

THE CHINA REPORT

To Brother Luis Trujillo

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Part 1

At the beginning of March, I flew to China to embark on a two-and-a-half week trip there. The first part of the trip was mostly "touring," the second part "missions." My objective was to visit my brother in Shanghai, visit my friend Dan Hsu in Hunan, visit my uncle and his family in Fuzhou, visit the church my grandmother built in Putian, play violin at Revival Christian church in Hong Kong, carry Bibles across the border to Shenzhen, and visit a couple house churches in/near Guangzhou.

Obviously, it was a pretty busy and ambitious plan. Nevertheless, I was able to fulfill all of these desires and much more. There were times during the trip when my health was less than 100 percent (it would be rare for anyone to operate at perfect health all the time, due to the drastic changes in food, weather, and scheduling). I will quickly describe the first half of the trip, and dwell more on the second half.

Arriving in Shanghai

I flew into Shanghai after a 14-hour flight from Los Angeles, bringing over many Christian books and CDs for my brother Gideon, since they don't have a lot of spiritual meat for the believers over there. The following day we went into the city for some sightseeing. Shanghai has around 18 million people, which is bigger than the entire country of Guatemala, where I was a couple weeks earlier, amazing! Shanghai is probably the most modernized, western-styled big city in China, with lots of new tall apartments and commercial towers. It has a fairly new underground MTR subway system, like Hong Kong. The city is like the mega-cities in the Matrix movies, stretching endlessly for miles and miles. The scale of the city is overwhelming.

I was in Shanghai for about four days, getting over jetlag, meeting Gid's friends, going out to eat, shopping for cheap clothes, and also attending a small-group prayer meeting led by Gid. This group is not under the covering of the state-monitored Three-Self Church, which meant that it is an illegal gathering under the law. In the States we don't think much of having small group meetings in our homes. We have the freedom to do it without having to register with any authority. Things are different in China. It was good to meet other Christians and fellowship with them. I was able to lead worship on guitar and also share with them a few words from the Lord.

Weekend Trip to Changsha, Hunan

We flew into Changsha, Hunan (pop. 5 million), in the mid-southern part of China on Friday morning. It was a pre-planned excursion to spend a weekend in Hunan, visiting Dan, a college friend of ours, who is in the countryside at a boarding school teaching English. When we arrived, we met Dan and his friend Kim, from Hawaii, who was also teaching English there. The weather was pretty chilly in Hunan. Dan gave us a tour of the school, and then we went and ate dinner at a local "restaurant," which is really just a family's home where they cook whatever you want on the spot, providing they had the right meat and vegetables. It was really a rural place, without much development. One might say "3rd world" to describe the living conditions, with occasional power and water shortages.

We were there for two days, wandering about the countryside, chasing goats, and playing basketball with the school kids. The kids live in dorms with 12 to a room, and they have to wash their own clothes by hand with running water in the sinks provided right outside the three-story

dormitory buildings. On Saturday night, we went to the piano room, where the only piano in the entire school was, and had a wonderful time playing and singing some English worship songs. It is pretty hard for both Dan and Kim to maintain a healthy spiritual life, since they don't really have any churches around there (perhaps some local underground house churches exists there, but we did not have any connection to them). On Sunday, we took a bus back to Changsha, and we flew back to Shanghai that evening, but I remained at the Shanghai airport to catch another flight to Fuzhou at 10 pm at night.

Meeting Relatives in Fuzhou

My uncle, whom I have never met before, picked me up at the airport. We took an hour-long bus ride from the airport to the city center, and then I rode with my uncle on his motorcycle from downtown to his house at the edge of the city, with my violin and luggage tied with a rope at the back of the vehicle. Needless to say, I was physically exhausted when I got there after traveling so many miles and hours that day.

After I got better health-wise, my uncle took me on a day-trip to Putian, my grandmother's hometown, and she had funded the building of a church in the countryside there before she passed away. We were going to visit some more distant relatives in Putian and see the church. I think the government allowed the church to be built as it was to be registered as a Three-Self church (for information on what a Three-Self church is, refer to the book "Jesus in Beijing," by David Aikman, and "The Heavenly Man," by Paul Hattaway). But since it was in the southern part of China and in the countryside at a pretty inaccessible area, they aren't as strictly regulated (the persecution of the church is generally less in the South).

Prior to my arrival in China, I was originally scheduled to spend only two days in Fuzhou, which wouldn't give me enough time in Putian. When I realized this, I immediately asked for my schedule to be reworked so I would have more time in Fuzhou to go to Putian. Thank God that my plane ticket could be rescheduled to accommodate this desire.

To Putian

On that day, my uncle and I took a 2-hour bus ride to Putian. Putian was much bigger and developed than I thought. I think people are more prosperous nowadays with the good economy. We ate lunch with some more relatives, and then five of us crammed into a taxi to take us to the church in the countryside. After riding for a while, we veered off the main highway and onto a small, one-lane road. This reminded me of the Guatemala countryside. Soon enough, the paved road turned into a red dirt road full of small rocks and stones, and we bumped and chugged our way to the church by the seaside.

The church building was a nicely decorated, three-story chapel. It was built in 1996, so it wasn't very old. They could probably fit over 100 people inside on the first floor, not to mention the balcony. Some members of the congregation were waiting for us when we arrived, as we had notified them via cell phone earlier (cell phones are everywhere around the world now).

Reflecting on my Grandmother

Outside the main entrance of the church was a plaque with my grandmother's name on it, saying that it was donated by her. Memories of my grandmother flooded into my mind. She was always full of faith and love, and God had used her to perform many signs and wonders in her lifetime.

When my brother and I were children, she would always tell us stories of supernatural healings, deliverances, and other interesting stuff like that. There were other tales of miraculous financial provision, and people getting saved radically. She also had a supernatural gift of curing barrenness. When somebody's wife wanted to have a child could not get pregnant, my grandmother would pray for her and she would have a baby within a year. Her prayers worked every time regardless of circumstances. When she was traveling on planes, she would witness to her fellow passengers and they would give their lives to Christ before the flight was over. Near the end of her life, she fasted every week for my family and we were always in her prayers.

I still remember the day she passed away. She was thousands of miles away in a hospital in Taiwan, while I was in Memphis, Tennessee, attending Passion OneDay with thousands of other Christian students across America. In the middle of a John Piper sermon, God spoke to me that my grandmother died, and I had peace. I didn't hear about the news from my parents until I got back to California after that weekend. They were surprised that I already knew.

We hanged out around the church for about 45 minutes, then it was time to leave, as our taxi driver was waiting for us all this time (the town was so far out in the countryside that no taxi would normally drive over there). We headed back over the bumpy dirt road and gradually made it back home to Fuzhou by nightfall.

The following day, I flew out and was on my way to Hong Kong, on March 17th, St. Patrick's Day. If you know anything about St. Patrick (other than green clovers) you would know that he was a miracle worker, a messenger of God, who preached and healed many people in Ireland, even

raising the dead, to birth a great revival in Dublin. Knowing this, I thought 3/17 would be an appropriate day to arrive in Hong Kong for the start of the official missions segment of my journey.

Hong Kong

Upon my arrival, Mike met me at the airport to pick me up. The weather was much warmer and nicer than Shanghai and Hunan, though it was raining on and off during the day. I've never met Mike Cogan before, though we both thought we might have met before the previous year when he was in Oakland for a couple weeks. He emailed me a picture of himself when I was in Fuzhou, so I could recognize him when I arrive. That was a good idea, as I was able to spot him immediately.

On the train ride from the airport, we were able to chat a bit. Turns out he was a graduate of Shiloh Bible College (the church I went to in Oakland, CA) a long time ago and had been living in Asia for the past 10 years—the first 3 years in Taiwan and the following 7 in Hong Kong. He was a good friend of Pastor Patrick, whom I've known at Shiloh, and so Patrick was able to hook us up when I told him that I was going to be in China.

