere to stand in North Korean society then on the rock that is Kim Il-sung.

And the people who had to pay the price for it were the Christians. And so that's why in the first 20 years of the rule of Kim Il-sung from 1948 through 1968, Christians were systematically exterminated. They were exterminated because they were a threat to the state because if what they knew was allowed to continue to spread, then the Juche ideology would be undermined and Kim Il-sung's rule would collapse.

And so every Bible was burned. Every church building repurposed. Every Christian executed.

And not only is it that Christians were executed, but in North Korea, the principle injustice is guilt by association. And so sometimes you may see pictures by some organizations talking about North Korea and talking about Christians in North Korea that show, for example, Christians sneaking out of their homes to worship in the forest or Christians hiding under a blanket and whispering hymns. That's a very kind of a comic book cartoon picture and it's not at all accurate because in North Korea, Christians aren't allowed to gather together.

And in North Korea, everyone is required to spy on every home within two homes of their own. If it is that someone within two homes of your home is guilty of something, then you yourself are, through the principle of guilt by association, guilty as well. So if your neighbor was hiding under a blanket, if your neighbor was sneaking out of their home at 11 o'clock at night, you would be the first one to report it.

Not because you don't love your neighbor, but because you love your children. And you wouldn't want to make it so that when in North Korea, even when you are convicted, it's not only you who's convicted, but three generations of your family then must pay that penalty. The penalty for being a Christian or having any association with a Christian faith is life in a concentration camp.

North Korea operates and has for the longest period of time of any country, a network of concentration camps which today hold about 160,000 prisoners. Of those, 30,000 are Christians. They're segmented in their own sections of concentration camps because nowhere does the faith spread faster than in a concentration camp.

You see, from the time that North Koreans become Christian, what they understand that to mean is that there is a path that is laid out for them and that future that's laid out for them is a future that terminates in the cross. They say that it came from Jesus who said, whoever would follow me must take up their cross daily and follow me. And so for a North Korean to become a Christian means to take upon themselves an identity that they know will end in death.

But they know, of course, that that identity takes them through death to the other side. And so you can put a Christian in a concentration camp and they won't say, oh, woe is me. I am so sad.

Lord, get me out of this place. They just turn and evangelize the next guy. And that's why the North Koreans took the Christians and put them in their own section of the concentration camp so that they could not infect other people.

So by 1968, there were no Christians in North Korea, at least as far as the government knew. But some had managed to remain. They lived lives that outwardly appeared to be devoted to Kim Il-sung, but inwardly there was something different.

And it's not because North Koreans worship by hiding under a blanket or because they worship by going up into the mountains. Actually, North Koreans worship in broad daylight with other people around them. It's just that people don't realize that they're worshipping.

I know that sounds really weird because the way that you and I worship, we couldn't do that. I mean, the moment you get your hand going like this, everybody would know you're a believer, right? And the moment that you bow your eyes to pray and close your eyes to this, they would know you're a believer. And the moment you pop open your Bible and you start to, they would know you're a believer.

And that's why in North Korea, the Christian faith doesn't involve any of those things. When North Koreans pray, they do it like this. I really want to thank our brother for what he gave us today.

And then you would say, yes, he is very generous. He supplies in every way. I'm grateful for the dear leader and the guidance that he gives us in life.

And you would say, yes, he makes it so that we never lack for anything. You see what they're doing? They're praying and the people next to them don't even know that they're praying. They're praying and the people next to them think they're talking about Kim Il-sung.

They're praying and the people next to them think they're talking about the brother or sister because that's the way that North Koreans have learned to be able to carry on and carry out their faith. They don't do it by hiding out under blankets. They do it in broad daylight.

They're not ashamed of the Lord Jesus. They have learned how to be able to carry on conversations without other people even realizing what they're doing. They don't whisper their hymns.

North Korea is 70% mountains. And so there's these spots that you can see railroad tracks going through or trails going through and the hills on either side. They look around and realize nobody's there and they just open their mouth and they belt out a hymn as loud as they can.

