



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on August 12, 2013

Chinese Underground Church Leader Samuel Lamb Dies at 88

Samuel Lamb, a leader in China's underground house church movement beginning in the 1950s and a hero of the faith to tens of millions both in and outside the communist country, died August 3 at the age of 88.

A firm believer that the church grows most vigorously under persecution — his oft-repeated slogan over the years was, “More persecution, more growth” — Lamb experienced more than his share of oppression at the hands of the Chinese government over his many decades as a church leader. Born in 1924 in southern China into a Christian home, Lamb, like his father, became an evangelical pastor. [Open Doors USA](#), an organization that monitors Christian persecution worldwide, recalled that Lamb was first arrested in 1955 during the early Christian persecution under Mao Tse-tung's oppressive regime, and would ultimately spend some 20 years of his life in prison for preaching and teaching the gospel.



Open Doors explained that Lamb was targeted by the Chinese government for his refusal to fold his illegal house church into the government sanctioned Protestant Church, called the Three Self Patriotic Movement. The government forbade pastors to “preach about the second coming of Christ and to teach minors under 18 years old,” recalled Open Doors. “China basically made the state church evolve around the state, and not around God.”

Among the heartaches Lamb was forced to face in prison was the death of his wife just a year before his release. It was a loss that he found himself placing in the perspective of the suffering he taught makes believers stronger. “I can understand Job's victories and Job's defeats,” Lamb reflected. “It taught me that grumbling does not help — not against God, not against those who persecuted me. My dear wife died while I was in prison. I was not allowed to attend her funeral. It was like an arrow of the Almighty, until I understood: God allows the pain, the loss, the torture, but we must grow through it.”

In 1979, a year after his release, Lamb reopened his house church in Guangzhou, in China's Guangdong province. Today, the church, which is made up of a block of houses set in a cramped residential area, has over 4,000 attendees each week at four services. While the church is still unregistered, for the time being the government has left it alone, although other churches throughout the country have faced severe persecution and crackdowns.



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Largely through the tenacity and perseverance of underground church leaders such as Lamb, China today has an estimated 80 million Christians, some researchers speculate.

Throughout his life, Lamb maintained a healthy distrust of government, teaching his parishioners that they should seek to obey the communist government's dictates unless they oppose Scripture. "The laws of God are more important than the laws of man," he maintained.

He also warned Christians not to get too comfortable with the government's supposed tolerance of their faith, noting that officials could quickly decide to crack down on churches. "We must be prepared to suffer," he counseled fellow Chinese believers. "We must be prepared for the fact that we may be arrested. Before I was sent to prison, I already prepared a bag with some clothes, shoes, and a toothbrush. When I had to go to the police station, I could just pick it up. I was ready."

He noted that fellow Christians "are still being arrested. You don't know what will happen tomorrow. Today the authorities are not bothering us, but tomorrow things may be different. I pray that we will receive the strength to stand firm."

In a statement, Open Doors noted that Lamb's passing "leaves a hole in the Chinese Church. Together with other [Chinese] heroes of faith like Wang Mindao and Allen Yuan, he symbolized the brave faith of a Church that grew at an unprecedented speed in world history. Long after his passing it will be said in many churches that more persecution only has one outcome: more growth."



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