More on Mike

Needless to say, Mike, a big white guy, can now speak fluent Mandarin and Cantonese, though I still primarily communicate with him in English. Everywhere he goes he surprises people with his fluency. People just assume that he doesn't know the language, and they think that I would be able to interpret Cantonese for him, but in reality it is the other way around.

Mike has a Chinese wife, Elaine, whom he met at Revival Christian Church in HK, a few years back, and I was to later meet her that night for

dinner. Mike told me that he married her when he was 29, after her parents approved their relationship. It was his petition to God that God would let him marry before 30. "If I were still single after 30, I would have been a bit desperate." He grinned. It was good that God approved his request and answered his prayer.

Since it was already late in the afternoon, we went straight to the place where I was to stay at for the next few days, the Ministry House in Tsing Yi. Viewing outside the window, Hong Kong still looks the same since I last went there two years ago, when I was on a three-day pit stop on the way to Beijing and then Russia. Extremely dense high-rise apartments everywhere, cars driving on the wrong side of the street, dual English and Chinese signs, fancy shopping malls, MTR subways, and even more advertisements everywhere (instead of having just poster ads on the side of the walls, they now have noisy multimedia ads on TV screens in MTR stations and buses, which makes you not only wanting to close your eyes but shut your ears also).

Everyone in Hong Kong was all highly anticipating the presidential election in Taiwan, which was to take place in a few days. They were keen on observing the reaction of the Communist government in Mainland China. The development in Taiwan is stimulating the drive for democracy in HK as well. Right now it seems unlikely that the government in Beijing will grant the citizens of Hong Kong democratic rule. No matter what happens we need to pray for the will of the Lord to be done in East Asia.

On the way to Tsing Yi, Mike gave me a briefing of my tentative schedule:

Thursday: orientation at the RCMI office;
rehearsal with RCC worship team.

Friday morning: border crossing into Shenzhen to transport Bibles to the "warehouse."

Friday evening: cantonese cell group meeting.

Saturday: free; nothing scheduled

Sunday: play violin for worship at 10:30 service;
embark on 2-day trip to Guangzhou with an American team to visit local underground house churches and drop off more Bibles and Christian resources;

Tuesday: fly back to Shanghai.

Looking at this schedule, I figured this was as much as you can do in the short amount of time that I had. Mike said, "If you had come one day later we could not have schedule you both trips into China, you would have had to pick between the day trip to Shenzhen or the two day Guangzhou trip." Now I was even more thankful that I arrived on the 17th and not the 18th.

The Ministry House

Soon enough, we arrived at my lodging quarter. It was a 4-story apartment structure (it is a very short and small building in HK scale), a place where they put all the international missionaries. Right outside is a basketball court where the local teenagers were playing. We entered into a nice two-bedroom apartment, in which they could sleep five persons total, sharing a bathroom, living room, and kitchen. On the wall in every room was a prayer map of China, and there was a bookshelf full of spiritual and non-spiritual readings, including a Lonely Planet traveler's guide to China. The place even had its own washing machine, which was a definite plus.

Since there was no one else staying there at the time, I got the whole apartment to myself. I

was glad in a sense in that this meant I would have more and better quality time alone with the Lord, though it would have been nice to meet and chat with some other foreign missionaries if they were here. In the following days I was able to play some basketball with the kids outside, though I couldn't really communicate with them since I don't speak Cantonese.

After dropping off my luggage, we head off to meet Elaine for dinner. Realizing later that she would be delayed (via cell phone), we went on a detour for me to check out Revival Christian Church (RCC). Inside the church, Mike took me to the pastor's office to meet Dennis Balcombe, the famous missionary and founder of RCC and RCMI. You can read about Pastor Balcombe in the book "Jesus in Beijing," in which a well-known Chinese house church leader is quoted saying that Dennis Balcombe is the "most influential foreign missionary to China since Hudson Taylor."

Pastor Dennis Balcombe

I will just say a few things regarding his biography. He was also a graduate of Shiloh Bible College, was taught by Dr. Violet Kiteley, the founder of Shiloh Christian Fellowship in Oakland (she is about 90 years old now and still preaches at the church. Her son and grandson, my friend Patrick, are also pastors), and was sent out by Shiloh as their missionary to China. Upon arrival in HK in the 60's, he lived in a semi-bathroom for two years and preached in Cantonese to the college students there. Those students are now the elders of the church, RCC, which now has over 800 members.

After the initial years of establishing a beachhead in HK, Balcombe started entering into China to meet the leaders of the house church networks in various provinces. He was the first

foreign missionary to enter and minister in Henan Province, the epicenter of revival in China, since the 1940's, when all foreigners were kicked out of the country. He was even arrested by the PSB when they broke into a house church meeting where he was ministering, and ended up being banned from China himself for a period of time. Needless to say, it was an honor for me to meet Pastor Balcombe, though we did not really carry on a conversation. After meeting several other brothers and sisters at the church, we finally went to meet Elaine.

Dining with the Cogans

Elaine, like Mike, is fluent in the three languages: English, Cantonese, and Mandarin. The two of them told me that they are planning to move to China, to Yunnan Province (a rural mountainous area), next month, after both of them quit their jobs in HK. Mike mentioned that the kids in his class (he is a local elementary school teacher) are sad to see him leave. Also, he noted lightheartedly that Elaine, an avid shopper, would have trouble shopping in the countryside. The clothing would be cheaper, but there won't be much selection or variety.

Shopping aside, they would be serving and ministering in the local house church network in Yunnan, as it was confirmed recently that God is calling them there. For those of us back in the U.S., it's pretty crazy stuff, but for those out in the mission field, nobody think twice when God calls them to some strange place to love strangers. It's part of their lifestyle to sacrifice their own lives over and over again for the kingdom of God. We ate some chicken during the meal. Nobody seems to make a big deal out of the bird flu epidemic in Southeast Asia.

Thursday at RCMI

Remembering the directions that Mike showed me the previous night, I made my way to the RCMI office in Kwai Fong at 10:30 AM for my orientation. Once there, I met Penny, a British lady; Jen, a girl from Texas who came to HK on a short-term trip and never left; and Ray, my orientation counselor and team leader for my Guangzhou trip. RCMI, established in the 90's, is a pretty impressive ministry in terms of how they have accomplished their objectives with tremendous success in the past years.

Their primary function is to organize and execute the transport of Bibles and Christian materials into China, specifically to house church leaders and contacts in their network. A secondary goal is to build up the house churches in China by providing whatever aid the local leaders deem needed for the local body. This has included not only the provision of teaching materials (books and VCDs), but also guest preachers and ministers to share and impart teachings, revelations, and anointing to the local believers. The locals are very eager to learn from the foreigners, as we are equally eager to learn from their faith and experiences.

Transporting the Bibles

The actual transport of the materials across the border is done mostly by foreign missionaries, who come to HK for this specific purpose. The foreigners, who have more access in and out of China through their multi-entry visa, are much less likely to be scrutinized by the Chinese customs agent when they cross the border, and they provide the much-needed manpower for the task to be done on a continuous and cost-efficient basis. The HK locals can do it, but they, like everyone

else in the world, are occupied with school and jobs everyday. The few full-time Christian staff members are needed for administrative tasks, and so foreigners are recruited to be the "hands and feet" of Christ to carry these books and teaching vcds to the ever-growing (more than 20,000 new converts per day) Christian body in China.

Even though today the Chinese government do allow the printing and selling of Bibles inside China, they are tightly regulated as to be only sold in small volume through the state-run Three-Self churches at a price that is too expensive for the poor to afford. Furthermore, there are very few Three-Self churches, even in the big cities, so most people don't have access to Bibles. And when the government notices that large quantities are being sold in a certain area, they will surreptitiously lower the quota for the Bibles there and decrease the supply.

