



East Gates

Seeing Beyond the Impossible™

INTERNATIONAL

May - June 2018

*D*ear East Gates partners,

We hope your summer has been going well. We just returned from China a few weeks ago. It was a timely trip as it followed the celebration of Pentecost, a biblical memorial to the time when God's Holy Spirit came in full power upon all those gathered in Acts 2:1-4 as promised by Yeshua (Jesus). Today, many Chinese believers are trying to understand what it means to function in the power of God's Holy Spirit.

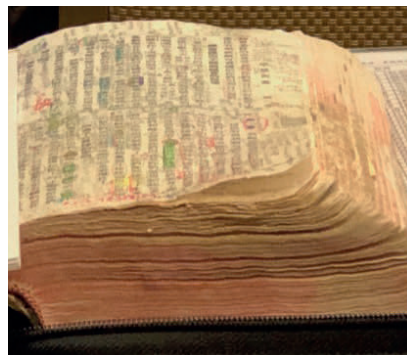
The common impression or belief in the West is that there is incredible Christian growth within the Church in China, both Open and House church. In many respects, it all depends on how one defines "growth." Do you base it on church attendance or genuine conversion and spiritual growth? In our judgement, one really can't define it by service attendance because thousands flow into China's churches every Sunday and even a larger number into meetings points or small home gatherings.

Over the years, when we've asked why some of them come to church, the answers have been interesting: a) my grandparents and parents have always come, so I should go, b) Christianity is Western, so whatever comes from the West is the best, c) the Christian way works better than Buddhism in certain areas of my life, d) my friends come to church and I like the fact it's a place I might find a "good" husband or wife, e) I like the potluck food they have afterwards, f) I enjoy the fellowship and social activities they offer.



At a recent church service, a church goer sat next to us who had his Bible open but during the sermon, he kept engaging with his cell phone. Given the time he spent on it, he wasn't looking up scripture. The greatest threat to faith today is distraction.

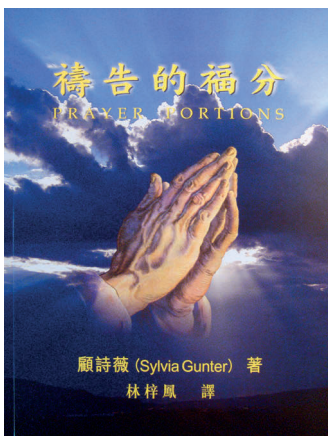
Of course there are Chinese believers who genuinely know and are learning about God and His Word each day. For them, He is a *living* God that reveals Himself through His *living* Word and Spirit. He's not like their former idols such as Buddha or the Chinese goddess of compassion, "guanyin," whom they now know to be impotent. From what occurred on Pentecost, they realize they serve a God of resurrection power; One who can cleanse them of their sins and resurrect them from death to eternal life! It takes faith and obedience. (James 2:18-26)



On the other side of us was a far more serious Chinese believer. The 'inspired margins' of his Bible were filled with personal study notes and other markings. From our conversation, you could tell he had been spending time with His Savior.

We share with our students the interesting correlation between God's fire, lightning and thunder-like presence at Mt. Sinai when 3000 men died because of everyone's disobedience, disunity and idolatry (Exo.32:28) and the Holy Spirit rushing through like a mighty wind with tongues of fire whereby 3000 souls were baptized and added to this community of faith due to their true repentance, awe of God and unity of spirit and mind! (Acts 2:41)

On this trip, we met many devoted and thirsty believers. Their leaders had invited us to do more discipleship and ministry training. At one particular location, every morning, from 5:30-7:30 am, they would gather together for prayer, Bible scripture discussion and worship. One was moved by the dedication of these group leaders, students and church workers. We noticed, however, that when it came time to pray, there was always a lot of loud moaning and weeping. The same thing happened everyday at a nearby location where we were asked to teach before. We thought to ourselves, “We know there are times when intense grieving and/or repentance calls for many tears but where is the joy of one’s salvation?” We later learned that teachers can come through with teachings such as, “You can’t get close to God in prayer unless you’re continually contrite in spirit, sorrowful of soul, repentant in heart and weeping to God regarding your situation. This is unfortunate and not scriptural. We introduced them to an excellent book on prayer called *Prayer Portions* by Sylvia Gunter which we’ve translated into Chinese. We also reminded them of the scripture, “And the disciples were continually diffused throughout their souls with joy and the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 13:52, Amplified)



Prayer Portions
by Sylvia Gunter



Early morning prayer and worship time at a training center where we were asked to teach. Two places were reserved for us near the back wall.



