

When Spiritual Warfare and Human Trafficking Collide

Steven Kim doesn't just talk about the fight against human trafficking—he lives out the consequences of it, having spent four years in prison for helping North Korean refugees get to South Korea through Vietnam.

“I never had a vision to help them,” says the South Korea native who now divides his time between Long Island, New York, and a new endeavor in the Dominican Republic. “They came to me. Once I saw their misery, I had no choice but to be involved. This was God’s invitation.”

Accepting that invitation involved high risks, though. And the work began quietly. While living in China, where Kim oversaw the manufacturing of chairs sold to U.S. retailers, he learned the plight of two refugees at the underground church he attended. The pastor feared the church would get shut down if he offered the two men anything more than food and a few dollars, so Kim took them home, igniting a spark that prompted him to help more North Koreans sneak across China and into other countries. This eventually led to his arrest in 2003 and subsequent conviction for aiding illegal immigrants.

Once in prison, Kim grew spiritually desperate.

“I could recognize God’s voice for the first time in my life,” he says. “I had no other choice but to allow Him to come in and lead me through.”

While God continued to fuel Kim’s spiritual fire, being locked up didn’t quench his desire to rescue refugees. After his release, he organized the 318 Partners Mission Foundation, named after Article 318, the section of Chinese law used to prosecute him for helping North Koreans cross the border. Launched with no support, the foundation now has nearly 1,600

partners. The businessman hopes the release of the book that tells his story, *The Fearless Passage of Steven Kim*, will add to this.

“I have no goals,” Kim says of the future. “God will drive the ministry by Himself. I just follow His leadership.”