There are currently over 80 million Christians in China, with a grow rate of about 30+ million per decade, and it is clear that China will become the most populous Christian nation in the world very soon. Even though RCMI have send in a whopping 10 million Bibles in the past decade, that number is still only a drop in the bucket compare to the number of Bible-less Christians in the country. May this fact alone bring conviction into your heart to pray for the Christians in China, who are not only lacking the Word of God, but are also facing constant persecution by the government. It is a miracle in itself that their faith are still so fervent, vibrant, and rooted in sound doctrines and theology.

In addition to praying for China, you might even want to consider going on a short-term trip to China and HK yourself, or with a group of friends, to help in the transport of Bibles into China. It is really not a hard thing to do.

Airline ticket prices to East Asia are not very expensive in off-peak season and you can go anytime for as long as you want, as they do border crossing everyday, and they always need more people, and you can customize your trip with RCMI ahead of time. Just go to www.rcmi.ac and you can find all the information you need there. Carrying Bibles is a task that anyone can do, as you don't need to be very "gifted" to do that. Even so, when you're in China, they would ask you to speak and minister to the local Christians too, regardless of your Christian background and maturity.

Part 2

Friday was the big day. Early in the morning, I met up with two people, Hannas and Deb, outside my apartment, for the one-day border-crossing trip to Shenzhen. Hannas was the team leader, and Deb was a girl, probably a few years younger than me, in the middle of a 6-month mission in Hong Kong with RCMI. Over the course of the day, I found out more information about Deb: She's from New Mexico, and this was her 2nd time in Hong Kong, working with RCMI, taking Bibles across the border.

I asked her how long she has been here now. "Since January," she said.

"How did you get so much time and money for this?" I was astounded.

She replied, "I worked at a pretty well-paying job, and also worked on the side as a photographer for weddings, so I saved up a lot of money for this trip. After I came here the first time, back when I was in high school, I decided to come back again for a longer period of time. And when I go back to New Mexico later this year, I plan to make and save up more money to come for a whole year."

Quite amazed at her life, I said, "So you've been taking Bibles across the border for a few months now, how many times have you gone across?"

"More than 50 times."

"So how many times do you cross per week?"

"Usually 4-5 times, but not this week, because I was sick earlier this week."

So she was a professional at this. Carrying Bibles across the border is like a stroll in the park for her (and Hannas), but this was my first time, so I was very excited and a bit nervous, though I try to appear cool like them.

Preparing for the Crossing

We got to the preparation room at the RCMI compound. On one side of the wall were boxes full of Bibles and Christian books. On another side were stacks of sturdy backpacks, duffle bags, and carry-on suitcases. There was a large plastic bag in the corner with some old clothes. On the main wall of the room was a large white board with two separate diagrams/maps on it. Each diagram depicts the layout of the China customs area at a border crossing point (the white board showed the two main crossing points into China).

Knowing that it was my first time doing this, Hannas gave me some brief instructions on crossing the border:

"First, here are some departure and arrival and health forms that you need to fill out...you can look at this chart to see how to fill out certain information...you can use your own backpack to pack in as many Bibles as you can from this box...looking at this diagram on the right side of the white board, this is where we are crossing today...we'll be taking the bus straight to the border...when you pass the HK departure side, show them your passport (and visa), plus these forms...when you get to the China side, give them these forms that you've filled out...the key is at the very end, when

you get to the customs area, sometimes it is pretty lax, other times pretty tight...it might be a bit tight at this border crossing today...we will have to put one bag on the scanner...here, take this empty dufflebag and fill it with some old clothes...you'll put this dummy bag on the scanner, but keep your backpack full of Bibles on your back at all times, and just walk straight ahead without making any eye contacts with anyone. Even if someone tries to talk to you, just ignore them first and walk straight ahead at your normal pace, but if they really want to talk to you, and they know that you heard them, just stop and do whatever they tell you to do."

Hannas continued, "It is actually not illegal to bring Bibles into China, for the Three-Self church do print Bibles inside China, so they can't really ban other Bibles coming in. But if they did ban it with a written law, then the whole world would know that there is truly no religious freedom in China, and that the Christians are being persecuted there. So they rather not make it a legal law to ban Bibles, but to discourage people from bringing them in and confiscate them for a while if they catch you carrying tons of Bibles. If you are a local Chinese, they might give you more problems (perhaps even jail time), but as a foreigner with an American passport, they can't really do anything to you if they catch you. They'll just tell you not to do it again, and take away your Bibles to a holding place, where you can pick them up when you come back into Hong Kong. So we don't really lose any Bibles permanently even if we get caught."

"What's the percentage of success?" I inquired.

"95 percent. Now very few of us rarely get caught. The borders are much more open than they were 5-10 years ago. When we first started out doing this, our rate of success was only 25

percent, 1 out of 4 times. It was a lot harder back then."

I was very encouraged by this knowledge. Quickly, I dumped twelve Chinese Bibles into my backpack (my backpack became much heavier than the "dummy" bag that I was also carrying). The three of us all gathered and prayed. Hannas prayed for a safe crossing, for these Bibles to be securely passed on to the hungry believers in China, that each Bible would nourish the needy souls, for the salvation of the Chinese people, and for the customs agents (listing specific individuals), that they would not keep the Bibles from entering into China, that God would blind them to what we are doing, so we would not get caught, and also for their personal salvation, that they themselves would turn to the one true living God, repent, and receive Jesus into their hearts. Amen!

On that note, we took off for the border. On the entire way there on the bus, I prayed fervently by myself, as I certainly don't want to get caught on my very first time. Never in my wildest imagination have I thought I would be doing this kind of ministry. It's quite adventurous, like something out of Hollywood, out of the movies. We're like secret agents for the kingdom of God, even dressed similarly (we're all dressed in causal business attires, like people on business trips).

We are under orders not to speak to anyone, and to not even talk about what we are doing amongst ourselves, but only to use code words when we're in public, until the mission is accomplished, when the "bread" is securely transported to our "warehouse" in Shenzhen. (We were also told not to wear Christian t-shirts, and not to sing worship songs loudly in the customs area)

The Crossing

Soon enough, the moment arrives. At the border the three of us split up in different lines, and we are to cross individually and not to wait for each other. We are only to meet up at the pre-assigned spot when we are safely on the other side. Then, quicker than I could think, I was at the China customs area, the final level. I drop my dummy bag unto the scanner belt, walked over to the other side of the scanner, picked up the bag, and walk away coolly, staring straight ahead. I continued walking with the crowd, outside the exit, up the stairs, over a pedestrian bridge, and met up with Deb and Hannas, who were already waiting for me at the rendezvous.

It was an extraordinary smooth crossing, very quick with no waiting, and no hassle. Praise God! It was so easy that I thought I could do this every day! Both Hannas and Deb were surprised at how smoothly this crossing went. Deb exclaimed, "The lady with the ponytail, she suddenly walked out the door and left when I was just about to cross!" Turns out that this particular lady with the ponytail has been a troublesome customs agent for her. On a previous trip across, the lady had stopped her and confiscated her Bibles before. Praise the Lord that this agent was distracted by something else before she had a chance to recognize Deb. On the other side, Hannas quickly called a cab and told the taxi driver in Cantonese where we are to go.

The Warehouse

It was nice to be back in China again (Hong Kong is a whole different world from the rest of China). The taxi dropped us off at a high-rise building in the middle of Shenzhen. Hannas paid the driver (all transportation cost for border

crossings are provided by RCMI), and we head into the building lobby. It was just like the Matrix movie, the three of us, with sunglasses on, strolling in past the security guards.

We got to the elevator and went up to the 19th floor. Getting out the elevator, we walked along several dark hallways filled with locked doors on both sides. The Matrix analogy is becoming a little too much. Finally, we arrived in front of a door and Hannas knocked. Somebody opened the door and there were several strangers inside this little room. It became clear that they were only strangers to me, and not to the rest of my crew. They chatted for a little bit, talked about the conditions at the crossing, and the other people left quickly, leaving the three of us there. Later I found out that those folks were part of another team that had crossed over earlier at another border, and had planned on meeting us at the warehouse.

