

# China Releases Uyghur Church Leader from Prison

✘ A Uyghur Christian in China's troubled Xinjiang region was released earlier this month after serving two years in a labor camp for alleged "illegal proselytizing" and "leaking state secrets," according to Compass Direct News sources.

House church leader Osman Imin (Wusiman Yaming in Chinese) was freed Nov. 18, sources said. Authorities had called for a 10- to 15-year prison sentence for Osman but significantly reduced the term following international media attention.

(Photo: China Aid Association)

An outspoken leader of the Uyghur church in the northwestern region of China, Osman was first arrested in 2004 and kept at a detention center in Hotan, southern Xinjiang. Local sources said his arrest was almost certainly related to his church work.

There he was chained to a metal bed in winter and frequently beaten while interrogated. Osman was released on bail on Nov. 18, 2004, but bail was canceled in October 2006. On July 26, 2007, he was again placed under supervised house arrest and finally detained by police on Nov. 19 of that year on the charge of "revealing state secrets."

Authorities denied him access to a lawyer, and in June 2008 a court rejected his appeal without explanation.

Authorities eventually moved him to the labor camp outside Kashgar. While in prison Osman was forced to work 12 to 15 hours a day, and his health quickly deteriorated. He was reportedly suffering malnutrition throughout his confinement.

Osman and his wife, Nurgul, have two young daughters.

Still in arbitrary detention in the region is another Uyghur Christian, Alimjan Yimit (Alimujiang Yimiti in Chinese). Officials initially closed the foreign-owned business Alimjan worked for in September 2007 and accused him of using it as a cover for "preaching Christianity." He was then detained in January 2008 on charges of endangering state security and was formally arrested on Feb. 20, 2008, on charges of "inciting secession" and leaking state secrets.

Court officials returned Alimjan's case to state prosecutors in May 2008, citing lack of evidence. Last May 21, government sources told Alimjan's mother that the Public Security Bureau (PSB) in Kashgar planned to quietly sentence him to three years of re-education through labor, thereby circumventing the court system.

Under Chinese law the PSB, which originally filed the case against Alimjan, may authorize such sentences without approval from the court or other state agencies.

Court authorities have returned Alimjan's case to state prosecutors, citing lack of evidence for charges of "leaking state secrets" and "inciting secession." Family, friends and work colleagues have insisted that Alimjan is a loyal citizen with no access to state secrets, and that his arrest was due largely to his Christian faith and association with foreign Christians.

In Xinjiang's politically charged environment, Alimjan's family and friends fear he could face execution if he were wrongly linked with alleged Uyghur separatists.

Sources said there appears to be a concerted effort to shut down the leadership of the Uyghur church in a restive region where authorities fear anything they cannot control. The region of ethnic Uyghurs has come under a government crackdown the past two years as long-simmering tensions erupted.

Disputes over ownership of Xinjiang's land and rich mineral resources have led to resentment between Uyghurs— native to

Xinjiang”and Han Chinese. Religious differences are also an issue, with a vast majority of Uyghurs practicing Islam, while most Chinese are officially atheists or follow Buddhism or syncretistic folk religions. Only a handful of China’s estimated 10 million Uyghurs are known to be Christians.

As part of authorities’ apparent effort to clamp down on Christianity, they have disbarred several lawyers involved in the defense of Uyghur Christians, including Alimjan’s attorney, Li Dunyong. He was effectively disbarred at the end of May when Chinese authorities turned down an annual application to renew his law license.

Zhang Kai, another Beijing lawyer who had defended Alimjan, suffered the same fate.

Authorities failed to renew licenses for at least 15 other lawyers who had defended civil rights cases, religious and ethnic minorities and political dissidents, according to watch group Human Rights in China.