That's what it's like to be a North Korean believer. But back in 1968, it seemed like they were all gone. There were only a few left and they were the ones who were, in many ways, too scared to say anything.

So how did the church regenerate? Where did it come from? If it is that every hymnal was burned, if it is that every shred of the Christian faith was eliminated, where did it come from? And this is why I tell you that when people say to me that North Korea is the worst place on earth to be a Christian, I say, oh, I'm sorry, you're mistaken. Romans 8.28 works inside the boundaries of North Korea just as well as it works in your country. Thank you very much.

Let me say that again because you didn't say amen. When you tell me that North Korea is the worst place to be a Christian, I say, oh, well then you must not know my God because my God says all things work together for good for those who love the Lord and are called according to his purpose. So it doesn't matter if you're inside North Korea or outside North Korea, the Lord will bless you the same way.

So that means that there's a deeper blessing, there's a deeper kind of freedom than the freedom that you and I get to experience that is a blessing and a privilege in Canada and North America. There is a deeper kind of a freedom that no government can ever take away from you. No government can ever give it to you.

It is freedom in Christ and North Korean believers experience that with the same amount of fullness that you and I do, if not more so. There is a wealth that goes beyond the kind of wealth that you can put in a wallet, amen? Amen? And so when I tell you that in 1968, it appeared that it was done, that Kim Il-sung had accomplished his purpose and created a country that was solely focused on the worship of him, he

had eliminated his greatest threat, which is the Christian faith. But I tell you that God works just as well inside North Korea as out and the North Korean Christians say, you pray for us, we pray for you.

Then that means that God was active there in a way that's causing them to have faith and confidence. So guess what? They have faith and confidence, so they're not waiting on us saying, man, just, oh man, if we could just hang on until the Canadians and Americans get here. All things work together for good.

So in 1968, when there were very few Christians and very few Bibles, how is it that the church managed to regenerate? Well, you remember I told you about the Pyongyang revival of 1907? And do you remember what I said happened right after that revival? What happened was that the first thing that that church did was to send out missionaries. Do you remember? I said they went to Northeast Asia and to Northeast China and they went to South Korea and so forth. So there were missionaries who were sent out from North Korea.

This is, of course, before the founding of the North Korean state. They were sent out from the northern part of Korea into Northeast China and they began to evangelize. And as they were doing their evangelism work and they were facing this way, all of a sudden the door slammed shut behind them.

North Korea had been closed off from the rest of the world. And there they were, North Korean missionaries sent out from their church, sent to Northeast China. What would you do? Well, in their case, they waited until God told one of them what to do.

Waited a long time. Waited some more. Waited until the late 1980s most of them had died.

A few of them remained. And when China began to open up and South Korean missionaries began to be able to covertly enter into China and they went, of course, the first spot they wanted to go is to the border with North Korea and China to begin to say, how can we get in here? Who did they run into? Missionaries who had been sent out from North Korea. God had preserved this remnant who still had connections back inside North Korea.

Most of the people they knew in North Korea had died, but some remained. These were the beginnings of the lines of communication into North Korea that continue to this day. Another means by which we get information, materials, supplies in and out of North Korea.

God had preserved a people. Why? Because that people was a mission people. I heard from our praise leader.

She said, you're a missional people. I hope so. What would happen if the only thing that remained of the Canadian church was its missional arm? What would happen? Could the missional arm, could what you have sent out be enough to restore you if what was here was destroyed? Thank God in the Korean church, they've always been a missional people.

And so that's what happened. So now we had our foothold. We had a means of communication back into the country.

We had connections. We had lines that we could move supplies along. But the problem was we didn't have what they needed, which was Bibles.

You see, because all of the Bibles had been burned in the country. So there were no Bibles to be able to use. And we had these South Korean Bibles on us, but the dialect diverged more than 40% because Kim Il-sung purged the Korean, North Korean language of all of its Chinese roots.

And so now when North Korean, South Korean people try to communicate, they still can, but it's like when you try to understand someone from New Zealand. Have you ever done that? You ever talked to somebody from New Zealand? My wife and I went to New Zealand. She's originally from South Korea.

