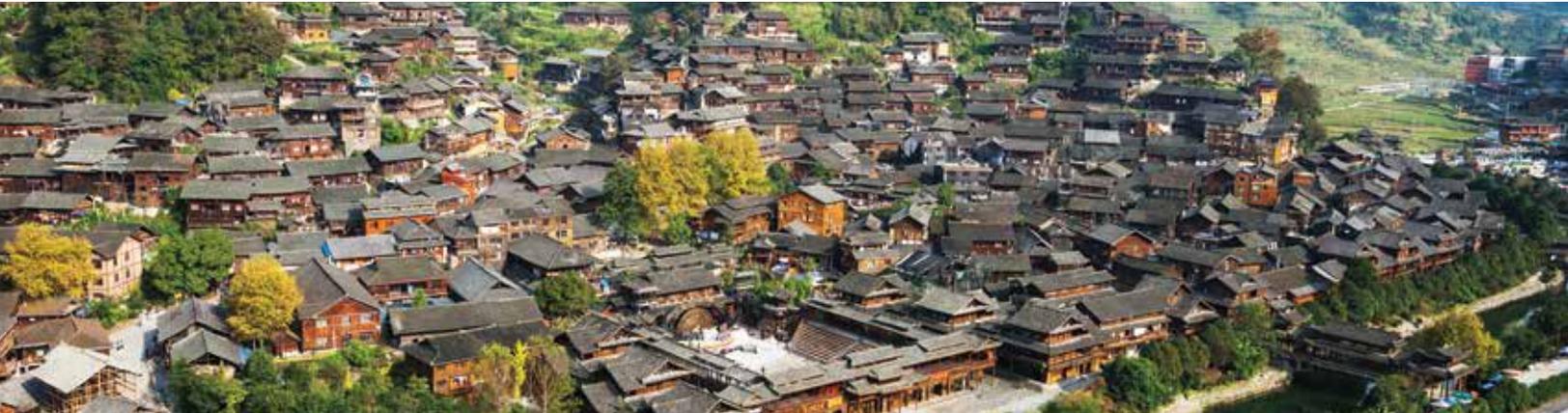




INTRODUCING EAST ASIAN PEOPLES

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The East Asian Peoples Affinity

The geography of East Asia extends from Tibet in the west to Japan in the east, and from Mongolia in the north to Hainan island in the south. However, our focus includes all East Asian people throughout the world.

Our ministry efforts focus on helping East Asians hear, understand, and respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The majority of East Asians live in five countries. They profess a variety of religious beliefs, speak multiple languages, and have different economic situations. East Asians live in rural areas and megacities. They wear both twenty-first-century fashion and hundred-year-old styles. One commonality among East Asian people is that their traditions are deeply rooted in life and language.

The area has a rich missions history, with Baptist work starting in the 1800s. Many of these countries do not have a large, thriving Christian population. Seeds have been planted and watered, and many have grown and been harvested, yet there is still much to do. Let's take a closer look.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACING THE EAST ASIAN PEOPLES AFFINITY

POPULATION

The population of East Asian countries represents a fourth of the world's population. These countries are home to nearly 1.7 billion people. East Asian governments grapple with challenges like controlling migration to already crowded cities, maintaining social stability, and encouraging job creation for millions of unemployed.

China, home to 1.4 billion, is the world's most populous country and has more than 175 cities with populations over one million.

URBANIZATION

In the last twenty years, Japan's population has shifted so that 92 percent of the people now live in cities. Roughly 82 percent of South Koreans live in urban areas; 20 percent live in the capital city, Seoul. In China, there is a plan to shift 350 million rural residents into newly constructed towns and cities by 2025. The government plans to fully integrate one billion people into China's cities by 2030.

AGING POPULATION

Japan's population continues to decline, due to one of the world's lowest birth rates and due to one-fourth of their population being age sixty-five or older. The shrinking labor force limits tax revenue and has caused Japan's debt to grow by more than twice its economic output. China has also experienced a dramatic increase in its aging population, and a declining labor force raises concerns about its economic prospects. The shrinking labor force is a result of China's one-child policy, which recently ended. Restrictions on rural farmers working in the cities prohibits them from contributing to the social security needs of an aging population.

Mongolia's average age is twenty-seven, making it the only East Asian nation with a young population.





China

POPULATION: 1.41 billion (2019)



Japan

POPULATION: 127.1 million (2019)



Mongolia

POPULATION: 3.09 million (2019)



South Korea

POPULATION: 51.1 million (2019)



Taiwan

POPULATION: 23.7 million (2019)



Map of East Asia



China

CITIES

In today's China, people go to cities to pursue a better life. China has more cities with a population over one million than any other country in the world. In 2018 nearly 60 percent of China's population lived in cities, and the number is growing annually. Much of this population explosion comes from rural people moving to the cities to find work to support families back home. In the past four decades, China's urban population has grown from 170 million to over 800 million. Within the next ten years, the Chinese government aims to have 70 percent of the people living in cities.

Shanghai, China's largest city with over twenty-four million people, is known as the "Pearl of the Orient" for its beauty and economic significance. It is on the cutting edge in almost every field: finance, technology, business, arts, education, and transportation. Rapid modernization and development are transforming the city at an incalculable pace. Sixteen metro lines and 413 stations provide the longest subway network in the world. There are two commercial airports, four railway stations, and the busiest container port in the global market. Shanghai serves as China's center of finance and foreign investment and boasts some of the world's tallest skyscrapers.

RELIGION IN CHINA

- ❑ The Communist Party, and therefore the government of China, is officially atheist.
- ❑ China officially allows the practice of five religions: Protestant Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Taoism, and Buddhism.
- ❑ While China is considered the world's largest atheist country, about two-thirds of its people engage in some religious practice each year, tied mostly to Buddhism or folk religion (ancestor worship).
- ❑ Most Chinese take a pragmatic view of religion: "If it will help me, then I'll believe in it."