Hannas went over to another door, at the corner of the room, pulled out a key, and went in. Inside this inner room were steel cabinets and lockers all along the four walls. Hannas took out another key and opened one of the cabinets. Inside were Bibles, hundreds of them, neatly stacked on top of each other. Each shelf inside the cabinet were neatly organized and labeled by trips into different parts of China for different house church networks. There were some empty shelf spaces in one area, and we quickly placed the Bibles that we brought there to fill up the shelf. Everything was executed with perfect precision and efficiency.

Passing the Time

After we finished the task, we went out the inner room and took a breather on the folding chairs in the outer room. Hannas quickly locked the cabinet and the inner room, and we relaxed a

bit. However, we are not allowed to leave the "warehouse" right away, as to arouse suspicion if we came and left too quickly. So we sat down and chatted for about twenty minutes. There were boxes of spring water bottles for our refreshment as we waited.

As it turns out, there were several other warehouses like this one in different locations to disperse the "goods," in case the PSB found out about one of these warehouses and confiscated the Bibles there, we would still have other locations that are safe. While we were just sitting and talking, I suddenly felt a strong manifested presence of the Lord coming over me. It was something that I have experienced before in the past, so I wasn't too surprised by it. At that very moment I was assured that we had just done something great for the kingdom of God, and that my heavenly Father was well-pleased with my accomplishment.

Lunch with Hannas and Deb

In our conversations, at the warehouse and later in a Shenzhen restaurant (very good Chinese food), Deb and I learned a bit more about Hannas, this international man of mystery. We found out that he was born and raised in South Africa, and that he could speak about 15 different languages! He could speak English, German, Dutch, French, Portuguese, Italian, Mandarin, Cantonese, Swahili, and several other African languages. However, he doesn't speak Spanish, but he could probably pick it up quite easily, seeing how quickly he had learned these other languages.

Hannas has been in Hong Kong for about seven years now, much to the dismay of his parents and former employer in South Africa. His parents still ask him, "When are you going to come back home and settle down?" He would reply to them, "I am settled down!" He doesn't plan to leave Hong

Kong and go back. "People just think I'm out here on a prolonged vacation break and not working hard or doing anything." Hannas observed. His old boss still bug him, "When are you going to come back and work for me?" Somehow they don't understand that this is what God has called him to do.

At the end of our meal, I asked Deb, "So what's your long term plan? You're probably going to come back here and live here, learn the language, and go into China to preach the gospel in the house churches, right?" She just smiled and nodded, "Yeah, probably."

After we got back to Hong Kong, I met up with Mike for his cell group that night. "So how many times have you crossed the border, Mike?" I questioned him.

"Probably about 500 to 700 times, or more."

"So you must have carried over thousands of Bibles all by yourself."

"Yeah, one time I carried 120 Bibles on one trip. It was quite heavy."

"That's cool."

You can see that Mike is a much larger man than me.

On Sunday, I arrived at RCC early in the morning for a final worship team rehearsal before the service. Our worship team composed of Matthew, the worship leader, on acoustic guitar, a nice girl on keyboard, an older lady on piano, a gentleman on electric guitar, a young brother on drums, and Greg, a missionary American, also from New Mexico. I was the newcomer on electric violin. There were also a couple female vocals who were very active dancers on the stage.

The musicians were all very talented and professional. Our worship set were a mix of English songs translated into Cantonese, Matthew's own song, and a Mandarin song by a Taiwanese

songwriter. The English songs were from Hillsong Australia, a large church located in Sydney, and I was familiar with them, since their songs are being sung worldwide. However, it was still a bit strange to hear the songs "My Redeemer Lives," "Now that You're Near," and "Through it All" being sung in Cantonese.

Worship Time

At 10:30 AM, the church service began with a half-hour period of corporate prayer. People streamed into the church, filling up the seats, and circled around in groups of 3 to 10, and prayed aloud. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Pastor Balcombe kneeling on the ground, off to the side, praying in the spirit. The elders of the church took the microphone, and invited the newcomers to join in prayer, in groups or by themselves, or they can just observe as they wish.

The Holy Spirit descended upon the congregation, and the presence of the Lord was thick. By the time the worship team got up on the stage to lead worship, the people were already fully engaged with the Lord, and that made our job a lot easier, as we did not have to stir them up to "enter" into worship. By the time we finished the songs, it was glorious. We could have gone longer and stayed in the flow for hours, but it was time for the speakers to preach.

Right after I got off the stage. I packed up all my belongings and said good-bye to Mike and Elaine, for it was time for me to embark on the Guangzhou trip. I met up with Ray, and with him was the American team, which had just arrived in Hong Kong a few hours ago. Ray was taking all of us across the border to visit the underground house churches in and around Guangzhou. The Americans were a group of seven people from

Columbia, Missouri. They were from a particular church called "Christian Fellowship." The team consisted of a couple seasoned leaders, Larry and Ron, and a bunch of youngsters: Nick, Aaron, Becky, Joanna, and Dan. For some of them, it was their first time in East Asia.

Tight Schedule

Our schedule was tight. The entire team was to cross the border into Shenzhen by early afternoon, carrying tons of Bibles in our packs, and then a hired van would take us to a small town an hour away to meet some Christian brothers and sisters there. They were part of Ray's personal network of house church leaders, as Ray had been living in that neighborhood for more than five years before moving to Hong Kong to work with RCMI. For that evening, we were scheduled to show up and minister at a local house church meeting, as the locals were eagerly expecting us. Afterwards, we would crash and sleep in host homes.

Under normal circumstances, the order of events would not seem too tough to handle. However, we were dealing with seven people who had not slept for the past 17 hours as they flew across the Pacific Ocean and the international dateline, and not to mention the tremendous cultural shock, the unintelligible foreign languages, along with the exotic food. Hong Kong, China is a long, long way from the quaint, friendly confines of the American Midwest. Through the entire border crossing and van ride, the "Americans" were dozing on and off, one by one.

(It is funny that I label them as the "Americans," as both Ray and me are Americans too. The two of us were just a lot more experienced in China and knew the language. In a sense, Ray is probably more fluent than me in that he has been

speaking a lot more Mandarin than me in the past five years, as I normally only speak Mandarin at home. Ray was the main interpreter for the Americans, while I also helped with the translating on the side)

First Contact with Local Leaders

On the van ride, the driver of the van was pretty shocked at the amount of luggage we brought with us (he wasn't one of our people). Ray told him in Mandarin, "It's the way Americans travel. They bring along with them everything. It's very exhausting." I laughed. Obviously, that wasn't really the truth (though Americans do pack a lot for travel), but you have to make up something, otherwise we might get in deep trouble.

We arrived at our destination safely. A Christian couple came out to welcome us. We were quickly ushered upstairs for tea and cookies. It was good to finally unload the heavy sacks. The husband (and father of two incredibly bright children), named Napoleon, is a man of God whom the Lord had blessed abundantly. Everything that he set out to do became anointed, and the Lord gave him success in every type of work he did. His children, who are in their pre-teens, could already speak several languages fluently. They excel in academics and music. Their home is on par with American homes (TV, DVD, computer, etc.) except for their toilet, which is a Chinese stall (where you have to squat) instead of a western, sit-down toilet. You get used to squatting in China.

Brother Ma

After resting for a few moments, our main speaker for the hour, brother Ma, came. Brother Ma was an apostle/pastor/missionary sent down to the south by his house church network in Henan

Province. They had experienced a great revival in Henan, and so Brother Ma was dispatched with a team of leaders to come down to Guangzhou to take the revival there. If he was in the States, he would be recognized as a "big-name preacher," but there are no big-name preachers in China. Of course there are several famous "father" pastors that everyone knows about (I would meet one tomorrow), but the point is that the Christian leaders here have a spirit of humility that is almost nonexistent in America. There was no trace of self-promotion or hype in Brother Ma, even as he told us that he is an overseer over a couple hundred thousand believers in their house church network. He has trained and commissioned over hundreds of full-time pastors already in his many years of ministry.

