



# East Gates

Seeing Beyond the Impossible™

INTERNATIONAL

July-August 2018

Dear East Gates partners,

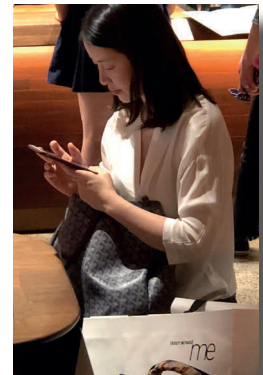
I hope your summer has been productive and fruitful. Unbelievably, in a few more months, we'll be heading into harvest season! When most of the world lived closer to the land, a time of harvest had greater value and meaning. Not anymore. Like most of the world, for the first time in China's history, there are more people living in the cities than in the rural villages. Since 2005, 100 million more migrant workers or *mingong* have moved into China's largest urban centers. 160 cities in China now have a population over one million. This hemorrhaging from the countryside to the urban jungle continues despite the fact that even though personal incomes have increased five-fold over the past 25 years, the average Chinese today is far less happy. Reason being, economic reforms have decimated job security and their social safety net (i.e. *Social Insurance Law*, welfare, pension etc.).<sup>1</sup>



Coffee shops and small eateries have replaced the village square where people used to do business and get the latest news.



The world's largest Starbucks Roastery opened last year in Shanghai (30,000 sq.ft). With Starbucks opening a new store every 15 hours in China, one can say that coffee is fast becoming the beverage of choice over tea.



China's consumer-driven economy is fed by a growing wealthy middle class with mounting disposal income.



Most Chinese migrants become disillusioned after entering the city. More money does not mean better quality of life.



Many megacities do not have the resources to sustain this influx of population thereby causing social, economic and healthcare strains. "*Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field, until there is no more room, so that you have to live alone in the midst of the land!*" (Isaiah 5:8)



Going from city to city, migrants with a rural registration card (*hukou*) carry all they have on their backs looking for work. Many begin to realize home may have been better.

<sup>1</sup> China study paper referenced in the March 15, 2018 *Washington Post* article -- [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/03/15/chinas-peasants-left-for-the-cities-to-seek-their-fortune-and-it-made-them-miserable/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.5e34de601efd](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/03/15/chinas-peasants-left-for-the-cities-to-seek-their-fortune-and-it-made-them-miserable/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.5e34de601efd)



As China's agrarian-based population flows into what they believe will be the "promised land of plastic and concrete" East Gates continues its work in China's rural villages and townships where there is a genuine thirst and heart for God's Word. The Pu'er or Simao District in Yunnan province is an excellent example.

The Pu'er District is ethnically diverse and home to 33 different people groups. The top five are Hani, Li, Lahu, Wa, and Dai. Western missionaries came early to this area so many of the churches have a 100-year plus history like the Lahu Christian church (below).



Yunnan is one of 23 provinces in China. Pu'er is one of 17 districts in Yunnan and named after its famous Pu'er tea plantations.



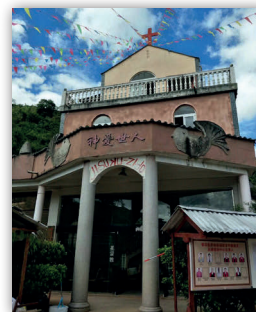
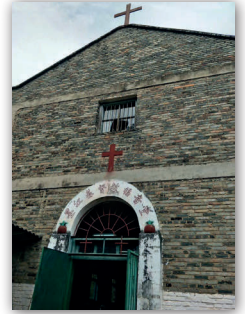
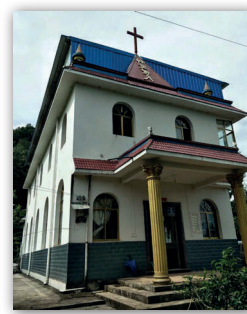
Lahu church members leaving church services.



Minority tribes understand the joy and strength that comes with worshipping and searching the scriptures together.



A local church welcomes the East Gates staff.



Most of the churches in the area, of which only a few are shown on the right, all stem from the long-established Lahu Christian Church. Over the past decade, given their remote location, East Gates has been their primary source for Bibles.



As all new believers know, it's one thing to have a Bible in your hand; it's another thing to know how it applies to daily life amid China's major geo-political and socio-economic reforms. Nowadays, even in the most remote areas of China, everyone has a cell phone. As a result, they're able to see what's happening in their nation and outside world in ways previous generations could not. This reality creates a greater need for Bible teaching on topics such as pastoral counseling, gender issues, child-rearing, end-time events and more.

At a recent Christian business professionals' gathering, near one of China's largest cities, the first question we were asked was, "Who do you think will win the US-China Trade War?" We answered, "If you put the Kingdom first (Matthew 6:33), then you won't have to worry about who wins the US-China Trade War because everything that is necessary for your eternal welfare will be given unto you." Of course, that begged the question, "What does it mean to put the Kingdom first these days?" We told them, "That is a question you each need to ask God. He will answer."

On the other side of the spectrum, at a very small House church venue where most of the believers came originally from rural townships, the first question was, "We heard that not as many people are going to church in America as in times past. It's on the decline. How come? We thought the Bible came from the West?" First of all, we thought, "Good question." Our answer was longer than this newsletter allows us to explain but in a nutshell, we shared how they should thank the Jews for faithfully penning and transmitting God's Word to us throughout the ages. The Bible did not come from the West but Middle East. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Bible scripture and its message to humanity must be understood within its cultural and linguistic context.

With respect to why American church attendance is falling, we shared with them how it may be due to multiple factors and that as a whole, the majority of Americans have not given up on God but with today's technology, it's all about convenience. It's easier to go to church online than drive to church. Some pastors are even calling the iPhone the "iSnake." We told them that the intimacy they're developing with God through prayer, devout Bible study and face-to-face fellowship cannot be replaced. Listen to one Master, respect God's creation in a world that defiles it and treat yourself as God's holy temple. Mediate on Philippians 4:11-12.

Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

~ Philippians 4:11-12 ~



An attentive training class in the Pu-er District.



A skilled Jewish scribe (*sofer*) writing out scripture.



Proving all things.

*T*oday, all the years East Gates has spent sowing into the region is now producing a great harvest. In the beautiful, natural environs of the Pu'er region, where the fragrant scent of tea leaves abound and the locals live close to the land and water, there is space to breathe in God's goodness. Close-knit communities of faith continue to pass God's blessings on to the next generation.



A recent baptism ceremony in the Pu'er District lasted for hours. Church members stood on the banks reading scripture and praying.

*D*espite the dark news that often floods the airwaves, from God's perspective, there is much to rejoice in and celebrate.

Biblically, everything we do in this life builds towards God's Kingdom to come; a time when all nations will flow to Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-4). Each day, each season and each year, we get closer.

Thank you for what you've sown into the lives of our brothers and sisters in China. As you bless them, they bless you. May God's Name be glorified in all we do!



On July 28th, the *Shanghai Deaf Fellowship* whom we partner with celebrated 15 baptisms!

*Ned and Christina Graham*

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