CHRISTIANITY IN CHINA

- ❑ The Chinese government sanctions only two Christian organizations:
 - The Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the official Protestant Christian Church in China.
 - The Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA).
- ❑ Churches in China are required to register with the government and follow its guidelines for their religious practices.



China

- ❑ Some churches, often known as house churches, refuse to submit to government registration.
- ❑ Churches, both large and small, that refuse to register have been forcibly shut down in recent years.
- ❑ Due to increased security issues and government sanctions, tracking the number of Christians has become more and more difficult, as Christians increasingly meet in secret.

BRIDGES AND BARRIERS TO THE GOSPEL

BRIDGES

- ❑ Many Chinese have prospered during the spectacular growth of the Chinese economy, but material possessions haven't brought satisfaction. Christian teachings bring peace to their hearts and many are open to hearing and learning more about Christ.
- ❑ The Chinese are very respectful to foreigners and will often listen patiently as the gospel is presented, even if they are not very interested.

- ❑ Websites created by Chinese Christians living both inside and outside of China provide great information about the gospel and Christianity.
- ❑ Generally, Chinese have a favorable impression of Christianity. Christians who are peaceful and helpful towards others create goodwill that results in more opportunities to share the gospel.
- ❑ Chinese Christians who've been radically saved and transformed by Christ can share the gospel powerfully among family, friends, colleagues, old classmates, and neighbors.

BARRIERS

- ❑ Government restrictions are making it more difficult for Christians to meet together and to access Bibles and other Christian materials. CCTV monitoring, facial recognition technology, and other tracking methods help officials identify groups of Christians.
- ❑ Churches that refuse to register are being shut down, and international Christians working with churches are being monitored and/or expelled.

- ❑ Many cults and non-orthodox sects, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, operate in China. But the most dangerous cults are homegrown, such as Eastern Lightning, which is especially effective in rural areas.
- ❑ Those who openly follow Christ face ridicule by family and friends. Communist Party members who have accepted Christ often hide their faith to avoid losing their jobs.
- ❑ Many people hold strong animistic beliefs and engage in ancestor worship; they are unwilling to turn from these long-held beliefs to follow Jesus.
- ❑ Although the gospel is widely accessible to those who understand Mandarin Chinese, an estimated 30 percent of China's population who speak different languages have little or no access to the gospel, especially ethnic minorities in rural areas who likely have never heard Jesus's name in any language.
- ❑ Although Chinese people have more wealth than ever before, more disposable income creates more distractions and less time for God.



LANGUAGE

Standard Chinese or Mandarin (Putonghua)

DID YOU KNOW?

- ❑ More than 70 percent of the world's toys are made in China.
- ❑ China's one-child policy ended in 2016 and now couples may give birth to two children.
- ❑ All the pandas in the world belong to China.
- ❑ China's name (Zhong Guo) means "middle kingdom" because it was believed that China was the center of the civilized world.

RELIGIONS

Officially atheism; also Buddhism (18.2%), Christianity (6.7%), Islam (1.8%), Taoism (less than 1%), folk religion (less than 1%), Hinduism (less than 1%), Judaism (less than 1%), and unaffiliated (52.2%)

POPULATION

1.41 billion (2019)

Japan

During their children's sports day, a parent asks several others how to keep families strong when husbands work more than seventy hours a week. One Japanese woman speaks up and shares how she relates to her husband and children as Christians. The others press in closer to hear details. In a country where less than 1 percent of the population is Christian, actually talking to one is rare.

One man comments that his birth was recognized in a Shinto ceremony, he was married in a Christian ceremony at a hotel, and he will be buried as a Buddhist. He quips, "I have no religion at all. I just believe in fate."

As the conversation continues, they focus on concerns like the aging population, natural disasters, and the demise of traditional values and families. Then the Christian father asks, "Is it really fate?" His question opens a discussion about the real purpose of life. He introduces them to God, the one who desires a real, living relationship with them. Japanese crave this at a heart level. Several nod their heads as the subject of "munashisa," a Japanese term meaning "emptiness of heart," is mentioned.

The Christian wife then tells that at age twenty-three she became a believer after hearing the gospel from a missionary. Now married with children, she and her husband are helping start a new church.

RELIGION IN JAPAN

- Most Japanese identify with Shintoism, Buddhism, or both.
- Very few Japanese will say they worship their ancestors or nature, yet most do not consider ancestor worship a religion.

CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN

- About 1 percent of Japanese claim to be Christian, but half or fewer are evangelical Christian. Many believers are over age sixty.
- Approximately three thousand Christian missionaries from overseas serve in Japan.
- The Japan Baptist Convention has more than three hundred churches, most with fewer than fifty members. While Japan has long been considered a difficult mission field, God is at work in amazing new ways across the country. Missionaries are seeing things they have never seen before. All of this is due to prayers that have been poured out for years for the people of Japan.

BRIDGES AND BARRIERS TO THE GOSPEL

BRIDGES

- Before becoming a Christian, the average Japanese has at least three "encounters" with Christ, whether through hearing a personal witness, participating in a Christian group, or reading the Bible.
- Japanese people need to know that they are loved and are valued. Sharing redemptive analogies and Bible stories (such as the Lost Coin, the Lost Sheep, and the Prodigal Son) helps them understand that God will go to great lengths to search for one lost person.
- Because Japanese have one of the highest literacy rates in the world, Christian literature is a very effective tool for sharing the gospel.