In a calm, quiet manner, he told us that there were three major successive calls in his life. The first call was God calling him to salvation to become a Christian. The second call, only a few months after that, was a call into full-time ministry, to become a pastor, preacher, evangelist. Basically, God told him to quit his job as a construction worker and work for Him alone for the rest of his life. He became very fruitful in his ministry, and miracles were common, occurring regularly. Many people were physically healed, delivered, and brought to salvation. And lastly, the third call, after some years, was the call for him to become an overseer of the flock and concentrate on pastoring, shepherding the saints. For each call, he told us, he heard the audible voice of God each time. And one time, the Holy Spirit spoke to him in the style of Chinese poetry. He recited the poem to us, which was about the purpose of his life on earth.

As Brother Ma spoke, we were totally captivated by the wonders of God. Who could have foreseen the miraculous survival and revival of

the church in China, after all these years of systematic nationwide attacks to eradicate the faith? Who could have predicted the proliferation of the underground house churches, and the passion and fervency in which the Chinese Christians hunger after God? And who could have prophesied the glorious outpouring of the supernatural Spirit of God on a people isolated and unknown to the rest of the Christian world? This is God's handiwork, and we are left bewildered, in awe of His wisdom, power, and grace.

In a land devoid of Christian advertising, buildings, radio, books, and schools, the church is doing well, understatedly. One can sense that this is a purer stream of faith, in that for the believers, either you trust God wholeheartedly, or you should not follow Him at all. There is no room for the half-hearted semi-Christian, for you are either ready to suffer and die for your faith, or not. And once you have witnessed these eye-popping signs and wonders happening everywhere, it is pretty hard to deny the existence of God and the validity of the gospel.

An Entertaining Dinner

In the evening, we went out to eat at a local restaurant. It was both humorous and painful to watch the Americans try out the different dishes, and see their faces react into various grotesque configurations, images that you would only see in Picasso paintings.

"It's not at all like the Chinese food in Missouri!" They cried.

"Of course, that's American Chinese food, not real Chinese food." We, the experienced ones, replied.

After the meal, we hanged about the sidewalk as Ray and Napoleon attempt to flag down a couple taxis. We were in the busy (shopping) section of

the town. Nick was amazed, "Wow, this place is hopping! Look at all these people out here at night, having fun."

"Well, they're trying to." Ray corrected him.

(Nick didn't realize that in East Asia all the stores open late into the night, unlike America, where you can barely find a shop open past 7.)

Ray touched upon an important truth. Just because folks are out on the town at night doesn't mean that they are happy and fulfilled in their lives. Some might shop, dine, watch a movie, get drunk, and meet some attractive counterparts, and they might enjoy some pleasure, but their lives are as messed-up and depressing as it could be. Appearance is nothing. Anyone can look cool, act cool, and be crying on the inside. This is why we all need God. Without Christ, I would just be lost in the crowd, either going through the motions, or committed suicide by now. Thank God for true love. A couple seconds later, we were transported speedily to our secret meeting.

The House Church

The taxis unloaded us off in front of a wall of five-story apartments. We were near the outskirts of the town, but not too far from where we were. Quickly, we climbed all the way up to the very top (all stairs, no elevator). As we reached the top floor, we could hear the sound of singing. A door opened to let us in, and boom! We felt The Presence penetrating through our skins.

It was like entering into a different atmosphere, a heavenly climate. The Lord was already there, we didn't have to wait for Him to come. It's not like the feel of humidity in the air, but more like being permeated by waves of deep emotions flowing continuously as in an ocean.

It was as if a canopy of compassion had settled over the room, and glory was filling every nook and cranny of the room. Hallelujah!

At this point, I quickly whispered to Nick, "This is it! This is the real thing!" Before I've seen video clips of house church worship, and this one was just like it, though you could not feel or sense the glory as powerfully in the clips. It was much more glorious live in person. Looking around, there were about 25 to 30 people crammed into the space. People were sitting on tiny plastic chairs and stools that were designed for kids. There were more females than males, and the ages were evenly distributed. We settled in along the sidewall, not wanting to stir up too much attention to ourselves and distract people from their worship.

Being Chinese, I could understand what they were singing. Passionate cries of love from the very depth of the heart. Every song was sang a cappella without instrumentation. There were no lyrics on transparencies or powerpoint, or anything like that. There was a couple makeshift songbooks lying around, but no one was using them. Everybody knew the songs by heart. A young girl was leading the worship at the front. She was a factory worker, as you can tell by her outfit. There were several other young girls like her near the front.

Part 3

As the worship went on, I quickly prepared my violin to be ready for ministry. Sure enough, they called Ray to the front, and handed him a guitar to lead worship. Ray immediately motioned me to come up. It was evident that Ray has done this many times at this church, as they all knew him and welcomed his ministry. Ray gave a few words on how to enter into worship, and remaining

in the posture and atmosphere of worship, even when the music is not playing. (It's amazing how the crowd was so open and responsive to the instructions. They were extremely teachable and hungry for God's Words)

Then he picked out some songs and led the worship, with me figuring out the song and playing simultaneously as we ministered. Some songs were easier for me to pick up, while others ones were more difficult. But I was still able to play all right, relying on His strength. Thank God that He had given me many opportunities in the past to practice these types of worship situations. Later on Ray said he was very impressed by my playing, how I was able to play well without even knowing the songs beforehand. Praise God.

Preaching Time

After the worship, we moved into a time of open-mike testimonies (except that there was no microphone). It was sort of like a "Holy Spirit free-for-all." Anyone who felt led by the Spirit could come up to the front and share a teaching, testimony, or prophecy. There was really no distinction between the "pastors" and the "congregation," as they don't even use these terms. One could foresee a little girl going up to speak the Words of God and she would be just as respected and appreciated as a seasoned full-time minister.

The local leaders introduced us foreigners to the church. Everyone knew we were coming, and this meeting was a highly anticipated event. The leaders also mentioned that most of the Americans were still dealing with jetlag, so that they might doze off on and off during the meeting, and they mean no disrespect. But first and foremost, they would like us, the outside missionaries, to come up and share, as they would like to hear about our Christian experiences in the West, and the

revelations and teachings that God has given us there.

One of the leaders of the Missouri team, Ron, a humble, experienced believer with graying hair, went up and spoke. He mentioned how it was such a privilege and an honor to be there in the midst of the Chinese saints. "The news of your faith and devotion to Christ are being spread around the world, and we, in America, have heard about you." Ron gave many other words of encouragement, and imparted a few teachings to them (of which unfortunately I could not remember).

My Turn

I was the next to go. I was a bit nervous, but I knew the Holy Spirit wanted me to speak. I did not prepare for it, but I knew exactly what the Lord wanted me to say at the moment. I started addressing them in Mandarin, while Ray translated it into English for the other Americans. It wasn't my first time preaching, as I had preached several times before at my college campus fellowship, but it was the first time in Mandarin.

I began by giving them my background, how I was born and raised in Taiwan before moving to America. I told them the meaning of my Chinese name, which meant faith and fire, and the Christian legacy of my family, starting from my church-building grandmother. As I spoke, I started stuttering here and there, which was not unusual for me (probably due to a combination of nerves, not being used to sharing in Chinese, and fatigue). Some of the young girls started laughing a bit every time I missed a word, but I paid no attention to them, and continued on giving my testimony. I told them how that even though I grew up in a Christian home I did not really

experience the reality of God until much later in my life.

An Unexpected Moment

At a certain point, right after another burst of laughter, Ray stepped in front of me, put his hand on my shoulder, and reprimanded the crowd. He told them,

"You guys need to stop laughing, as this man right here does not care about how he sounds. He does not care about losing face, but all he cares about is giving glory to God. Some people's weaknesses are more obvious than others. You guys, the Chinese, you never want to lose face. You always try to cover up your weaknesses. You guys have lots of pride, which gets in the way of your faith. This man does not have that problem, and God is going to use him mightily in the future for the kingdom of God."

