

Marcus and Julia – China Update

March 30, 2008

Christian Men!

Today we had our second prayer meeting for all of the Christian men in our church. We've decided to have four of these meetings per year. We have been praying for more Christian men. And God is answering our prayers. Four more men were baptized last Sunday!



On Easter, three of our recently baptized brothers shared their testimonies. It was the first time any of them ever preached before. It was awesome and powerful. Two young men were touched by their messages and decided to get baptized that same day.



Those two guys, Wang Xiao Hu & Xia Zhuo, have been studying at the Bible study that Julia and some of the other brothers and sisters from our church hold at the

China Agricultural University (CAU). I pray that the CAU Bible study can become a separate house church before the end of this year.

Ben and Grace:

As you all know, Martin, I and a group of 4 Chinese brothers left Gary and Danita's church two years ago to help start a new group on the other side of town. Well, Ben is the guy we all thought would become the spiritual leader of the group. Instead, he allowed his life to become overwhelmed with weeds. Ben and his wife, Grace, stopped coming to church less than a month after we started the new group. They decided they wanted to dedicate more (or all) of their time towards making more money. (Moses and Joe also fell away, for similar reasons.) We pray for them often. We pray that the Holy Spirit will plow into their lives and set them free.



Anyway, Ben and Grace came to church last Sunday for the first time in over a year! It was good see them. Please pray that they will keep coming and get right with God and take up roles of service and leadership in the church.

By the way, William is the most active servant, leader and evangelist in our church to this day. God has done great things in and through William during the past two years.

Six Baptisms!

Last Sunday six people were immersed into Christ. Two boys from CAU, Shi Wei (our neighbor), A Ying (Liu Wen Jiang's fiancé), Gao Hai Juan (Summer's landlord), and Sun Guang Yuan (the chemist). Julia and I met Shi Wei when we were handing out cookies to our neighbors. Shi Wei is now with his parents (in our building), while he recovers from surgery and chemotherapy; he got limp



node cancer last year. Shi Wei confessed that if he hadn't gotten sick, he probably would not know Jesus today; he has mixed emotions about that, but mostly gratitude (Rom 8:28). Shi Wei and I are becoming good friends.

We met Sun Guang Yuan in September. The first time he came to our Bible study he thought it was going to be a party. God opened his heart and gave him the gift of faith. I studied the book of Luke with Sun Guang Yuan last semester on Friday mornings. He is real smart. He has been offered five full-ride scholarships to several PhD programs at some of the top universities in the States. He is still waiting to hear back from UCLA. We hope he can go to California. Sun Guang Yuan will be a blessing wherever he goes.



Watching Liu Wen Jiang baptize his girlfriend, A Ying, was pretty awesome. Ham has been sharing his faith with A Ying ever since they started dating 8 months ago. A Ying is real smart too. She will receive her PhD in Biology from the Chinese Institute of Science & Technology this June. We pray that they can both find jobs in Beijing. They said they will get married as soon as they find jobs. We pray God will guide them.



Jacky and Alicia in Beijing:

Jacky and Alicia, our good friends from the church in Jingzhou, moved to Beijing to open an online Christian bookstore. They have a one-year-old baby boy; his name is En Qi, which means “amazing grace”. The three of them are staying in our apartment temporarily, because we have an empty guest room while Julia and her mom are in Jingzhou. Jacky is really passionate about serving the Lord. We are excited to be able to work together again. We are certain they will be a blessing to the church here. We are stoked about that.



Jennifer and Her Husband (Update):

A few months ago we asked you to pray for Jennifer and her family, because her parents were strongly opposed to her marrying a preacher man, remember? Well, unfortunately, her parents are still super opposed to their marriage, but they went ahead and got married anyway – on February 2nd. (Jennifer’s parents did not attend the wedding.) Jennifer and her husband just called us this week to tell us that they are pregnant! They didn’t waste any time at all. We’re excited for them.



