

China's House Churches Thriving as Coronavirus Tapers Off

At the time of this writing, the situation in China is improving rapidly. New cases of coronavirus are in single-digit numbers, most of them from people returning from overseas where the virus is still spreading. After a few months in which the people in Hubei were in total quarantine, many are now allowed to leave their homes, and some are returning to work. Life is slowly getting back to normal.

Several Christians lost their lives due to the virus. But we know of many who caught it, were admitted to the hospital, and now have been released claiming they have made total recovery and are feeling great! Many testified to healing through prayer. Perhaps the communist government has been more focused on containing the virus, and thus, persecution of Christians has dramatically decreased.

Also, the Lord has greatly blessed the Christians, and they have been able to produce or purchase large quantities of face masks and other items. We recently from Wenzhou (the Jerusalem of China) sent 10,000 face masks to Paris where we have a Chinese church, and they arrived just in time for the total lockdown of the city. Several thousand were sent to our work in Lebanon, and this week we sent several hundred from Guangzhou to a church in Pakistan, where they are not available at any price.

Members of at least one large house church in Wuhan, right at the center of the outbreak, even now are out on the street (some of the people are no longer having to be in quarantine), passing out face masks and disinfectant solution while sharing the gospel with the people. Many are coming to the Lord

through this.

The most exciting development is the use of the latest technology to “do church.” Even before COVID-19, it was difficult for house church members to meet in large groups. Most people’s movements are being monitored all the time, and since COVID-19 people must register to leave their residential areas.

For many years Christians around the world have used online programs like Facebook Live in which people in other locations can watch your church meetings in real time online. But now in China, there are very powerful videoconferencing programs like Zoom. One is “Tencent Meeting,” which is free of charge for the basic program and will not be monitored by Chinese authorities.

Through this program, scores or even hundreds of people in a local church can have church meetings online in which everyone can participate in prayers, worship, teaching and testimonies. Many house churches are using this technology; thus, some churches can reach more and teach more than if they were meeting in one physical location.

The challenge to this in China, Hong Kong and other nations is those older people or poor people who don’t have cellphones or a good internet access. This is even a challenge for our government, which has closed all schools and required students to study at home online. Students in poorer families in subdivided apartments don’t have good internet access.

Sadly, some churches have failed to grow for years, have few young people and their congregations are mostly older people not up-to-date on cellphones and internet access. They cannot easily hold services online, and they cannot receive offerings from their people. It is feared some of them may be forced to fold up if COVID-19 continues for several months more.

Chinese government and church leaders in Hong Kong, Macau,

Taiwan and Singapore learned the lessons from the 2003 SARS epidemic, and took drastic measures to protect their populations from this deadly epidemic. Many leaders in the West and Africa failed to do so, and now we are seeing high death rates and nation-wide lockdowns. But now we are here in Asia facing a new threat from visitors from these nations bringing the virus with them. Thus, most of our nations have totally closed their borders.

I don't believe COVID-19 is an indication of the end of the world, or even that we are in the last of the last days. Of course, Jesus prophesied the sign that there would be pestilences in the end times (Luke 21:11). But Jesus prophesied of the gospel of the kingdom being preached to all ethnic groups before the end (Matt. 24:14).

Most of the people in our part of the world, making up two-thirds of the world's population, still have not heard the gospel. Is it possible, due to unity in the church and modern technology relating to COVID-19, more people will hear the gospel than if life went on as normal before 2020?