

Open *Doors*



WOMEN'S MINISTRY

February
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North Korea

Kim Jong-Il's death in December 2011, does not change much for Christians in the world's most closed country in the world.

Kim Jong-Il will be remembered for his nuclear weapons, the isolation of North Korea, the chronicle famine in his country and his vast and numerous labour camps. He should also be remembered as a dictator who did not tolerate any other religion than his own idolization. Open Doors' viewpoint is that Christians and other underground religion adherents don't have to expect a major policy change from Kim Jong-Il's successor, his son Kim Jong-Un.

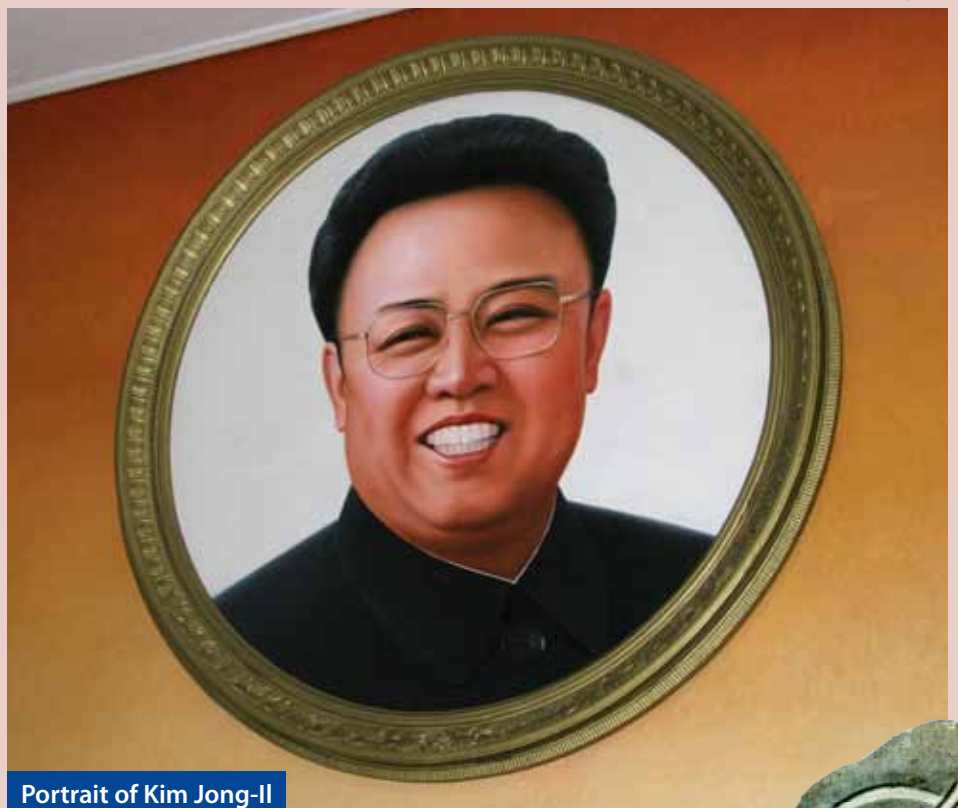
Kim Il-Sung, the father of Kim Jong-Il, established many labour camps for unfaithful citizens and political enemies. But it was Kim Jong-Il who made these camps grow. Not only are there a few 'mega camps', like Yodok and Hoeryong which hold more than 50,000 prisoners, but there are also dozens of smaller camps. A few hundred thousand North Koreans wake up in these hellish places every day. That is more than 1 percent of the total population. Among them are between 50,000 and 70,000 Christians, who are considered to be enemies of the state.

Another estimated 300,000 Christians have to hide their faith in the country Kim Jong-Il left behind. Even the possession of a Bible is enough reason to be executed or to be locked up for life with your entire family.