And I was speaking there and they welcomed us there. Our host, when we first got off the plane, and she said to me, she said, sweetheart, are they speaking English? And I said, I don't know. And so that's what it's like when North Korean and South Korean people communicate.

It's not just a different accent. It's that 40% of the vocabulary is different. So the Bibles we had weren't of the kind that could reach people and touch them.

It wasn't in their heart language. We needed Bibles. Interestingly, there were some.

In the 1970s, when the competition between North and South Korea was at its height, when it wasn't clear who was more economically prosperous, because remember, this is still under the Soviet Union. So North Korea was still strong and still growing. South Korea was under the tutelage of the West and growing, but it was unclear which nation was stronger.

They would compete in everything. They'd compete in sports. They'd compete in music.

They'd compete in movies. And what North Korea knew was people were beginning to have suspicions that North Korea didn't have freedom of religion. And so they looked at South Korea and they looked at the South Korean Bible and they knew that Christianity in South Korea only being, at that time, less than 100 years old, that the translation of the Bible that was used in South Korea, which is kind of like today we think of it as the equivalent of the King James, but it wasn't translated extremely well from the original Hebrew and Greek.

It was adopted with some Chinese and some English. And so it's kind of put together with tape and string in terms of the linguistics of it. And they said, here's our opportunity.

We can translate. This is the North Korean government speaking. This is Kim Il-sung speaking.

We can translate the Bible from the original Greek and Hebrew. We can do the best translation ever done in the Korean language. We can distribute that around the world and people will know that there is religious freedom in North Korea.

So that's why in the 1970s, North Korea conscripted people to, interestingly, these are people who had a connection with historic North Korean Christians. They conscripted them to translate the Bible from the original Greek and Hebrew. And today, that translation, which was done under the aegis of the North Korean government, is known as the most accurate translation of the scriptures ever done into the Korean language.

Korean linguists, the United Bible Society, Bible experts around the world say there's not a hint of bias in it. It's an extraordinary translation. North Korea is very smart in that regard.

They understand that if it did have bias or those kinds of things, then people would point that out. But what they did on purpose was the translation of the Bible, they could say this is better than anything that South Korea could ever do. It was just one small problem is they didn't print a lot of copies because they didn't need a lot of copies.

They only printed 500. And they used those at the two fake, there's four fake churches in North Korea now, two Protestant, one Catholic, and one Russian Orthodox. But at that time, they had just the two Protestant churches there.

And so they did 500 copies. And those are the churches that they, when people go to North Korea and they try to convince them there's freedom of religion, they have the people who are North Koreans who pretend like they're Christians and they worship there, and they're actually trained by the state. So that's the only spot that you could get a North Korean Bible.

And so we did, you wonder about Bible smuggling into the country, that's easy. Let me tell you what's hard. Smuggling a Bible, one of 500, out of the country, that's hard.

Unfortunately, we were able to do it. And we got a hold of that Bible and we mass produced it. And now every year, we send in 50,000 copies back into North Korea of a translation of the Bible by the government that burned every Bible.

But because God uses everything together for good, God had that government translate the most accurate translation of the Bible ever done to this day in the Korean language. I'm not feeling sorry for North Korean Christians. They're not feeling sorry for themselves.

Don't you feel sorry for them because the things that they see God do cause them to say, you pray for us. So now we had a supply line. We had Bibles.

We needed a way to get them in. I mean, we could get some in through those supply lines, but not many. We needed to get more in.

We needed to figure out how to do this. And God gave us this group of 27,000 North Koreans who have escaped from North Korea. They cross all the way through Asia.

You can't just go North to South Korea. That area that separates North and South Korea, they call the DMZ, the Demilitarized Zone. Well, that's a misnomer.

There's no way to cross there. You have to go all the way across China and through a third country like Laos or Thailand or Vietnam, and then you go to Korea. So we have 27,000 people who have made it.