BARRIERS

- Many Japanese perceive Christianity as a foreign religion.
- Japanese avoid confrontation and want to be part of the group. Being a Christian separates them from mainstream society. Pressures that arise from tradition and family to participate in ancestor worship, and the fear of offending ancestors' spirits, keep many from Christianity.
- Most Japanese have no concept of a daily walk and relationship with a living God. Japanese find it very difficult to understand Christianity's claim to absolute truth. Because religious words are rich with Buddhist and Shinto concepts, the Japanese language is a barrier.



LANGUAGE

Japanese

DID YOU KNOW?

- Japan's land area is comparable to that of California, yet its population equals almost half that of the United States.
- The literacy rate in Japan is almost 100 percent.
- Japan is composed of more than three thousand islands.
- Japan's population has been declining at 0.23 percent annually.

RELIGIONS

Shintoism (83.9%), Buddhism (71.4%), Christianity (1%), other religions (7.8%).
Note: Total exceeds 100% because many practice both Shintoism and Buddhism (2005).

POPULATION

127.1 million (2019)

Mongolia

In the capital city of Ulaanbaatar (oh-LAN-BAH-tar), young professionals push through rush-hour traffic to get to the office on time. On the quiet grassy plains, nomads tend their sheep, returning home to “gers,” round tent dwellings, at day’s end. In the mountain valleys, breeders carefully raise livestock. In the southwest, winds crossing the Gobi Desert stir up dust storms, creating a seemingly uninhabitable land.

Modern Mongolia is a peaceful country with a distinctive culture. Geographically, it is landlocked between China to the south and Russia to the north. Mongolia is the nineteenth largest country in the world by land mass. However, Mongolia is also the third most sparsely populated country in the world.

About 45 percent of the population lives in Ulaanbaatar. Another 28 percent live in other major cities. The rest are rural people who earn a living through livestock, agriculture, or mining. Many follow a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle.

RELIGION IN MONGOLIA

- During the reign of Genghis Khan, Tengriism and shamanism were widely practiced, but they eventually gave way to Tibetan Buddhism.
- Throughout most of the twentieth century, religious practices were repressed by the Communist government.
- Tibetan Buddhism has become the most widely practiced religion in Mongolia, but other religions are quickly gaining followers.
- Most Mongolians visit temples in times of need.

CHRISTIANITY IN MONGOLIA

- In 1990 there were only forty known believers in Mongolia.
- In 2016 Mongolia had an estimated thirty-five thousand believers in five hundred churches.
- The Mongolian church has a vision to take the gospel to every country that was a part of Genghis Khan’s great Mongolian Empire.

BRIDGES AND BARRIERS TO THE GOSPEL

BRIDGES

- The most effective way to evangelize Mongols is in homes around the table. Explaining God’s plan from creation to Christ in an extended conversation brings greater understanding and receptivity.
- Young people are generally more open to the gospel than older generations. English camps, sports classes, and human needs projects have been useful tools in reaching Mongolians, including remote nomadic herdsmen.

BARRIERS

- Mongols generally do not accept the idea that Jesus Christ is the only path to salvation. They don’t want to reject their other beliefs to follow Christ exclusively.
- Because of their upbringing and culture, many Mongolians consider themselves Buddhists. They assume that becoming Christian would separate them from their family and cultural identity.



LANGUAGE

Khalka Mongolian (90%)

DID YOU KNOW?

- Mongolia is three times larger than Spain, yet Spain has a population thirteen times greater than Mongolia.
- Mongolia is a land-locked country with no navy.
- In Mongolia 30 percent of the people live below the poverty line.
- In Mongolia the ratio of livestock to people is 20:1.

RELIGIONS

Buddhism (53%), Islam (3%), Shamanism (2.9%), Christianity (1.3%), other (0.4%), not religious (39.4%)

POPULATION

3.09 million (2019)

South Korea

Samsung, LG, kimchi and K-pop are all things that come to mind when someone mentions South Korea. South Korea has transformed from one of the poorest and most undeveloped nations after the Korean War to a developed and technologically advanced nation. Today Samsung's Galaxy mobile phone is as popular as Apple's iPhone, and LG has made a name for itself among global brands for home electronics and appliances.

South Korea, a modern, image-conscious nation with the thirteenth largest economy in the world, is very different from its neighbor to the north, a poor country whose people live under strict rule. The two countries existed as one nation from the seventh century until 1945. At the end of World War II, Korea was divided along the 38th parallel, a political division that continues to this day.

Though Koreans are among the most ethnically and linguistically homogenous people in the world, Korea possesses a significant population of Chinese-speaking ethnic Koreans.

RELIGION IN SOUTH KOREA

- ❑ Though many South Koreans follow Buddhism, twice as many people in South Korea adhere to no religion at all.
- ❑ Although the rate of church growth in South Korea has slowed, there is still a high percentage of South Koreans who identify themselves as Christians.
- ❑ The Foreign Mission Board of the Korea Baptist Convention has nearly seven hundred missionaries serving in more than forty countries or people groups around the world.
- ❑ Early morning prayer meetings are filled with the ardent and earnest prayers of many first-generation Christians.

BRIDGES AND BARRIERS TO THE GOSPEL

BRIDGES

- ❑ South Korea has a high level of religious freedom and separation between church and state.
- ❑ The paramount interest for learning English and Western culture provides a gateway for evangelism by English-speaking Westerners.

- ❑ Christian materials are readily available online and at Christian bookstores, including influential Western Christian materials that are promptly translated into Korean.

BARRIERS

- ❑ The dominant influence of secularism and materialism have turned eyes and hearts away from interest in church and spiritual truth.
- ❑ Highly publicized corruption scandals among prominent megachurch leaders has added to growing cynicism regarding the church and Christianity.
- ❑ Long, hard hours at work or school, and the pressure to succeed and excel, leave most Koreans with little time for anything that doesn't add value to their education or career pursuits.
- ❑ Churches tend to be steeped in traditions. Some find it hard to try new ways of outreach and church planting that appeal to the younger generation.