Chinese students and church workers take prayer time seriously.

We knew *Prayer Portions* would open their eyes to a whole new way of praying effectively using scripture and help them hear God better. It covers all the titles and attributes of God which describe His nature. By speaking forth His names, one’s soul can only be encouraged. Since most of the students are also full or part-time church co-workers, we knew that topics in the book such as: *Praise on Earth like in Heaven*, *Keys to Breaking Bondages*, *Praying on the Armor of God*, *Exposing a Religious Spirit*, *Who You are in Christ*, *Praying for Spiritual Leaders*, *Is My Heart God’s Resting Place* and *Prayer that Hits the Mark* would inspire them as well.

On this particular day, near the end of worship, the group leader informed everyone that in a few weeks, a month-long mission trip was being planned to a remote, mountainous region to assist HIV victims. She said they would need to get in shape and learn some survival skills. Given these insights into what these students would be encountering, I felt the Holy Spirit’s prompting to teach on the greater meaning behind Yeshua’s missions with His own 12 disciples. I began with the “Storm on the Lake of Galilee.” (Luke 8:22-25) I asked the students if they had all read this passage and they nodded their heads. I told them every mission trip Yeshua took His disciples on was a teachable moment. The first question I asked them was, “When the tempest engulfed the boat on the lake, why did the disciples cry out, “*Master Master, we’re going to drown!*”? Didn’t Yeshua tell them in verse 22, “*Let us go over to the other side of the lake.*”?

There was no response from the students. I told them not to be shy. Slowly, a few ventured to answer the question. Bottom line, it’s not because they weren’t interested. It’s because their standard educational

system is based primarily on the teacher infusing them with information and the students just taking notes. Most Chinese students who come to the U.S.A. to study tell us that growing up, they were not taught how to develop critical thinking or engage with the teacher or materials they were given. Knowing this, I shared with them that what I was going to teach was just as important as how they were going to be taught and if Yeshua was here, like a good Jewish rabbi, He would be asking them a lot of questions and encouraging feedback. To help them along with the greater meaning of Luke 8:22-25, I shared with them the following major points:

1) Too often, the disciples were listening to their own voices based on fear and the challenging circumstances around them versus what Yeshua had told them. In this case, it was the same. The fury of the wind and the waves and the disciples' internal voices of fear spoke louder than Yeshua's simple statement, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." If Yeshua says you will get to the other side of the lake, you will not perish in the process. I shared with them how as they are out and about doing God's work, listen to the Lord's calm voice of reassurance and not their voices of fear, insecurity and confusion.

2) Throughout the Bible, the physical realm has always been intimately tied with the spiritual realm. Yeshua knew that after His resurrection, His disciples would be persecuted. The spiritual forces in dark places (Eph.2:2) would attack. The tempest on the lake was symbolic of the geo-political and socio-religious situation at the time. In Acts 13:44-45, 49-50 and Acts 17:13, one sees how whenever the Apostle Paul, the disciples and God's Word made headway into a region and penetrated the realm of chaos and disorder, the local political/religious authorities felt threatened. As a result, the latter would incite and stir up (Grk. *parotruno*) the masses against them. The peoples' minds would be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. Yeshua revealed through His creation that He was not affected by the principalities, rebellious spirits or power struggles of His time. He merely silenced the 'howling winds' and the 'raging waves' and the lake became 'calm' (Grk. *galene*). When I asked the students how the lake now looked like, they said, "flat." I said if that were the case, the boat wouldn't be going anywhere. The Greek word for 'calm' is *galene*. It comes from the Greek root word, *gelao*, meaning 'to smile.' The Greek poets used this term to represent a 'smiling ocean' or 'happy waves.' So Yeshua took a tumultuous spirit (representative of the times) and transformed it into a joyful one. Joy also implies hope and strength (Heb.12:2). That's why, once on the other side of the lake, the disciples should have been able to understand in greater context what Yeshua did with the Gerasene demoniac. (Luke 8:26-39)

There was much more to this teaching but for lack of space here, wherever we went, students were grateful for what God led us to teach



them (photos above). They said it truly helped them gain a larger perspective on how the spiritual and physical realms are intimately tied together. It gave them greater insights and purpose on their calling and work. One training center wanted us to create a special syllabus and curriculum so they could incorporate it within their training program. We will need additional funds for this project, so please keep this in your prayers when it comes to East Gates' financial support and gifting.

On the last page of our newsletter, we share a portion of a letter from a dear pastor friend of ours. May it inspire you to pray and intercede for our 'Chinese family' and the nation of China even more.