Bang. The whole room became silent and repentant. I was pretty stunned and emotional myself. I don't ever recall anyone standing up for me like that. I was already set on finishing my testimony regardless of the crowd reactions, but this was a totally unexpected boost and encouragement. I was on the edge of tears, and I believe that God did an innerhealing work in my heart at that exact moment.

Ray spoke to me gently, "Sam, I am really enjoying your testimony more and more as you speak. Carry on." Suddenly I felt an in-fill of the Holy Spirit into my soul, and I recovered my poise immediately. After that, I spoke with a supernatural authority, and the stuttering ceased pretty much for the rest of my speech.

Preaching with Power

I spoke about how I encountered the power of the Holy Spirit at Stanford. How God taught me how to pray and revived my relationship with Him. How I was baptized in the Holy Spirit, and felt the manifesting of the Holy Spirit in my body for long periods of time. How God transformed my mind, my world-view, and my life. How I received His love and helped me to love others. I told them that the goal in life is not to be successful in the eyes of the world and make lots of money, but to chase after God and reveal His glory upon the earth. Hallelujah!

People started to respond positively to my words, and I felt stronger and stronger in my spirit. I transitioned from my testimony to straight-up teachings. Even as I was speaking I was asking the Lord what to tell them next. The Lord did not fail. I taught on the Father's love, on how we can be saved and be Christians but yet have not experienced the love of our Heavenly Father. If we are rooted in the love of God, nothing that anyone else say or think about us will hurt us, and we won't respond by hurting them back. I told them not to listen to the voice of the evil one, which tells us that "we're no good, unimportant, and will never amount to anything." I told them to counter those lies with the truth, the Word of God, to meditate on the Word of God, to fill your mind with the Truth, because if you believe in the lies your life will be in bondage by the enemy, even when you are saved and are going to heaven.

Pursue Your God-Given Dream

I also preached about how God has placed in each one of our hearts a dream, a desire, and a calling that we want to fulfill. Some of these dreams might seem impossible, but with God nothing

is impossible. It does not matter if you are weak and incapable of achieving these goals, because if you were able to accomplish it by your own strength, it would not be a work of God, but a work of man. Our lives are to give glory to God by being testimonies of the work of God. I felt that this message is especially important for the youths.

Lastly, I taught them on hearing the voice of God. God has always been speaking to us, but it is us who rarely listen. If we quiet our hearts and pay attention to His voice, then we would be able to hear and know everything that we need for our lives—directions, encouragements, revelations, etc. etc. I then finished speaking and sat back down. (What I wrote above is just a brief summary of what I said. It would be impossible and unnecessary to recount everything here on paper, if this report is going to be of reasonable length)

The Following Segments

Ray came back up after me and said, "This is very good testimony and teachings, what I really liked was the point of focusing our minds on the truth, to meditate continuously on the Word of God, on the love of God, to fill our hearts with His love. I tell you that you need to read your Bibles more, and not to watch TV. Watching television is a bad habit."

This is great, I thought to myself, when was the last time I heard a preacher telling people not to watch TV? After that, they had several local minister/missionaries come up to preach. Two young men spoke consecutively, and then a powerful woman preacher spoke. By the very end, we didn't need to translate for the Americans, since they were already asleep in on their stools. I will just recount the highlights of each person's testimonies below.

The First Speaker

The first young man shared a powerful testimony. Not long after he first got saved, the Lord led him to a village in a remote part of China. As he was walking down the streets, he saw a large group of people worshipping idols at a temple, performing some sort of ceremony. Suddenly, filled with the Holy Spirit, he shouted out to the villagers, "What are you doing? Why are you worshipping idols and false gods?" Offended, they surrounded him. He stood up on a platform and addressed them, telling them the gospel and Jesus Christ, the one and only true Son of God.

Suddenly, the power of God fell upon them. The glory of God was manifested, and all of them were filled with conviction, as the Word of God pierced their hearts. They repented right on the spot, throwing down their incenses into the trash, and rushing back into the temple to smash all the buddhist idols. They demolished the entire temple right then and there, and turned to serve the one true and living God. Hallelujah!

The Second Speaker

The second young man was a missionary/minister from Henan. He said, right after he became a Christian, he had to move to a new town. He was desperate to find some other Christians in the surrounding areas to fellowship with, but he didn't know anyone. So he prayed to God to let him meet some brothers and sisters, as he was feeling very dry spiritually.

A couple days later, as he was walking by some farmhouses, he saw an elderly couple sitting on their porch. They called out to him and invited him to sit down to chat. Soon enough, the young man told them that he was looking for some Christians around there, if they knew any

Christians that he could hook up with. The elderly man smiled, "Both my wife and I are Christian, and we know several more friends who are also believers here." Praise the Lord, as it has turned out to be a divine encounter.

Later, as they meet to worship the Lord, the elderly couple urged the young man to preach to them. The young man didn't know how to preach, as he only knew a few Bible stories then. But due to their incessant prompting, he went up and preached to them the story of Noah's ark. As he spoke, he felt empowered by the Holy Spirit, and he preached with passion. Afterwards, they all told him that it was very good preaching. He was surprised, and asked, "Haven't you heard of the story of Noah's ark before?"

They said, "Nope, we've never heard it before, and when you were quoting all these other Bible chapters and verses, we had no idea what they are."

It turns out that nobody there had a Bible, and no one had read the Bible before. How they became Christians is a deeper mystery. Realizing this, the young man became their pastor/preacher and taught them the Bible every week. He himself had to start reading more of his Bible to gain more knowledge, in order to teach his "church."

The Third Speaker

This final speaker is the wife of a well-known minister from Henan, and she is the most anointed and powerful speaker of the three. Though small in stature, her voice resonated through the entire room, and people responded with amen's and hallelujah's. It was like being at a black church in America.

She started off by saying that a while after she got saved in Henan, the Lord anointed her with a preaching gift, but back then the Lord did not let her minister in preaching. The Lord had her

in the ministry of helps, cooking, washing dishes for the underground Bible schools and training classes. She had to learn obedience in the little things before the Lord allowed her to minister in preaching.

Later, after the Lord released her to preach, she was sent as a missionary to the northeast. Revival broke out. There were signs and wonders happening constantly and people were getting saved everywhere. She said that there were times when she was so filled with the Holy Spirit that she could not sleep for days. It was during one of these sleepless nights when the Lord first told her that she was to go down to the South and be a missionary there. In her own mind, she had no intention of ever going to the South, so she disregarded that word from her life.

Shortly afterwards, her husband received a free plane ticket to go down to the South, to Shenzhen, to attend a friend's wedding. When he got down there, they saw that he had some eye problem, so they forced him to remain in Shenzhen to see this renown eye specialist to fix his vision. However, there was a waiting list to see this eye specialist, so his stay in Shenzhen dragged on.

Later, as he was nearing his appointment, they realized that he needed a signature of his spouse in order for him to receive treatment. So they called up north and got her to fly down to Shenzhen. It was only after she flew down did she remember the Word that God had given her, and looking at the mission field of the South, she stayed and obeyed the Lord.

Working with the local house church leaders, they decide to train up people in the local factories to evangelize to their co-workers. At one factory, there were only four new believers. She invited them out for a meal, to get to know them. During the prayer to bless the meal, the Holy Spirit suddenly gave her words of knowledge

for each of the four women, and she began to pray and prophesy over them on the spot. Two of them, she prophesied, were going to become full-time ministers. Afterwards, the four women were stunned, "How did you know about our personal lives?"

"The Lord told me." She replied.

And out of that initial meeting the group grew from four people to over sixty people in a couple months. And the two women did step out to become full-time ministers. Near the end of her message, she said, now she understands why the Lord brought her down here. Guangzhou is a very strategic place, as the youths from all over China are gathered here. The Lord wanted to reach these youths here, so they can bring back the gospel to their own people in their provinces and expand the kingdom of God. One day, we will see every tongue and tribe gathered at the foot of His throne, worshipping the Lamb of God, Hallelujah!

