

Chinese Underground Church Leader Samuel Lamb Dies

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Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: I had the privilege of meeting Pastor Lamb at his church in Guangzhou when I was in China taking Bibles to the underground church in the early 1990s. This meeting had a huge impact on me. After he explained how the church grew every time the communist authorities tried to crack down on their meetings, or on him, he stared at me intently and said (with a Chinese accent that added power to his words), "Persecution good for church!"

This article accurately describes what I was able to see and hear during that meeting. However the title of the article is in gross error. Pastor Lamb did not die, but he did move to heaven where I am looking forward to seeing him again when my tent is put off too.



Pastor Samuel Lamb became a hero of the Christian faith for millions of believers inside and outside China. Every Sunday after the service, Chinese pastor Samuel Lamb (also known as Samuel Lam) invited foreign guests into his office and immediately began to tell the story of his life, which he summarized in the one "holy principle" of "more persecution, more growth."

He experienced Communist oppression and spent more than 20 years in prison. He also experienced God's response: an amazing growth of the church in China, now estimated at 80 million. Lamb became a hero of the Christian faith for millions of believers inside and outside China. He passed away on Saturday at the age of 88.

Lamb (*Lin Xingiao* in Chinese) was born in a mountainous area overlooking Macau. His father pastored a small Baptist church, and he was raised as a Christian. Lamb was arrested during one of the first big waves of persecution in Mao's China and was held in prison from 1955 to 1957. The Chinese authorities sentenced him a second time in 1958. He spent 20 gruesome years in labor camps, where he mostly worked in coal mines. Despite the harsh punishments, Lamb continued to teach.

The main reason Lamb was targeted by the government was his refusal to merge his illegal house church into the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, the state-led Protestant Church. The government used to forbid Christian leaders to preach about the second coming of Christ and to teach minors under 18 years old. China basically made the state church evolve around the state and not around God.

In 1979, Lamb restarted his house church in 35 Da Ma Zhan in Guangzhou. Attendance grew quickly, and he moved his congregation to a bigger building in the same city. Now his urban house church is still unregistered but tolerated by the authorities. The church has over 4,000 attendees each week with four services.

Lamb's theology challenged the government, the attendees of his church as well as other believers inside and outside China. He taught that Christians should obey the government unless those leaders directly oppose God with their law enforcement. "The laws of God are more important than the laws of man," he said.

Suffering played an important part in many of Lamb's sermons. He repeated "more persecution, more growth." That phrase had not only to do with numbers of believers, but also with spiritual growth...

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