With this as a setting, I would like to share *Eun-sook's testimony with you. Many Chinese Koreans have relatives in North Korea. Sometimes when North Koreans escape their country, they manage to reach their 'Chinese' families. Eun-sook was surprised to find her cousin *Mi-young on her doorstep one day. It was the start of a spiritual journey together, which ended tragically. "I feel so guilty. I can physically feel the pain, the cold and the darkness of the camp where Mi-young is now."

Open Doors met with Eun-sook a few times before. A fire burns in this thin, aged, even fragile looking woman. A fire for Jesus. Her faith always appeared to be unshakable. Even when she saw so little progress in Mi-young's walk with God, Eun-sook kept inviting her. She listened to Mi-young's tragic life story. She prayed with her. She opened the Word of God. Now, Eun-sook's faith seems to have taken a blow. She struggles with questions like 'why?' and 'what could I have done to prevent this from happening?' Perhaps she even asks God why He didn't intervene when the police came.

*Pseudonyms



Portrait of Kim Jong-Il



Not without her daughter

Like many North Korean women, Mi-young fled from her country because of the severe famine. She left her teenage daughter behind in the hope that one day Eun-sook could bring her too. Mi-young dreamed of South Korea. Eun-sook looks down when she says: "Mi-young had several opportunities to go to South Korea after she arrived in China, but she didn't want to go without her daughter."

When Eun-sook met her cousin, Mi-young was already married off to a Chinese man and had had two more children. "Mi-young didn't love her husband. Marriage is the best way of hiding for any North Korean woman in China. She didn't love her children either. How could she? She was forcibly

separated from her daughter, forcibly married and had gotten pregnant involuntarily. She felt really bad that she couldn't love her children like a mother was supposed to. Mi-young was simply unable to do just that.

The Bible was poison

"Mi-young's Chinese husband was very poor. So she just came to my house for financial support", says Eun-sook. "I hear that's true for a lot of North Korean refugees and it's certainly my experience: you cannot trust them. A North Korean has never learned to love or to accept love. We know about giving and receiving. The North Korean society holds to a different principle: survival of the fittest. Mi-young 'knows' that you cannot trust anyone but yourself.

"She went to great lengths to get the financial support, but really didn't open up more than she felt she had to, to get the money. Of course she lied too. She could lie so well. I didn't judge her for that. In her world there were no trustworthy, loving people. Christians were enemies. The Bible was poison."

Mi-young kept visiting and Eun-sook read the Bible to her and prayed with her. Mi-young had many questions, which Eun-sook tried to answer as well as she could. However, it was the arm around her shoulders – the lived out faith of Eun-sook – that really changed Mi-young. Slowly, very slowly, her faith grew. "When Mi-young realized how Jesus had always watched over her it meant the world to her. Her gods, the leaders of North Korea, abused her.

But the supreme God of the universe loved her. The most beautiful thing was that she finally learned to love her Chinese husband and children too."

Mi-young still visited Eun-sook. They talked about farming, children and 'women's stuff'. They even shared prayer points with each other. One day, Mi-young brought some food for Eun-sook. "That's an amazing gift from a North Korean", Eun-sook observes. "Her life remained difficult too. Some people tried to convince her to go to South Korea. She refused. She really didn't want to go without her daughter, who was now almost old enough to try to escape.

Then that frightful day came..."

Send me in their place

That day Eun-sook will never forget. Mi-young was at Eun-sook's place for fellowship and Bible study. Once she was inside the police raided the house. "I screamed that Mi-young was innocent. That they should take me along, but they refused to let her go. They took us to the police station and we were separated. The next two days I was interrogated."

Eun-sook was pressured to give more information about other refugees.





"Do you know what we will do with this North Korea woman you took care of?"

Eun-sook nodded her head. "You will send her back to North Korea."

"And do you know what they will do to her in her own country?"

"They will execute her."

"You'd better give us more information."

Eun-sook cried. "No, no. Please don't send her back. Send me! Let them kill me! Mi-young has children, a family! Please, let her go."

