Approximately 14 million people live in and around the city of Leshan in southern Sichuan Province. The 1990 Chinese census listed 1,07 million people in Leshan, which is actually a combination of four different towns and districts in one official administrative area. In 1990, more than 400,000 people lived in the Shizhong ('Central City') area of Leshan, 315,000 inhabited the Wutonggou District, 210,000 lived in the Shuang District, and an additional 56,000 made their homes in the Jinhong District of Leshan. For the purposes of this book, we have combined the four different administrative regions into one profile.

Leshan has quickly become an industrial and tourist hub in the past few decades. The city can be horribly polluted at times, with waste and gas from the city's many plastic factories choking the air and the waterways. At other times, after a rainy or windy day, Leshan transforms into quite a pleasant city. The city's inhabitants are almost entirely Han Chinese, except for several thousand Yi people, almost all of whom live in the Jinhong District. (The majority of Yi people, also known as Nuos, live in the south of Leshan in the Dalingshan ('Big Cold Mountains').) Leshan is one of the last cities on the Silk Road plan before the mountains, where for centuries saw warfare between the Chinese and the Yi, who frequently kidnapped Chinese and took them as slaves.

Leshan is famous all over China as the site of the world's tallest Buddha statue. Measuring an imposing 71 meters (233 feet) high, the Grand Buddha is carved into the side of a cliff overlooking the confluence of the Dadu and Min rivers. The sheer size of the idol is impressive. Its ears are 7 meters (23 feet) long, and even its toes measure 8.5 meters (28 feet) in length. Work on the statue commenced in 731 AD, by a monk named Hai Tong. The work was completed in 803 after Hai Tong's death. Thousands of Chinese and foreign tourists come to Leshan every month just to view the Buddha. Many also climb nearby Mt. Emei, one of China's four most important religious sites. At 3,099 meters (10,165 feet) above sea-level, Mt. Emei is a trekking climb. There were once more than 70 Buddhist temples operating on the mountain, in addition to monasteries and nunneries.

For these Christians inclined to intercession and warfare at spiritual strongholds, there are few places in China more important than Leshan and Mt. Emei. For centuries these places have been a focal point of people's attention, keeping them trapped in spiritual blindness and oblivious to their need of Jesus Christ.

In addition to the Grand Buddha in Leshan, there are numerous temples, museums and other historical sites in the area, most of which can be reached by boat: At the Oriental Buddha Park there is a newly-made island with a newly-carved Buddha, said to be the longest statue in the world.

Although Catholic missionaries are known to have commenced work in Sichuan Province in 1649, the first Protestant workers to the province were Griffith John and Mr. Wylie on a surveying trip in 1868. In 1877 Johns McCarthy of the China Inland Mission settled down in Chongqing, much further east than Leshan. In the late 1880's the CMS commenced work in Leshan, followed by the Canadian Methodists and the American Baptists.

There are just a few small churches among Leshan's 1.4 million people. One Christian publication sums up the Leshan church: "Since 1949 the Church of the nation has languished in isolation and suffered greatly from the lack of leadership and pressures from leftist policies. Even now, many Christians seem not to have shaken off the fright from the past. The church is quite weak and works haltingly."  

Pray for Leshan

1. Ask God to raise up prayer and intercession teams to travel to Leshan for spiritual warfare against the powerful principalities and strongholds that keep the people of the area trapped in darkness.
2. Pray the small and fragmented church in Leshan would be blessed spiritually and numerically: By the Holy Spirit, giving them a burden and a vision for the souls of the lost in their city.
3. Pray people from all around the world who come to Leshan to worship idols would instead hear the Truth from local believers.

Overview of Leshan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Attractions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,070,000 (1990)</td>
<td>Grand Buddha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,383,100 (2000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,932,000 (2010)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Chinese Christians: 2,000 (0.2%)