The meeting was over. It has been over three hours since we begun, but every moment was precious. People were instructed not to leave all at once, but in groups at 20-minute intervals, so we wouldn't arouse the suspicion of our neighbors. So while some people were leaving, the rest of us hung around and fellowshiped. The Americans woke from their slumber and were re-energized. We were all joyously socializing and many photographs were taken.

Suddenly, a casual conversation with a young factory girl turned into a sober prayer ministry time. Everyone hushed as our Missouri girls laid hands on her and ministered to her. Other of us also gathered around and prayed for us, moving from intercession into prophecy, as the Spirit led. It was wonderful to see the Body of Christ function in ministering to each other.

Finally, we left the building, and they arranged for Ron, Ray, and me to stay overnight at a brother's home. This brother was one of the speakers at the meeting. In his apartment, we were able to enjoy a hot shower and the luxury of a western-styled toilet. As we relaxed on the sofa enjoying some Chinese snacks, Ron remarked how my preaching was anointed. I was just glad that I was able to bless and encourage the people of God in this manner. We also discussed amongst ourselves what we have seen this very night, how God moved.

My Own Thoughts and Observation

Personally, though I was impressed by the passion and intensity of the people's faith, I realized that these people (and probably other believers across China) are severely lacking in the deeper teachings and revelations of the Lord. They have minimal biblical knowledge on subjects such as spiritual warfare, intimacy with Christ, innerhealing, and the five-fold ministry. Most of their preaching is based on their personal testimonies (nothing wrong with that), but not on deep scriptural insight and teaching. Also, because many of them are witnessing and leading others to the Lord right after their own salvation decision, many are immediately thrust into the shepherding, discipling roles without much biblical and spiritual understanding at all.

Many of them may be already moving in those areas of ministry mentioned above, without the fundamental knowledge of how to develop and grow in these giftings and ministries. It is sort of like learning to play a musical instrument without instructors or guidebooks. It is possible to advance in one's skill without outside guidance, but one could progress much quicker with regular instructions.

What we can offer

I would say that, though our churches in the west are not as strong as the church in China, we still have much to offer them in terms of teaching. In the States we have some very good, deep teachings and revelations that are the legacies of the spiritual foundation of America. The Lord has blessed America from generation to generations, as she was a God-fearing nation from conception. Though the nation have committed many sins along with her extraordinary good deeds in the past, it is only in the recent decades that the United States has begun to lose its divine covering and blessing.

So, even as many American churches have fallen into lukewarmness, God is still revealing the deep things of His kingdom to those who have remained faithful and passionate in their walk with Him, and it is through this stream of ministries in America that we can impart spiritual meat to the saints in China.

In hindsight, I feel that if the Chinese Christians can attain these powerful teachings and revelations, their ministry and evangelism will be exponentially more fruitful and powerful than what it is right now, as they are build up from the elementary teachings of Christ. It is hard to imagine what that increase would look like, since they are already so fruitful and effective with the minimal knowledge that they have. It would be the greatest revival the world has ever seen. With that in mind, I am praying that God would send more anointed teachers into China to better equip the saints for His work.

We can all minister

It is then no surprise as to why they want us foreigners to minister to them. They themselves are aware of their own lack in the

knowledge of God, so anyone with any understanding of the Bible or any substantial years in the faith are asked to preach and teach the Word of God to the saints. What you may consider basic knowledge and obvious truths in the faith, taken-for-granted in your Christian walk, may be the very teaching that they need in China.

After I came back from China, I told some of my friends, "Any Christian here can preach in China. In fact, they want you to preach there." With over one billion souls who have not yet heard the gospel, even if every single Christians in California went over to preach, there would still be not enough ministers to reach everyone and shepherd them. Let's go!

It is easy to think that we're not worthy to minister to these "super saints," but the truth is, they are just as human as we are, and they need us just as much as we need them to complete the work of the Lord on the earth, to fulfill the will of God. In China, they really have the mentality that "every Christian is a preacher and missionary, wherever you are," and this is the mindset that we need to have in the West.

In America, the average believer doesn't speak and preach to groups of people on a regular basis (We let the professionals do it). In China, they do. In America, we often feel a sense of inadequacy and false humility when we are called upon to minister. In China, they want you to minister regardless of your experience, or lack of it. I just want to share a story that happened when a new believer at my dad's church in the US called home to China.

The Accidental Church-Plant

When this new believer shared the testimony of her salvation to her family members in China, they were convicted in their hearts and received

Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior right then, over the phone. These brand-new believers then got hold of some Bibles, and started a weekly meeting on their own, with no outside help or contact with any other Christian in their area.

Before long, they invited their friends to come and shared with them the gospel, and their friends got saved too. Then, after a couple months, they had over 60 people meeting in their home, and most of them have already accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior. Praise the Lord! All of this was done without anyone having any "training" on how to live the Christian life or run a church ministry.

A couple months ago, my parents visit them to check out this "accidental" church-plant. My parents baptized many of them in their short stay there, and gave them a few tips on Christian living and ministry. This rapidly expanding house church is just a prototype of the kind of work that the Lord is doing in China.

At the end of our conversation that long, wonderful night, Ray turned to me and said, "I believe God is going to heal you of your stuttering." I said, "I believe it too." We then retired for the night. I was fast asleep the moment my head hit the pillow.

Part 4

Early next morning, we took the train to Guangzhou, an hour from where we were the previous day. We were on our way to see Pastor Samuel Lamb and his famous house church. Pastor Lamb and his ministry are so well known around the world that the PSB doesn't even come by to shut them down any more. His "underground" church has over 3,000 members, meeting in a single location with four services each week.

The biography of Pastor Lamb was documented in "The Cross: Jesus in China" DVD, as he was interviewed for the documentary. Pastor Lamb is one of the three recognized living "fathers" of the Chinese church, along with Alan Yuan in Beijing, and Moses Xie in Shanghai. All three of them have done over two decades of prison time since the 1950's, when the communists started persecuting the Christians.

Though I've already heard of him and hear him speak in the film, I was very excited to meet him in person and hear him speak. He gave us a lot more details to his testimony than he did in the film. He is now over eighty years old, but he looks much younger than that. In fact, he showed us a photograph taken right after he was released from prison, and he looked much older than he does now in the picture.

Pastor Lamb

Pastor Lamb's church is actually a converted four-story apartment building with a first-floor annex next door. Each floor has rows of pews from front to back, and a big television screen at the very front. Pastor Lamb preaches on the top floor, and they have closed-circuit television so everyone can see and hear the sermon being preached.

We went up to the second floor, where Pastor Lamb greeted us with great enthusiasm. The man bubbled with joy, and there is a constant smile on his face. Pastor Lamb welcomed us in broken English and invited us to sit down with him around a small conference table. He had been to America before, in the 1930's, I think, and so his English wasn't all that bad at all. For the rest of our meeting, we conversed in English, with occasional translation from Cantonese.

Highlights of his testimony

Pastor Lamb was arrested and was in prison and labor camps from the 1950's to the 1970's, over a period of twenty-plus years. God protected him through these years, even as he had a couple near-death experiences. In the middle of his sentence he was transferred to work in the mines, where there was a high risk of injury or death. Twice, when he was loading carts to the trains where a train was a couple inches from crashing into him. He narrowly escaped with his life.

Later, during the Cultural Revolution, the communists brought him out and forced him to write a report criticizing Christianity. He told them, "I can't, I still believe." But they told him to criticize anyways. So he prayed and asked the Lord as to what to do. The Holy Spirit told him, criticize the liberal Christians, and so he did, because the liberals at the time have all denied the supernatural aspects of Jesus' ministry, and were not adhering to true faith and doctrines. When he turned in the report, the communists were pleased. "You criticized well." They told him. They could not distinguish the true Christianity from the liberal Christianity.

Pastor Lamb reflected on this event with much amusement. "If I had really criticized my beliefs and denounced my Lord Jesus, I would not be sitting here before you today. I would have betrayed my Lord and lost my faith completely. Thank God that He provided a way out."