Instead Eun-sook was released. "One officer came up to me and spoke in Korean. He said that he felt sorry for Mi-young, but that he didn't have a choice. After all, his family needed bread on the table too. So he did his duty and handed Mi-young over to the North Korean authorities. As far as I know, she was not executed, but sentenced to a few years in a labour camp."

Eun-sook sighs. She has told Mi-young's story, but not yet her own. She carries a heavy burden of guilt. "I have to think about Mi-young and her family in China and in North Korea all the time. Whenever I hear children laughing in the street, I see the faces of Mi-young's children. How can they go on? If it wasn't for me, they still might have had a mother. Sometimes, when I am alone, I can physically feel what Mi-young is feeling. I feel like I am lying on a cold concrete floor in a dark place. I am hungry and afraid."

Psalm 23

One time she couldn't bear the thought of Mi-young in the camp anymore. Right then she had to think about those famous words from **Psalm 23:**

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

"It was like God was asking me questions. He asked: 'Who am I?' I answered: 'You are Abba, Father.' 'And who am I to Mi-young?' 'You are her Father too.' 'Yes, I am her Father and I love her.'"

"I was so comforted. And God continued to confirm how much He loves Mi-young. Over and over I was confronted with Psalm 23, which reminds

me about His love for Mi-young and for me. But..."

'She had such dreams'

Eun-sook falls silent for a moment. "But... I just pray... that she will hold on to her faith... I am not convinced of that. I know that God is faithful, but Mi-young is still such a young believer. She had such dreams... Dreams of being reunited with her North Korean daughter, sharing the Gospel with her and moving to a safe country. Now each day she wakes up in place that is truly hell on earth... It troubles me."

Eun-sook is finished talking. All there is left to do, is to pray for her, Mi-young and her family and for all other North Koreans in similar situations. After the prayer, standing up to leave, Eun-sook says: "I think I just have to accept that Mi-young may be in the valley of the shadow of death, but that God is right there with her. He is with all of us; wherever we are."

Prayer Points:

- Pray that Eun-sook will be freed from these feelings of guilt she is experiencing.
- Pray for Mi-young. We know she is a young believer. Pray that God will help her to stand strong. Pray Psalm 23 over her and all the thousands of believers in labour camps.
- Pray for her children, especially her daughter who lives within North Korea. Pray that she will come to a saving knowledge of Christ.

Events to look forward to in 2012:

18 February

Our first Travellers' Day to be hosted at our head office. Contact me to register.

14-23 April

Well-renowned speaker on North Korea visits South Africa.

2-8 August

Women's focus week – details to follow.

3-5 August

First national women's conference – details to follow.

2-8 August

Well-renowned speaker on situation in Gulf countries and Middle East visits South Africa. She will also be the main speaker at the women's conference.

6-17 September

Speaker on situation of persecuted believers worldwide visits South Africa - details to follow.



From my pen ...

Dear Sisters

Our brothers and sisters in North Korea value our prayers. As an organization we will be setting apart the 15th of April for a worldwide day of prayer and fasting for North Korea. The focus will be specifically on our beloved brothers and sisters. People like Mi-young and others... Would you please set this date apart and entice your church members and friends to pray as many as possible Psalms on behalf of the North Korean believers. We will be letting the North Korean Christians know in advance that on April 15 brothers and sisters around the globe are praying Psalms for them. This will give them a tremendous morale boost. So please participate.

A renowned expert on North Korea with a passion for the church in this country, will be visiting South Africa during April. She will be speaking at two women's meetings, which I will be hosting. I will provide you with more information in the April prayer letter,

but they will be during the period of 14-23 April 2012. Email me or phone me if you require more information.

My prayer for 2012 comes from Philippians 4:4-7:

"⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

May this be true for your life and mine, as well as the lives of our sisters in Christ, who pay such a dear price for following Him.

Together in His service

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