Thank you for keeping the burden of the churches in the northern part of China in your heart for years. This year, we especially sense danger everywhere. The Church has been experiencing the threat of the Lion's roar externally yet at the same time is experiencing continual refinement within. It gave us great encouragement and comfort when we received the Bibles you donated. On behalf of our co-workers, I would like to express our deep appreciation.

Since the ordinance (China's regulations on religious affairs*) issued last year, the surrounding churches have been in somewhat of a state of panic. Local authorities have told individual church leaders to join the Three-Self church and have prohibited training and large-scale meetings. As a result, small cell-groups have multiplied. Some Sunday services have stopped. We believe these trials have been allowed by God to discern the real situation between the Shepherd and the church's co-workers. Given the changing times and situation, the sale of online Bibles is now prohibited. Before, we were able to purchase Bibles at the Three-Self church but now only limited copies are available. Some even have to present their ID card before getting a Bible. At this moment, some of God's servants are really beginning to realize the importance of the Bible and are passing this message onto the believers. Some believers have come to the sudden realization of what should they do if someday there is no Bible supply!

Although lots of "Shepherd districts" have stopped meeting together, by the grace of God, my "Shepherd district" insists on meeting like normal. When I prayed one day, I was moved by the Holy Spirit to read Hebrews 10. I was deeply touched. It brought me power to proclaim guidance sent by the Holy Spirit to arouse everyone to not lose heart and be brave; to insist on preaching the Gospel to save souls even during this formidable time. Originally, the number of believers at our various meetings points were few but in six months, the situation has totally changed. The Holy Spirit works powerfully. Basically, in my present "Shepherd district," miracles have been following all our Gospel work. The lost sheep are returning back to the herd and converts have been flooding to the Lord Jesus. Within the half year, the number of new believers have increased by 200. This kind of phenomenon has not occurred for years. Thank you Lord. More external pressure has made everyone more warm-hearted and earnest in prayer. God can now work with them and the number of saved people will increase! Presently, for the newcomers, we're doing basic training on God's Truth. We expect by August, we will have baptisms for those who clearly know what they believe. The 64K-size Bibles you donated have been sent to 24 meeting points in the "Shepherd districts." The pastors will keep these Bibles to use in small group meeting Bible studies. A special person in the "Shepherd district" will keep the larger Bibles and give them freely to believers based on age."

Thank you East Gates partners for your priceless prayers and support to our faithful and growing flock in China!

 *Christina*

Ned and Christina Graham

感谢神多年来把关怀北疆这一带教会的负担放在您老心里，特别是在今年这种风声鹤唳之时，教会外面正在经历狮子吼叫的恐吓之声，内部也正处在炼净调整之时，收到您赠送的圣经，给我们带来极大的鼓舞和安慰。在此小弟代表我们的同工们深表感谢！

自从去年条例颁布之后，我们这一带的教会好像是进入一种恐慌之境况中，个别领袖被约谈要求加入三自堂，禁止培训和大型聚会等，随之就陆续出现分小组，转型聚会形式，还有的干脆停止主日聚会等，各种各样吧！

神许可的试验临到也正好让我们看见牧人与雇主的真实境况。随着时代的变化，圣经在网上的禁售，三自堂过去大家还能买到圣经，最近也只能限购，还得出示身份证方可获得等情形，此时一些爱主的工人们才感到圣经对我们有多重要，开始传递这些信息。有些信徒如梦初醒，知道平日有圣经不好好读，真到了有一天没有圣经会如何了！

但很多牧区停止聚会时，本牧区一直靠主恩坚持正常聚会，一天祈祷中圣灵感动希伯来书第十章的经文，被深深触动，并带来力量，宣读传递来自圣灵的引导，激发大家不可丢弃勇敢的心，在这种看似恐怖的境况中坚持传福音抢救灵魂，不到半年的时间，原先部分聚会点人数不多的情况就被翻转，圣灵也大大作工，基本上在我现在牧养的牧区中神迹奇事伴随，迷羊回归，新人不断涌入皈依救主耶稣，不到半年牧区新增信徒二百多人，这种现象好多年没有了！感谢神，越是有外部的压力，大家反而越发热心，越发祷告，神越发做工，得救的人数越发加添啊！目前我们正在做初信主的基本要道培训，预计在八月份给那些清楚信仰的人安排洗礼呢！您赠送的圣经小本64开的已经分别发达牧区中的二十四个堂点，由牧者保管，放在小组聚会查经中使用。大本的由牧区由专人保管，根据需要者的年龄分别赠送。

Chinese version of the letter.



Bibles we sent to the "Shepherd districts." Small portion shown here.