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## **Thanksgiving: Substance or Illusion**

✘ This past weekend millions ate turkey, traveled hundreds of miles to spend time with their families and showed up at major retailers as early as 5 a.m. As Americans did these things men of the cloth, sociologists and demographers wondered what was on the mind of the average American. Getting the latest, best deal on consumer products certainly got 197 million of us moving through stores, but we ogled and did not buy much. Black Friday sales were only up only .5 percent as Americans went on their traditional day-after-Thanksgiving

shopping spree. We know that Wall Street aficionados were worried about the news of the Dubai debt crisis because it is inexplicable and it seems like a harbinger of future problems.

Against this fluid backdrop of concern and financial worry, many people would ask, What's there to be thankful about? Although I am a minister, I avoid preaching in this column; nonetheless the season and the circumstances beg another question in response to the hypothetical question I just posed, How many of us really celebrated the holiday in proper fashion?

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## **The Lesson of the Seed-Grain**

Jesus used many analogies to teach us the truths of the kingdom. One of these was the lesson of the seed-grain, in which He compared the life of the believer to the process of development of a grain of wheat.

“‘Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies,’” He said, “‘it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain’” (John 12:24, NKJV). This process is the same one we must go through if we are to bear fruit as we are called to do.

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# You're Blessed

✘ It is said that this is a man's world. It is not a man's world. Men may be occupying many seats of authority, but God is in control.

If God blesses you, do not fear. A blessed woman can survive—even in a man's world. The challenge is to receive what is yours without becoming bitter about the times it was withheld from you.

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# Single and Simply Fabulous

✘ *To a woman, whether single or married, what matters most is knowing her worth in the eyes of God.*

What do you think of yourself? How would you describe yourself to someone if you were being objective? Would you want to get to know you if you met yourself walking down the street? Well, it's time to get under the skin you're in.

I've told the story of the time I was deeply hurt in a relationship—so deeply I had a party with the devil who served me Unbelief Tea and Resignation Pie topped with "Why Me?" sauce. Well, the man got married and divorced. He became a Christian. He came back to me. I was thrilled.

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# How Pornography Kills Love

✘ *Dear Laurie,*

*I'm grieving the loss of my young womanhood and the countless nights I went to bed wounded in heart and frustrated sexually. It's hard to look at my face in mid-life and wonder how my*

*husband rejected me when I was at my best—I was really pretty.*

*I went through the stages you did. I was obedient, submitting even over tiny issues. I ministered to his needs and enjoyed*

*it, even when he was oblivious to mine. For years, I've suffered from*

*exhaustion—afraid that if I went to bed before my husband, I'd be*

*neglecting his sexual or emotional needs.*

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## The Sacred Name of God

✘ In Hebrew, the sacred, divine name of God is spelled with four Hebrew letters: yod, hei, vav, and hei, or, in English, YHVH. This four-lettered name is called the tetragrammaton, which means “four letters.”

This name, YHVH, is found 6,823 times in the Hebrew Bible. Hebrew scholars and rabbis all agree that the exact pronunciation of these four letters has been lost throughout the centuries. Some suggest the name is pronounced Yehovah or

Yahweh, while westerners say Jehovah, replacing the first letter Y (yud in Hebrew) with the English letter J, which does not exist in the Hebrew alphabet.

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## Integrity Is King

"Integrity"

is a word that is widely used—and widely misunderstood. If you were to



ask the average person for a definition of integrity you'd probably hear a lot of hemming and hawing. The origin of the word makes its meaning very clear. "Integrity" comes from the Latin adjective integer, which means "whole" or "complete." In mathematics, an integer is a positive or negative whole number or zero—a number without any fractional part.

A person of integrity is honest and upright. His soul is not divided or compartmentalized.

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## **Holy Dissatisfaction**

Did you feel guilty on Thanksgiving—the day of all days to  express heartfelt gratitude to God—because you aren't TOTALLY content? Perhaps you offered up the obligatory thanks for family, home, job, health and the hearty meal as you sat around the holiday feast, but inside, you were aware that your heart is not quite full to the brim with satisfaction—and you aren't sure what to do about it.

What could possibly be wrong?