

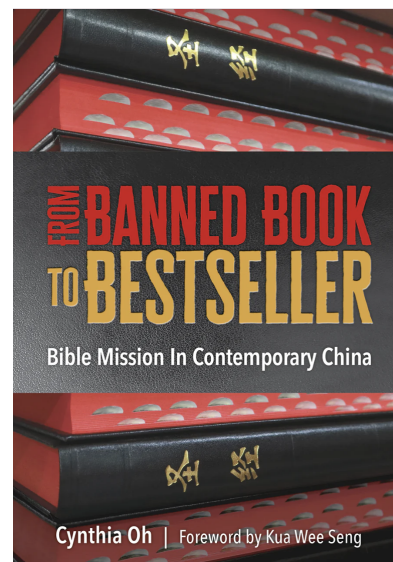
Oh, Cynthia. *From Banned Book to Bestseller: The Bible Mission in Contemporary China*. Littleton Colorado: William Carey Publishing, 2024.

Reviewed by Lucy Witten, IMB Personnel, Asia Pacific

“The greatest missionary is the Bible in the mother tongue. It needs no furlough and is never considered a foreigner” (95). These words from William Cameron Townsend, founder of Wycliffe Bible Translators, emphasize the importance of Bible translation, printing, and distribution to make the gospel of Jesus Christ known.

From Banned Book to Bestseller describes the transformation of China from a spiritual desert into one of the largest Bible producing countries in the world. This book is the story of God’s Word spreading throughout China through Bible missions among registered churches. Cynthia Oh shares firsthand testimonies of Chinese Christians across the nation through her work with United Bible Societies China Partnership. Her book is a record of Chinese Christians’ deep love and hunger for the Bible and diligent effort to spread His Word to all the peoples of China.

From Banned Book to Bestseller is strengthened by its detailed history, frequent photos and testimonies, and emphasis on multiple peoples and situations in China. First, Oh helps the reader to understand the background of the Bible in China. She details the original missionary translation work of the Bible into Mandarin, the spread of God’s Word and the church in the ensuing years, and the dark days of Bible scarcity during the Cultural



Revolution. This history sets the stage for the reader to better understand the miraculous nature of the first Bible printing press in China.

Second, the book also contains numerous photos and testimonies from Chinese believers. The reverent, smiling faces and joyful words from our brothers and sisters in the Lord as they receive a copy of the Bible in their hands stir the reader's heart to thanksgiving to God. Instead of mere bland statistics, these testimonies create an intimate picture of the life-change God brings to His people through the Bible. These individuals made difficult decisions, endured hardships, and trusted the Lord for the copy of God's Word they hold.

Third, Oh explains how multiple groups in Chinese received the Bible—Protestants, Catholics, ethnic minorities, and the Deaf. Bible portions were instrumental in sharing the good news for those suffering during COVID and helping families grow in Christ together. The chapter on Braille Bibles for blind Chinese is particularly moving. These Bibles are expensive and labor-intensive to print, yet the Chinese press (Amity Printing Company) and generous givers from around the world prioritized their production and distribution so all could read the Scriptures.

One weakness of the book is that the scope is limited to the registered churches in China. Oh acknowledges that her book is meant to be one story of the many of what God is doing in China. Future works need to be written as witness to God's work of the Bible distribution, gospel proclamation, and church expansion among the unregistered church.

This book is a valuable resource for any missionary. There is great joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:10). How much more can we rejoice that so many heard the gospel and were saved through God's Word going forth in China! The emphasis on the centrality and value of God's Word is imperative in all missionary work. What message do we have without the good news of the Bible? The poignant testimonies of believers who went without food, walked for days, or faced jail time to have a copy of God's Word

call the missionary to honestly look at her own hunger for the Bible. How can we grow in our own love for the Word?

Oh also highlights the many partnerships that made the production and distribution of the Bible possible. This example of synergistic gospel ministry can encourage missionaries as they work with local and international partners in their own contexts. How can we partner well, encouraging locals to grow and lead well in their own context?

I highly recommend this book to any missionary. *From Banned Book to Bestseller* encourages the missionary to see how God moved mightily through the proclamation and distribution of his Word. The book also challenges the missionary to hunger for the Bible in her own life and to participate in spreading the Bible message to all peoples. For more in-depth reading of the work of God in China, Paul's Hattaway's series *The China Chronicles* gives detailed accounts of the work in many areas of the country.