And so these are the people who we say to them, how do we do this? We got these Bibles, and how do we get them into North Korea? Well, a little bit of background. As South Korea and North Korea over the years have gone back and forth and had this conflict, there came a time in the late 1980s when South Korea said, hey, enough is enough. Let's begin the process of making peace with our North Korean neighbors.

And that proceeded through the 1990s and into the 2000s, something called the Sunshine Policy. They said, what do we need to do in North Korea to make you happy? And North Korea said, there's two things you do, South Korea, that drives us crazy. One of them is you launch these balloons that have political

propaganda into our country, and we want you to stop.

The second thing you do is you have shortwave radio broadcasts that broadcast political propaganda into our country, and we want you to stop. And the South Korean government said, okay, we'll stop. Because you and I know how well that works, doesn't it? To try to give a bully what they want by asking them what you're doing that you shouldn't be doing that's making them bully you.

So the South Korean government stopped doing those things, and so as we talked to North Koreans and we said to the North Korean Christians, how do we get these Bibles into North Korea? They said, there's two things we need. One is balloons, and the other is radio broadcasts. And so from the mothballs, we took this balloon technology, and by balloon technology, don't think of like the balloons that you would get at a zoo or these kind of things.

These are big 40-foot tall cylinders. If you want to see these, by the way, you can go to the Voice of the Martyrs website, the Voice of the Martyrs Canada website. They're back here in the very back corner, and that's where I'll be after the thing if you want to talk about North Korea.

40-foot tall cylinders, we fill them with hydrogen. You say, hydrogen? Don't you mean helium? I said, no, hydrogen. You say, isn't hydrogen explosive? I say, yes, but we're very cheap.

So we fill them with hydrogen, and then on the bottom of them, what we do is we attach this, it's like a wrap. It wraps around the Bibles, and think of a box, and then around it is this cable, and at the bottom of the cable is this section of this tube, and into the tube, we pour acid. And you're thinking, hydrogen, acid? And I say, yeah, come visit us.

Help us launch balloons. It's a great time. Is it safe? Of course not.

But, and so the acid cuts through the cable at a reliable rate, and when it breaks, then the box drops open, and all of the Bibles come out. And they come out at a height of about 14,000 feet, and they're wrapped in individual plastic. And don't worry, it's just the New Testament, so nobody's been hit on the head and killed with a Bible.

So we wrap them in plastic, so if they fall in the water, it'll be okay. It was the North Korean Christians who came up with this idea, and that's why every year, we launch 50,000 of these back into North Korea. And then every night, 90 minutes of radio broadcasting broadcast into North Korea in the North Korean dialect.

Now, I love missionaries. I am one. But one of the things I've learned about being a missionary is that there is nothing quite the same as being reached, not by a missionary, but by someone who speaks in your language, who looks like you do.

And so that's why all of the other radio broadcasts that go into North Korea are done by South Koreans. That's very good as far as it goes, but remember, with a 40% divergence in dialect, it's much easier for North Koreans to understand other North Koreans. And so that's why we use North Korean announcers to write the scripts, and the North Korean announcers to be able to voice the scripts.

And so from that period in 1968 on through today, God has regenerated the North Korean church, and today, that church now consists of over 100,000 believers inside of North Korea. 100,000. Praise God.

Yeah, that's okay. You can applaud for that. Now, you say, well, wait a minute.

I thought you were gonna say something like a million, you know, two million. Sometimes you'll hear people say those numbers, but this is what, and this is where I'm gonna close today. If you wanna talk more about North Korea, we can talk more about it, but this is what I came to tell you about.

You'll sometimes hear people with different stories about North Korea. They'll say stuff like two million Christians in North Korea, and they'll talk about, oh, we're getting 50,000 Bibles in the concentration camps. We're doing this, that, and the other thing.

And when you hear those things, I want you to be very suspicious. You understand there's a lot of money to be made in religion when it comes to the North Korean government. See, the North Korean government is not stupid.

Anytime that there's money, they're gonna figure out a way to get in on the cut. They're really more like a mafia than a government. And so what they know is that Christians everywhere feel sorry for North Korean believers.