Released from Prison

After he was released from prison, he found out that both his father and his wife had died, and a few months later his mother died. Even with all these deaths, he was grateful to God. Why? Because if his mother had died before he was released, they would not have let him out. The

rule was that you need a living family member to return to before they can release you. So he praised God that it was only after he was released the Lord took his mother home.

Upon returning home, he started preaching again, leading church meetings at home, just as before, and the Lord prospered him. Soon enough, his meetings grew larger and larger to hundreds of people, and the PSB started giving him trouble again. He was re-arrested a couple times in the 1990's for a few months each time, but as the persecution rose, the church grew even more. Pastor Lamb even told the PSB to arrest him again, if they wish, because he was "used to prison life," and so he doesn't mind it at all. After the church was moved to its current location (a miracle of God in itself), the PSB has stopped bothering him for the past four years. I guess they finally realized that there was no use persecuting him.

Free Resources

As we chatted, Pastor Lamb gave each of us a large stack of booklets that he had written, along with CD's of hymns that he had written himself. He is an accomplished pianist, and had composed over 40 songs in the past. As an author, he has written over 100 books/booklets on various topics, ranging from controlling anger to end-time prophecies. Only about twenty of them have been translated into English. Everything he wrote he gives away for free, including the music, and he told us to make as many copies of anything as we wish, to advance the kingdom of God. "No copyright," he said, "you copy right!" We all had a good laugh at that one.

Finally, as the conversations winded down, we stood up and hugged one another, and took some pictures. In leaving, we were all amazed at the life of this saint, who had so much joy and

serenity in spite of all these years of relentless persecution in prison. It was indeed an opportunity of a lifetime, as who knows when the Lord will take this precious minister home to Him.

About Ray

It was about lunchtime, so we stopped at a restaurant to eat. During the meal, we learned a bit more about our team leader, Ray. It was not shocking to us that Ray had lived an incredible life up to now, as almost every missionary we met at RCMI had some amazing testimony. Ray told us that he was born in a missionary family, and was raised in Pakistan. He then came back to the States for schooling, and yet, while in the States, he lived everywhere. Now he says that he's from Colorado, as that is where his family is living.

Over ten years ago, Ray decided to come to China. His friend there told him to just fly to Hong Kong, get across the border, find a house to rent and live in, learn the language, and start preaching the gospel. Talk about big faith. He said, "You don't really need to ask for permission to preach the gospel, if you are hearing from the Lord and obeying what the Lord has called you to do."

Now he has a beautiful Chinese wife, Dora, who also works for RCMI, and children, living in Hong Kong. Though he is now residing in HK, his heart is still in China with the local house church ministry. He says that he is more comfortable and at home in the developing Chinese society and culture, rather than in the Westernized confines of Hong Kong.

Meeting the Nigerians

After lunch, we took a taxi to meet missionaries from another ministry, the Nigerian

missionaries of Royal Victory International. It was a surprise to all of us that there are black missionaries from Africa in China, but there they are. Our main contact here was a Chinese woman named Kitty, who had worked for RCMI before moving on to work in this Nigerian ministry in Guangzhou, training up both Nigerians and Chinese to be pastor/missionaries in their expanding house church network

We went up the elevator to their apartment. Once there, we met several Nigerians there, and relaxed a bit on the sofa. The main Nigerian pastor gave us an overview of what they are doing here in Guangzhou. Since they could speak English very well, we had no trouble communicating with one another.

Called to China

As the church in Nigeria has experienced tremendous growth in the past decades (read "Out of Africa" by Wagner), God has been calling many young Nigerian ministers to preach the gospel internationally, and some of them were called to China (and more are coming). The leader of this ministry shared with us that several years ago, God spoke to him in a dream, telling him to go to China. In obedience to this heavenly call, his church in Nigeria sent him, along with others, who had the same calling, out to China.

Due to the Lord's favor, they were able to quickly take root and establish the ministry in a few years, adapting to the local culture, and many of them have learned to speak Mandarin fluently now. Their strategy is to network with local Chinese house church leaders, while doing evangelism and start up new home meetings as well. They also have a ministry school where they train up both new African missionaries and local Chinese missionaries, and we, the American team, were

fortunate to be able to attend a typical ministry class that evening.

The Ministry School

The ministry leaders were very excited to have us come to their training session. They wanted us to bless them and impart to them what the Lord has given us. This particular training session was geared towards the Nigerian missionaries, as it was conducted in English (they also have sessions in Mandarin for the Chinese). The session began with a cappella worship of English hymns, even though they do have other musical instruments in the room. There were about 30 of us total, and everyone sang with great devotion and passion.

After the worship, the leader went up to the front and introduced us, the Americans, and previewed the order of the night. Two young missionaries-in-training preached consecutively. The messages were sound and instructive, and at the end of each teaching was a question-and-answer time where the listeners could respond to the speakers.

Prayer Time

After the messages, we moved into a time of intercessory prayer for the nation of China. In an instant, the entire room was filled with loud voices crying out to heaven. People stood and interceded for China with all of their might. It was hard to believe that these Africans have such a heart for China, to see all of China saved. All of us Americans started shouting out to the Lord too. This was a sound not unlike the sound I've heard in Guatemala, Russia, and America. It is the same all over the world when people cry out to the Lord in fervent corporate prayer. One could feel the Holy Spirit in the atmosphere, fueling

our intercession, as we pressed in more and more in prayer.

Following the flow of the Spirit, the pastor asked me to come up to the front, as a representative of China, to pray for my people. I was ready, and I prayed as led by the Lord. After my prayer, we continued to lift up petitions into the heavens. Near the end, we moved into an impartation segment as they laid hands on each one of us and blessed us, and we did the same with each one of them. We prayed that God would pour out His Spirit on each one of them to move in miracles, signs and wonders, and healings, as they go forth to preach the Word of God. We especially prayed for the pastor and his wife, Kitty, for their protection against the attacks of the enemy, and for an extra dose of anointing in their lives and ministry. It was a powerful time, and I do believe that our prayers that night affected the heavenlies, and China was not the same the next day.

One Body, One Family

Afterwards we all went out to eat and fellowship. It was amazing to see all of us, of different ethnicities and nationalities (Africans, Americans, Asians), coming together and bonding like family, because we are indeed brothers and sisters. In all of my travels to different nations I've witnessed the same thing, the connection in the spirit in Christ amongst strangers from various cultures. In Christ we are one body, one people, and we can all testify that God is the same everywhere. He doesn't act one way in one nation and change His ways in another. God loves and disciplines his children in the same manner. He is consistent and constant. If our Christianity is different, it is us who are in error, not God. God reveals the same things on each continent, and we should not be surprised

when we find out that we have been learning the same things worlds apart from one another.

On the following morning, I said good-bye to my American friends, and took a separate taxi straight to the Guangzhou Airport. The Missouri team was heading back to Hong Kong and they are going to do a few more border-crossings, to carry more Bibles, in the next several days. I was flying back to Shanghai, and back to America the next day. Physically, I was very exhausted at the end of the trip, but I was glad inside. I experienced a lot, learned a lot, and ministered more effectively than ever before.

Final Thoughts

Honestly, I have to say that it was never my goal to go to China for missions, and it was never a dream of mine to minister in an underground house church (I've been more interested in Russia than China). But it is funny how God works, and how He takes us to places we never expect, and do things we never thought possible. It was all God; I never planned it out. It is true that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has comprehended what God has in store for all of us. My faith is still too little, my expectations too low, my vision too small, and my dreams and goals too conservative. It is my personal prayer that I would not limit God with my life.

It was a trip to remember, and who knows, I might come back for more in the near future, and with some friends, perhaps. It's up to the Lord. I will go wherever He wants me to go, and be wherever He wants me to be. It's pretty fun (and crazy and hard) living this life of total submission and surrender. It is not me who lives but Christ who lives through me.

The End

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