LANGUAGE

Korean

DID YOU KNOW?

- ❑ Korea is the largest consumer of garlic.
- ❑ South Korea is the plastic surgery capital of the world.
- ❑ It's a tradition to bring toilet paper and/or laundry detergent for a housewarming gift.
- ❑ There are over one hundred kinds of kimchi.

RELIGIONS

Christianity (31.6%—24% Protestant, 7.6% Catholic), Buddhism (24.2%), unknown (0.9%), none (43.3%)

POPULATION

51.1 million (2019)

Taiwan

Home to Asus and Acer computers, Giant bicycles, the Taipei 101 building, and bubble tea, Taiwan is often overlooked in today's world. Overshadowed by neighboring China and not officially recognized as an independent nation by the UN, Taiwan is a little-known jewel. Called the "Heart of Asia," Taiwan delightfully blends old and new, mountains and ocean, city and countryside. Most of all, Taiwan is home to over twenty-three million people, the fifteenth most densely populated country in the world.

RELIGION IN TAIWAN

- ❑ The spiritual need among Taiwan's people is evidenced by their frequent worship of a variety of gods through offerings of food, money, and incense. Shrines are set up in homes and shops to honor a deity or an ancestor.
- ❑ Traditional Chinese religion is a complex combination of ancestor worship, Taoism, and Buddhism. Fortune telling, conversing with spirits, and spirit possession are extremely common, and many believe that the more gods one worships, the better one's fortune will be. If a person doesn't get what he wants, he simply finds a bigger, more powerful god.

- ❑ Taiwan is one of the most pluralistic nations in regard to religious beliefs, with twenty-seven officially recognized religions.

CHRISTIANITY IN TAIWAN

- ❑ Christianity has been in Taiwan for over 150 years, yet the number of Christians—including both Protestants and Catholics—in relation to the entire population is only 7.1 percent.
- ❑ The Taiwan Baptist Convention, Seminary, and Mission are working together to see one hundred new churches started between 2018 and 2028.
- ❑ Outside the cities, even fewer people are believers. In south-central Taiwan, most townships with populations of twenty-five thousand have only one or two struggling churches, if any. In many villages you may not find even one Christian witness.

BRIDGES AND BARRIERS TO THE GOSPEL

BRIDGES

- ❑ Over the years, churches have reached into communities with children's camps and programs. Many believers can trace the roots of their Christian journey to outreach activities like these.

- ❑ Because Taiwan is highly literate and the study of English is required in schools, English Bible camps are excellent ways to attract students. In addition, schools often welcome Westerners into the schools to teach about American holidays such as Christmas and Easter.
- ❑ The Taiwanese have a hunger for spiritual things and a desire to worship.

BARRIERS

- ❑ The Taiwanese often see Jesus as just another god among many and can't comprehend a true God who wants a relationship with them and can fill their hearts completely.
- ❑ The foundation of many significant festivals in Taiwan is folk religion, and community activities often revolve around the temple.
- ❑ The pursuit of wealth, education, and material advancement often results in spiritually weak Christians with little commitment to serving God.
- ❑ In a country that embraces diversity—of religion, gender, and thought—the narrow road of Christianity is hard to accept.



LANGUAGE

Mandarin Chinese (official), Hokkien (Taiwanese) 70%, Hakka 15%

DID YOU KNOW?

- ❑ International ratings place Taiwan's passport in twenty-ninth place for visa-free entry to other countries.
- ❑ Taiwan holds the record for the most titles in the Little League World Series.
- ❑ Taiwan stands in a strategic position to facilitate gospel work in China and beyond.

RELIGIONS

Mixture of Buddhism and Taoism (93%), Christianity (4.5%), other (2.5%)

POPULATION

23.7 million (2019)

Buddhism

The saffron-colored robe of the monk sways as he walks through the temple courtyard. Despite the wet, falling snow, people swarm throughout the open space. They light candles, burn incense, and prostrate before a host of golden idols, hoping their attention to spiritual matters will ward off evil or bring good fortune in the coming year.

The majority of Buddhists in the world today can be found in East Asia. Estimates of East Asian followers of Buddhism are as follows:

- Taiwan—93%
- Japan—71.4%
- Mongolia—53%
- South Korea—24.2%
- China—18.2%; countless others combine Buddhism with other beliefs such as Taoism or folk religions.
- Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China)—14%
- Macau (Special Administrative Region of China)—50%
- Tibet (Special Administrative Region of China)—the majority of Tibetans are Buddhists.

Buddhism is the fourth largest religion in the world with more than 350 million followers worldwide. Siddhartha Gautama, a Hindu Brahman searching for enlightenment, founded Buddhism nearly 2,500 years ago.

Buddhism teaches that there is no God, but one may reach enlightenment, or nirvana—a state of such peace and ultimate wisdom that one ceases to exist—through strict discipline, through study, and by performing good works.

BUDDHIST PRACTICES

Different schools of Buddhism emphasize different practices to reach enlightenment. They may meditate, repeat mantras, go on pilgrimages, spin prayer wheels, hang prayer flags, study Buddhist scriptures, burn incense, and offer charity to seek enlightenment.

Some East Asians who claim to be Buddhists do not adhere to standard forms of Buddhism. Instead, they mix Buddhism with animism and superstition to create a type of folk Buddhism.

Tibetan Buddhism, popular among many Westerners and celebrities, is, in essence, an animistic practice with a layer of Buddhism placed over it. Many Tibetans actually operate out of a fear/control worldview. While Tibetans will certainly acknowledge the Buddhist concepts of karma, reincarnation, and the Four Noble Truths, most of their time is spent seeking to appease the host of spirits, demons, and impersonal forces that plague their daily existence.

FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS OF BUDDHISM

1. Suffering exists.
2. Suffering arises from attachment to desires.
3. Suffering ceases when attachment to desire ceases.
4. Freedom from suffering is possible by practicing the Eightfold Path.



Taoism or Daoism

At the top of a flight of steps is the door to an elaborate temple. In front lies an urn, where people place their incense, bow, and pray to one of many deities represented there. Inside the door, various deities are represented; in front of the larger ones are places to kneel down and worship.

Special holidays bring more people, but every day people with hardships and sorrows journey to the temple to seek solace for their hurting lives.

Taoism, sometimes known as Daoism, originated in China around 2,500 years ago. Its root word, “Tao” literally translates to “the Way.” Because Taoism originated in China, many Chinese make it their religion of choice. Over the years Taoism has changed to meet the needs of the people, resulting in hundreds of variations of Taoist practices.

TAOIST PHILOSOPHY AND SYMBOLS

- The essence of the philosophy revolves around the concept of the Tao, or “the Way,” the ultimate creative principal that connects and unifies all things.

- The Tao is not a god, but its followers worship many deities in folklore that are also subject to and dependent on the Tao.
- The Taoist symbol—the yin yang—represents one of the key principles in the religion: a balance of opposites. Taoists teach that the world is filled with complementary opposites such as light and dark, hot and cold, and good and bad.

TAOIST PRACTICES

- Reading and chanting of scriptures
- Feng shui (fung-shway)—positioning furniture, windows, buildings, graves, and other objects to allow the flow of energy, harmonize with spiritual forces, and usher in good fortune
- Ancestor worship
- Worshipping a pantheon of deities
- Fortune-telling

UNDERSTANDING TAOISM

- Taoists value compassion, moderation, and humility.
- The ch’i (ch’EE) is the Taoist term for cosmic energy that allows people to survive and links them to the universe. Ch’i is accumulated with life and dispersed in death.

- Taoists also believe in “wu wei,” a concept of non-intervention, or trying to live in accord with the true nature of the world without obstructing the course of nature. This idea of living in peace and harmony was the basis of the USA’s hippie movement in the 1960s. Taoism was the hippie movement of 500 BC.



Folk Religions

In southwest China on a chilly afternoon, Brother Lee receives word that his father has died. The news sends a shock through his soul. What had caused this sudden death? Why had God allowed his father to die, and just one year after his mother's death? As he travels in stunned silence up a dark mountain road, such thoughts continually roll through his mind.

He arrives late at night at the remote mountain peak and finds a group of village farmers. Lee's brother sits silently with the farmers beside his father's corpse. Their dad, although sober for many months, had started drinking again, and this time the bottle took his life.

Tied to the stone-cold body is a live chicken fluttering and kicking about; it is, in fact, a common practice for villagers to tie a live chicken to a human corpse. A kicking chicken is meant to scare the evil spirits away from the dead body. The spirits would have difficulty finding the deceased's soul if the chicken keeps him moving.

After filing the police report and taking care of the formalities, the family transports the father's body back to his home village for burial. The body and chicken are loaded into the back of a truck.

Driving down the mountain, Lee sees fireworks exploding all around. Fires burn along the roadside all the way down the drive. The fear-filled farmers do all they can to make sure the evil spirits will not inhabit either this man's corpse or the people of their village.

Animists like these live in daily fear of offended spirits. They bury their deceased on mountaintops to watch over them, protect them, and bless them. They eat meals at family graves. They burn incense and strike the gong. They live in perpetual fear. Religious folk practices like these are not written in a book but are passed down orally from generation to generation. Grandparents and parents are the religious authorities and keepers of the religious precepts for the following generations.

ANIMISM

One of the earliest recorded belief systems, animism, revolves around the idea that spirits inhabit every object, whether plant, animal, or soil. Followers use rituals to please the spirits and to encourage rain, healthy crops, or good luck. They often treat inanimate objects as if they were alive. In parts of China, witch doctors are called upon to offer animal sacrifices and create talismans to ward off evil spirits that can cause sickness or disaster.

SHINTOISM

Shinto, "the way of the gods," is Japan's native religion. Shintoism is as old as the country and is woven into the character of the people. The animistic religion connects strongly to nature. Shinto has no founder or official scriptures. Japanese believe they are surrounded by spirits and that these spirits have an interest in

their lives. Therefore, they want to be on good terms by making offerings to the spirits that they hope will please them. This takes place at shrines, and many families have small personal altars in their homes. Rather than a pattern of formal beliefs, Shinto is best seen in the patterns of the lives of the Japanese.



Confucianism

The influence Confucius has had upon generation after generation of Chinese people is immeasurable. Confucius (551-479 BC), like many sons of minor nobility, spent most of his life pursuing coveted positions in service of feudal princes. As a master teacher, ethics and morals permeated his thoughts. After Confucius's death, his teachings were eventually collected by his students and compiled into what is known as the Analects. For over two thousand years, this book was considered one of the classical Four Books. The greatest impact this work has had on Chinese society revolves around the Confucian moral code, which focuses on the Five Constants (Benevolence, Righteousness, Rites, Knowledge, and Integrity). When every individual practices the Five Constants, social harmony will result as each individual accepts their role in the natural order. Relationships in China are dictated by the order of ruler to ruled, father to son, husband to wife, older brother to younger brother, and friend to friend. Critics of Confucianism point to the fallacy of meritocracy and the relatively low position of women. Recently China has seen a revival of Confucianism.