The only people who don't feel sorry for North Korean believers are North Korean believers. And so this idea that we need to help them because we pity them and they need our help is what North Korea itself as a government capitalizes on. And that's why 90% of the people who claim to be underground believers in North Korea are actually spies planted by the North Korean government.

There is a Christianity major at Kim Il-sung University, and it ain't to make people Christian. It's to study how Westerners think about the Christian faith so that North Koreans can then create and plant spies who pretend to be underground believers who can then make an appeal. How can you tell the authentic North Korean believers from the fake North Korean believers? You know the easiest way? The fake ones say, help us! Do something! Because a true believer directs that call in one direction, and that's to the Lord.

So the reason I tell you these things is that the North Korean government does two things through the planting of fake underground believers. 90% of the believers who claim to be underground believers are fake. And a lot of the ministry then you see by other organizations to North Korea is shaped profoundly by these fake Christians.

The weird thing is North Korea didn't train these Christians to act like the real underground North Korean Christians. They trained them to act like Westerners would assume underground North Korean Christians would be. Pulling blankets over their head, going to the forest at night, singing hymns without saying anything, words coming out of their mouth.

So they play upon what we believe to be true rather than on us doing the hard work of the research of knowing these things and being wise as serpents and knowing how to address them. And so what concerns me is that North Korea not only makes money in this way, and I'm talking about a lot of money, but the second thing they do is that they use a portion of this money to fund the North Korean State Security Agency, one of whose task is to hunt down and kill the real Christians. So let me see if you understood that.

The money that funds the hunting down and killing of the real Christians comes from Western Christians who are giving money to Christians claiming to be underground Christians who are planted by the North Korean government. Does that blow your mind or what? So you say, well, then I don't know what to do. I don't know who to help.

I'll tell you what North Korean Christians tell me. Quoting from the book of Esther, it doesn't depend on you. Mordecai said, maybe God raised you up for a time like this.

And if so, then God will use you powerfully. But if you choose not to be used, God will raise up help from another source. You see, in 1945 through 1960, well 1968, through that time period when the rest of the world was unaware that all of this was happening, God still knew what he was doing.

He was still in church. God rebuilt the North Korean underground church. God today is causing the advancement.

God today is giving them boldness. They're not bold because they think we're going to come to their aid. They're bold because God has come to their aid.

And so as a result of that, my coming here to you is not to say, oh, please do something. My coming here to you is not to say, feel sorry for these people. My coming here to you is not to say, unless you do something today, they will perish.

My coming here to you today is to say, if God is like I say he is in North Korea, if God can regenerate a church like that, then why wouldn't you go? Why wouldn't you do whatever he asked you to do? Because that is the only place you would ever be safe in your life. Why wouldn't you follow him when he called you? Why would you be worried about what you were eating or drinking? Why would you worry if it was going to end in a cross? You wouldn't. You wouldn't.

You'd be absolutely confident that God is all you need. And if you had that kind of a confidence, it doesn't matter what they do. They can destroy your churches.

They can kill all of the pastors. They can burn every Bible and you'll say, you go ahead, bring it on. Because all things work together for good for those who love my God and are called according to his purpose.

So my concern is not to get your help into North Korea. My concern is to get what's in North Korea and that underground believers back out to the rest of the world. Because even though I live in South Korea, the country with 10 of the 11 largest churches in the world sending out more missionaries than any other country per capita, I know where the heart of Christianity still is in Asia.

And I know where the heart of Christianity is around the world. It's in the 53 countries where people are persecuted and executed for their faith. And the reason why I want to encourage you to get involved with Voice of the Martyrs here in Canada is not because these poor people need your help.

It's because we need their help to remind us of the greatness of the God we worship. Because these people, when they get burned, when their buildings are burned, when their money is taken away from them, their responses, all things work together for good. As if you have money and you have freedom, you're not going to turn to the Lord much.

But if you have neither money nor freedom, then you're going to come to know God in a way that will cause you to be absolutely confident that there's nothing that can separate you from his love. Amen. Thank you.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/jgqnbtdIGYk.mp4>

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