

Bob Fu Describes Life as a Christian in China

Hi again! Nice to have you with us on As It Is. I'm Kelly Jean Kelly.

And I'm Avi Arditti.

Today we are talking about a recent book on China. The book is called "God's Double Agent." A double agent is a person who appears to be loyal to one group but is really working for the other side.

Bob Fu wrote "God's Double Agent." He once worked for the Chinese government while he was also a leader of a banned Christian group.

Today he leads a group in the United States that seeks to help Chinese citizens who believe they have been oppressed by their government. These citizens include Chen Guangcheng, the blind lawyer who escaped house arrest in China in 2012 and came to the United States.

Bob Fu's book is an autobiography. That is, he tells the story of his life. He was born in 1968 in a small Chinese village. He says that when he was growing up, he often felt uneasy because his family was very poor. He says he promised himself that he would earn a lot of money one day to help other people who were poor or suffering.

Bob Fu says his parents supported his goal. He was a good student, and he dreamed of going to law school and working in the government. He believed he could help people most as a Communist Party official.

But the government had other plans. Officials decided he should attend a teachers' college. The government wanted him to teach English.

Bob Fu was not happy, but he started attending college and studying English. He quickly became a leader at his school. He started a campus newspaper, and he urged his classmates to pay attention to what was happening in their country and the world.

In 1988, Bob Fu learned that some Chinese citizens were protesting against the government. Teachers were asking for better pay, and students wanted to end corruption. He supported the protests. In the spring of 1989, he organized some other students to attend the demonstrations in Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

That spring, hundreds of thousands of protesters gathered in Tiananmen Square. They stayed there for weeks to call for democracy. Many were students, like Bob Fu and his friends. The Chinese government told the protesters they could not stay. Eventually, the government used force to remove them. At least 240 people were killed, but many foreign groups say thousands died.

Bob Fu was not there the day the troops came. He says his girlfriend had become sick, and he took her back to the college campus. But several weeks later, officials detained him. They forced him to admit his involvement in the protests. His friends were no longer permitted to speak to him. Bob Fu says he was so lonely and angry that he thought about killing himself.

One day, another student secretly gave him a book. It was the story of a Chinese intellectual who became a Christian. The book described what Bob Fu called the “Jesus religion.” He decided that he believed in God and wanted to become a Christian, too.

He explains that practicing Christianity is not illegal in China, but the government wants believers to attend state-supported churches.

After a while, Bob Fu decided he did not like the government controlling his religious beliefs. He joined the “house church” movement. A house church is where Catholics or Protestants organize independent religious services in their own homes. People who attend house churches in China often keep their activities secret.

Eventually, Bob Fu finished college and started law school in Beijing. He married his girlfriend. He got a job as an English teacher for Communist Party officials. And he became a clergyman in a house church. He and his wife organized evening Bible study classes. And they offered training for other people who wanted to practice independent Christianity in China.

Soon, officials arrested the couple.

The Fus stayed in jail for two months. When they were released, they decided to have a baby. Bob Fu says his wife did not have official permission to get pregnant. He says he was afraid the government would not let them have the child. So they kept the pregnancy a secret until a friend could help them leave China and get to the United States.

The family has been living in America since 1996. They now have three children. Bob Fu is still a pastor, but his main job is to help people in China who are having problems with the government.

“I have to really take my call from God to basically rescue them and eventually over the years built this underground railroad in some extraordinary situations to help get them out.”

He says people often call him in the middle of the night, asking him to help them leave.

Bob Fu says he wrote “God’s Double Agent” because he wanted to explain the rules about religion in China. He says some people have the idea that citizens are completely free to practice religion. Others, he says, think the opposite. They paint what he calls a “totally dark picture.” They think a citizen can be sent to jail just for practicing any religion at all.

“I just want to use my story and to clarify that China has very limited religious freedom, that certain religions are tolerated, if you only conform to the state-sanctioned version.”

Not all the people who come to Bob Fu for help are Christians. He says he works with all kinds of dissidents, including human rights lawyers and individuals who want to elect their own village leaders.

He says dissidents are having an effect.

“As long as you are committed and dedicated, you can make a difference in changing not only your own life, but also many others’.”

In some cases, officials have changed laws as a result of protests. But he says legal and political changes are slow, and that the real transformation is happening in society. Bob Fu says he sees many people in China who want more rights and more independence. And, he says, they are not afraid to demand change.

That’s As It Is. I’m Avi Arditti.

And I’m Kelly Jean Kelly. Thanks for listening.

By the way, Bob Fu’s Chinese first name is Xiqiu, which means “Hopeful Autumn.” One of his English teachers gave him the name Bob, because it was easier for an American to say.