Atheism

China's leader has called upon Communist Party members to be "unyielding Marxist atheists." The stance as an official atheist state has been held since the 1949 Chinese Revolution. Thus, almost ninety million party members are forbidden to hold religious beliefs. CCP (Chinese Communist Party) members hold the most important roles in society—all government positions and many teaching positions—thereby touching every aspect of society. Some polls indicate that China is the most atheistic country in the world with over 65 percent who claim to be "convinced atheists."



Islam

More than thirty million Muslims live across China. Ten of China's officially recognized fifty-five ethnic minority groups are predominantly Muslim: the Hui, Uighur, Kazakh, Dongxiang, Kyrgyz, Salar, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Bonan, and Chinese Tatar. Evangelism and church planting remain difficult among these small groups because most of them believe they would lose their ethnic identity if they stopped being Muslim. The inextricable bond between ethnic identity and religious belief presents great challenges when family and ethnic identity are both so important in each culture.

Muslims in China are facing persecution for their religion. Persecution varies, but in many places it is illegal to study Arabic and buy a Qur'an. Muslims with important leadership positions in

government or commerce may not be allowed to fast during Ramadan or go to a mosque. In some cases, Muslims are being sent to re-education camps.

Muslims in China have not been very responsive to the gospel, but in the last few years they have been more responsive to presentations of the gospel by Chinese Christians who demonstrate genuine love. Please pray that God will call many Christians to live among Muslims in China, to love them well, and to share the gospel. Pray that Chinese churches will reach out and engage the Muslims in their cities. Pray also that they will send workers to western China to engage Muslim villages and cities with the good news. Pray for churches to be planted among Muslims communities across China.



Affinity Cities

EAST ASIA'S CITIES

The new face of East Asia is found in its cities. If we begin with a strategy of concentrated prayer for the more than 450 cities with populations in excess of 500,000, we believe God will call out workers to take the gospel to East Asia's remaining unengaged cities. Developing and implementing creative strategies to engage these cities across East Asia is critical to fulfilling our vision.

MATERIALLY RICH AND SPIRITUALLY POOR

The cities of East Asia are filled with the most modern skyscrapers in the world, gleaming urban structures, parks, museums, cultural and arts centers, recreation facilities, high-rise apartments, cars, and a mushrooming population.

Wealthy urbanites and a growing middle class spend millions on vacations and buy name-brand products at high-end retail malls in China, Hong Kong, and Macau. They send their children to the best schools in the US, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. They invest in companies and properties in other countries and consume high-quality goods that drive their own thriving economies.

Many cities have become economic powerhouses, bringing East Asia into a prominent position on the world stage. Living conditions and lifestyles have vastly improved for East Asian people in the cities, but many have yet to seriously consider their eternal destiny.

CHALLENGES TO EVANGELIZING THE CITIES

Sharing the gospel with urbanites has many challenges. Many work long hours and make long commutes on public transportation. Often they can afford to buy homes only if they work more than one job. Caught up in a frenzy of work and play, many just don't have time to talk. They don't get to know their neighbors, and they want their independence. Most urbanites would say they don't have time for worship, Bible studies, or even socializing with friends.

WHAT DRIVES URBANIZATION

People move to the cities for a variety of reasons. Many leave rural areas, equated with farming and poverty, in search of a better life and opportunities to support the families they leave behind.

But in countries like China, villagers who come to the cities are looked down upon as second-class citizens. Squatter villages crop

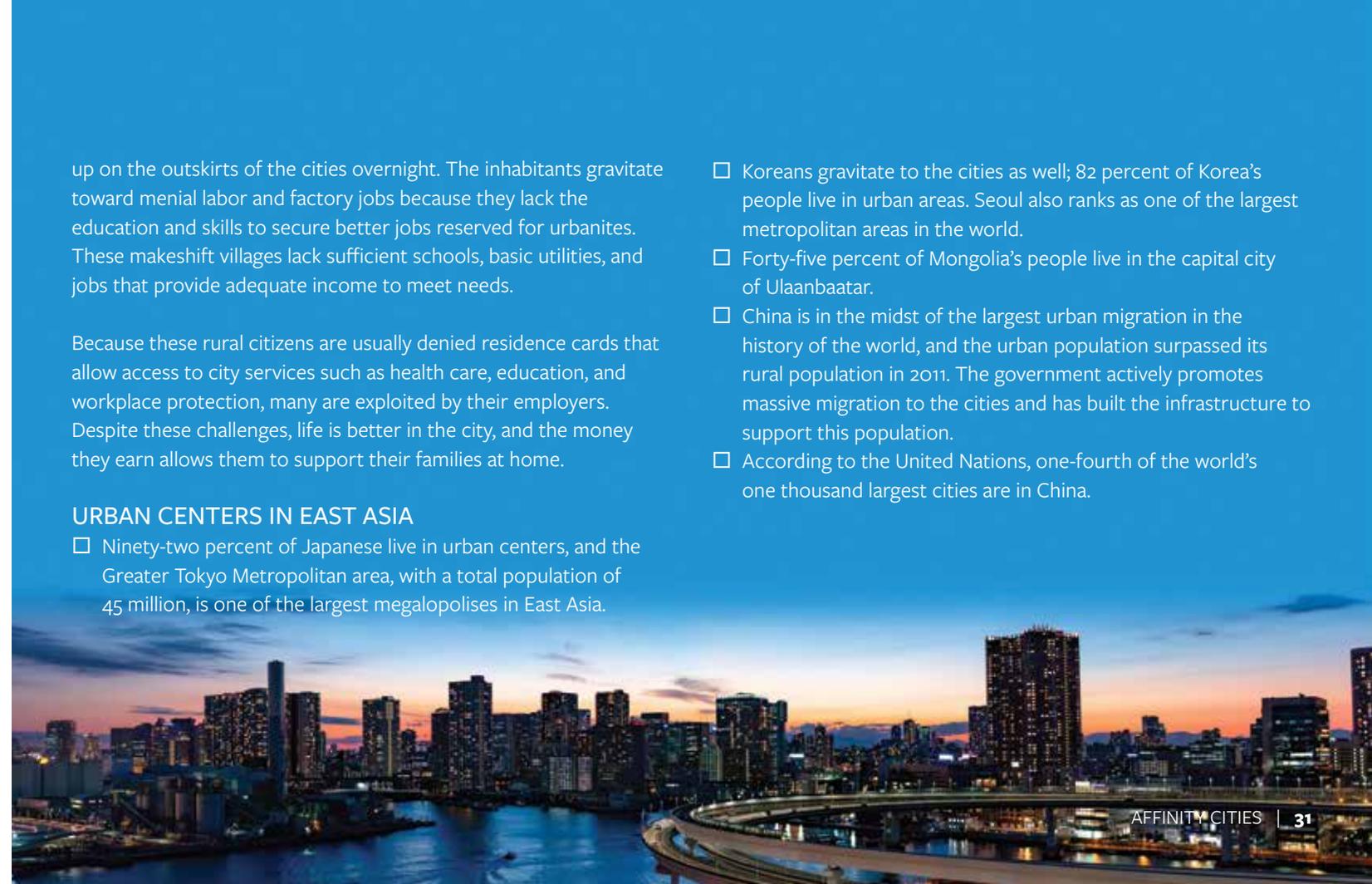
up on the outskirts of the cities overnight. The inhabitants gravitate toward menial labor and factory jobs because they lack the education and skills to secure better jobs reserved for urbanites. These makeshift villages lack sufficient schools, basic utilities, and jobs that provide adequate income to meet needs.

