

South Korean Woman Prepares for ministry in North Korea

The ministry skills she's learned in the West have prepared her to take the gospel to the East, Young Wha Kan says

A South Korean mother of two believes the street ministry she founded in Toronto has been God's way of preparing her to return to Asia and minister in atheistic North Korea, a country where Christianity is illegal.

Although it has been prophesied that the diminutive, yet fiery Young Wha Kang would one day minister in her native land, she said God has had to "reconstruct" her as a Korean so that she could obey His call and be filled with His love for her people.

Kang was born in South Korea and immigrated to Canada in 1975. She founded Follower's Mission, a daily ministry to street people in Toronto, in 1992. She says the ministry's work in some of the city's roughest areas reaches some 400 people per year for Christ.

Yet God surprised her four years ago, she said, when He instilled a longing in her to return to South Korea and do the same in her homeland.

"I felt a real burden for Korea, but I ignored it because I thought it was just a popular place to pray for and wasn't sure if it was really God calling," she told Charisma.

Kang became firmly convinced that God was calling her to the Korean people, however, when a group of students from the

Asian country visited Toronto in 1999 and stayed in her home.

“They came to experience Holy Spirit revival, and when they were all slain in the Spirit, a boy who needed some deliverance told me he needed me to minister to him,” she said. “It was at that moment that God showed me I needed His love for my people.

“It was the first time He spoke to me in Korean. Before that it was always in English. He said, ‘Let’s go,’ in Korean, and all I could do was weep.”

She began to intercede for the entire Korean Peninsula every day at 5:30 a.m., as did other intercessors at the Follower’s Mission. God gave one of the intercessors a vision of the border between North Korea and South Korea collapsing and many young people entering North Korea by skateboard.

Since 1999, Kang has visited North Korea twice, once as a tourist and once as a sponsored guest. She has been in China three times and was, according to some, the first person to bring the complete Bible into Mongolia. She obtained some of the first copies translated into the Mongolian language and took 16 of them across the border.

Kang became a Christian in 1980 but said she wasn’t close to the Lord until her marriage broke up in the mid-1980s.

“I then began to seek God on a deeper level and went on my first short-term missions trip in 1990,” she said. “I knew then that God was calling me to the nations, and I said, ‘How can I do this, Lord?’ He said, ‘Open your front door, and there are the nations.’”

She started Follower's Mission after participating in a summer street-outreach with her children through Youth With A Mission. "That outreach was the first time I ever saw the destitute people of Toronto. I didn't even know such people were out on the streets," she said.

That fall, Kang ministered for the first time in one of the roughest parts of Toronto—Queen and Sherbourne streets.

"I came down with my mother—all we had was a huge thermos of coffee and a dozen doughnuts, but we prayed as we sat on the bench, and a lot of people came by," she said.

Soon, they were ministering on the street weekly, handing out hot dogs and words of encouragement from the side of a van. In 1994, Kang started renting a building, and the ministry became a full-fledged mission.

She credits the ministry experience she's gained through Follower's Mission with preparing her to take revival to North Korea. "[God] keeps showing me that ministering to people in a country which forbids Christianity is no different than ministering to the street people in Toronto," Kang said. "The people who come through [our] doors represent nations from all over the globe. I believe it's a training ground for me as God launches me out to minister in my native Korea and to other nations."

Josie Newman in Toronto