Because these rural citizens are usually denied residence cards that allow access to city services such as health care, education, and workplace protection, many are exploited by their employers. Despite these challenges, life is better in the city, and the money they earn allows them to support their families at home.

URBAN CENTERS IN EAST ASIA

□ Ninety-two percent of Japanese live in urban centers, and the Greater Tokyo Metropolitan area, with a total population of 45 million, is one of the largest megalopolises in East Asia.

- Koreans gravitate to the cities as well; 82 percent of Korea's people live in urban areas. Seoul also ranks as one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world.
- Forty-five percent of Mongolia's people live in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar.
- China is in the midst of the largest urban migration in the history of the world, and the urban population surpassed its rural population in 2011. The government actively promotes massive migration to the cities and has built the infrastructure to support this population.
- According to the United Nations, one-fourth of the world's one thousand largest cities are in China.



Unreached People Groups (UPGs)

The villages of the Luowu, an unreached people group (UPG), are scattered among the mountains of China's Yunnan Province. Many have never heard the gospel message. The Luowu are considered animists. They believe in many gods and live in fear of evil spirits who want to kill or destroy them. Though some Scripture translations are available in their language, they cling to traditional beliefs and allow themselves to be controlled by the spirit world.

An ethnic group is considered unreached when there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to engage this people group with the gospel. Less than 2 percent of its people are evangelical Christians. East Asia has 656 people groups, most of them unreached. Of these, only 68 UPGs have useful heart language Scripture resources for evangelism, 74 have limited resources, and 221 have no resources. Only 61 UPGs have adequate heart language Scripture resources for discipleship, while 405 have little to no resources. There are 203 unengaged UPGs with no one attempting to reach them through an evangelism and church planting strategy.

UPGs in East Asia are usually divided into three groups—animist, Muslim, and Tibetan Buddhist. All are very different as far as customs and beliefs, but they all worship false spirits or gods. For most of them, to turn to faith in the one true God would also be denying their families and cultures.

The population of East Asia totals 1.71 billion people. Most of the East Asian UPGs live in China and represent about 8 percent of the population. Close to ten million people still remain unengaged with the gospel.

Most East Asian UPGs live in areas that are difficult to reach. Physical and language barriers keep most of these ethnic minorities in China largely untouched by the gospel. Many speak only their minority language, for which there are few Christian resources. That lack of resources in their heart language—for evangelism, discipleship, leadership development, and church—stands as a major barrier to them hearing, understanding, and responding to the good news.

STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT OF UPGs

Evangelism and church planting strategies used to reach people in China's major cities will not work among the diverse, isolated, rural people groups in China. Contextualized, worldview-specific, and prayer-saturated strategies for engaging UPGs with the gospel require creativity, perseverance, and hard work. Because almost no minorities speak English, and many of the smaller people groups with populations under twenty-five thousand don't even speak Chinese, learning their heart language is essential to reaching them.

In China, believers from the Han majority who want to take the gospel to their neighbors have to overcome significant barriers to be effective missionaries. Most people groups prefer to retain their language and customs, which rarely overlap with the language and cultural practices of the Han. Cross-cultural training and language learning are foundational for Han believers who want to reach China's minorities.



Global Diaspora

Wherever you travel throughout the world, you will likely find East Asian peoples. They pursue higher education in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. They own and operate factories that sell cheap wholesale goods to local distributors. They build the infrastructure of developing nations. They work for major automotive, electronics, and appliance companies with extensive global footprints. The East Asian Peoples affinity group seeks to make Christ known among East Asian peoples like these around the globe.

CHINESE DIASPORA

It has been said that where there is sun and water, you will find Chinese people. The Chinese, who have left their nation over many years and for many reasons, constitute one of the world's largest overseas populations, with more than seventy-three million people living outside China. Approximately five thousand Chinese migrate to other countries every single day, contributing to this increase.

China has seen multiple waves of emigration since the fourteenth century. You'll find well-established Chinese communities in some countries, but even in rural, hard-to-reach villages of Africa you will find small shops owned and operated by recently arrived Chinese families.

China is also the world's top source of overseas students, with the number growing almost 20 percent annually. During the 2017-2018 school year, more than 360,000 Chinese students held student visas for the US.

Chinese people work hard and sacrifice much in order to reach their goals, and failure is not an option. In places like Africa, Indochina, and the Americas, Chinese construction workers are often preferred because they will work long hours with little pay. No longer a part of their homeland, these workers are not yet integrated into their new country. Most have gone in search of a better life, but what they most need, the truth of the gospel, remains distant. Few Christians have taken the time to get to know them.

Great spiritual need is found throughout this diaspora. Lack of assimilation into their second culture prevents them from easily adapting to a local church. Language barriers and grueling work schedules cut them off from opportunities for fellowship, and childhood teachings of ancestor worship, Buddhism, or atheism continue to bind their hearts. The question remains: How will they hear if no one tells them?

JAPANESE DIASPORA

Japanese immigrants known as Nikkei first migrated to Peru and other parts of South America in the late nineteenth century searching for better living conditions after the end of feudalism in Japan. Today the largest population of Nikkei, 1.8 million, lives in Brazil. Most Nikkei followed Buddhism and Shintoism, but some have begun to embrace Catholicism. Today 60 percent of Japanese-Brazilians are Roman Catholic and 25 percent adhere to Japanese traditional religion. As work contracts end, many Nikkei start small businesses and maintain their Japanese culture, religion, and language in their homes and communities. Less than 1 percent of South America's Nikkei are evangelical Christian.

TIBETAN-BUDDHIST DIASPORA IN SOUTH ASIA

The Dalai Lama, the spiritual and political leader of Tibet, left his homeland in 1959 due to conflict with China and walked through the Himalaya Mountains to neighboring India. Eventually, approximately one hundred thousand Tibetans followed him. Today the Tibetan presence in India and Nepal continues to grow, and Tibetans live scattered across more than forty-eight settlements throughout South Asia. It is often said, "To be Tibetan is to be Tibetan Buddhist."

Most Tibetans have never heard the name of Jesus Christ. They are not only physically isolated, but the gospel has been virtually inaccessible to them. Yet God is working among them, raising up faithful worshippers committed to him.

Tibetan Buddhist-background Christians have a passion for reaching Tibetans with the gospel. They regularly share Christ with their local friends and lead Bible studies. They have faced persecution, accepting that it is expected for followers of Jesus Christ. To see healthy multiplying disciples and churches among Tibetans, local Christian leadership must be developed. Also, the gospel must be faithfully communicated, a process that often stretches over months and years before Tibetans believe.



Connect

In a day of rapidly diminishing mission resources, your church can make a radical difference. Prayerfully consider how you might impact lostness among one of East Asia's 203 unengaged, unreached people groups (UUPGs).

STEP ONE: PRAY. 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

Prayer launches us toward the glorious outcome of all people coming to "the knowledge of the truth." It suggests that God enables us to feel his brokenness over those who remain in spiritual captivity. This brokenness involves:

- Persistent and passionate prayer among individuals or groups in your church who consistently plead God's mercy for a UUPG.
- Focused prayer. Through the East Asian Peoples affinity group connections cluster (eastasiaprayer@pobox.com), you can request a status update for the most unreached people groups in East Asia. As your team prays through this list, God may direct you to the people he has equipped and is calling you to reach.
- Informed prayer. As God directs your team to a specific people group, request that the affinity connections cluster send you specific information on this people group (eastasiaprayer@pobox.com).

STEP TWO: EXPLORE. NUMBERS 13:2

In this step, gather information needed to plan an effective strategy and determine how to deploy resources to accomplish this task.

- Contact your associational director of missions. Find out if there is a potential close-culture partner in your area (a Chinese, Korean, or Japanese Baptist church) with which you might partner. Are there already God-appointed interpreters and/or a culture coach in your city with whom you can meet?
- Become familiar with anthropological and missional websites that may help you develop a deeper understanding of the people group (such as joshuaproject.net or peoplegroups.org). Visit us at imb.org/east-asia.
- Determine whether Scripture portions are available in your people group's heart language or whether you will need an oral strategy.
- Work with the East Asian Peoples affinity group connections cluster to plan a vision trip to the area. When will be the best time to go? With whom should you meet while there?

STEP THREE: EXAMINE. 2 Peter 1:3

Assuming that God does not call without also equipping your church for this assignment, begin the process of self-examination:

- Based upon information discovered in step two, could your church leverage businessmen or others in your church already traveling internationally?
- What skill sets, such as medical, engineering, agricultural, or mechanical, has God already placed within your church that might provide relevant, long-term access to this people group?

STEP FOUR: TRAIN. DANIEL 1:4-5

You will be offered training and orientation to help you add skill sets to your engagement toolbox and become full, valued members of this global missions venture. This will include pre-trip training through the East Asian Peoples affinity group connections cluster and just-in-time, on-the-ground training through the connections cluster and our training cluster. Training will include topics such as these:

- How do I find a person of peace in a new community or village?
- How might I tell the complete redemptive story, creation to Christ, in thirty minutes or less?
- How do I gather those being saved into an expression of church that makes sense in that context and that encourages biblical integrity and healthy reproduction?

The East Asian Peoples affinity group commits to work with you as you extend the ministries of your local church to the ends of the earth! In serving, sharing, and giving together, it is our prayer that soon, just as the prophet Habakkuk prophesied, "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14 ESV).





Every church. Every nation.

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INTERNATIONAL MISSION BOARD

If you need more information, please contact eastasiaprayer@pobox.com.