Prayer Requests:



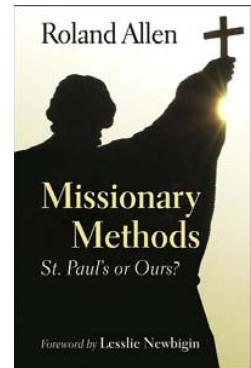
First, my dear friend and former boss, Jason Presley, passed away last week from a rare and deadly liver disease. Julia and I are grieving with and praying for his wife and their three daughters. We feel so sad that this happened. Jason was a deeply spiritual man of God who had a profound impact on my life. **Second**, Lisa and Silas, members and servants of our church, are having serious marriage problems. They had a fight and Silas left. He’s been gone for two weeks. Please pray that God would bring Silas home and salvage their marriage. **Third**, we assume you have heard about the turmoil in Tibet. Honestly, we don’t really know what is going on because media is controlled and limited in China. Pray for peace and justice. Pray that God will somehow use all of these things to open people’s hearts to the gospel. (By the way, we are fine; everything is calm in Beijing.)



Missionary Methods:

I just finished reading the book “Missionary Methods” by Roland Allen, written in 1912. Here are some good quotes:

In little more than ten years Paul established the Church in four provinces of the Empire: Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia. Before AD 47 there were no churches in these provinces; in AD 57 Paul could speak as if his work there was done...So far as the foundation of the churches is concerned, it is clear that the writer of Acts intends to present Paul’s work as complete (pg 3). He succeeded in doing what we have only tried to do.



Causes for our failure:

We have allowed racial and religious pride to direct our attitude towards those whom we have been wont to call ‘poor heathen’. Consequently, we have preached the Gospel from the point of view of the wealthy man who casts a mite into the lap of a beggar, rather than from the point of view of the husbandman who casts his seed into the earth, knowing that his own life and the lives of all connected with him depend on the crop which result from his labor.

Approaching them in that spirit, we have desired to help them. We have been anxious to do something for them. And we have done much. We have done *everything* for them. We have taught them, baptized them, shepherded them. We have managed their funds, ordered their services, built their churches, provided their teachers. We have nursed them, fed them, doctored them. We have done everything for them except acknowledge any equality. We have done everything *for* them, but very little *with* them. We have treated them as ‘dear children’, but not as ‘brethren’ (pg 143).

What should we do?

Paradoxical as it may seem, I think that it is quite possible that the shortness of his stay may have conducted in no small measure to Paul’s success. There is something in the presence of a great teacher that sometimes tends to prevent smaller men from realizing themselves. They more readily feel their responsibility, they more easily and successfully exert their powers, when they see that, unless they come forward, nothing will be done. By leaving them quickly Paul gave the local leaders opportunity to take their proper place, and forced the church to realize that it could not depend on him, but must depend upon its own resources (pg 93). It would be better, far better, that our converts should make many mistakes, and fall into many errors, and commit many offences, than that their sense of responsibility should be undermined (pg 145).

Schism and heresy are almost unknown in our mission. But at what a price have we succeeded! If there has been no heresy, there has been no prophetic zeal. If there has been no schism, there has been no self-realization. If there has been no heresiarch, there has been no Church Father. If there have been no schismatics, there have been no apostles. If there has been no heresy, there has been no native theology. If there has been no schism, there has been no vigorous outburst of life. If there has been no danger of a breach between New Missions and the Church which founded them, there has been no great advance in the religious life of the Church. (pg 138)

Trusting the Holy Ghost:

He willingly practiced retirement, physically and morally. To do this required great faith; and this faith is the spiritual power in which Paul won his victory. He believed in the Holy Ghost, not merely vaguely as a spiritual Power, but as a Person indwelling his converts...Without faith—faith in the Holy Ghost, faith in the Holy Ghost in our converts—we can do nothing (pg 152). Lack of faith has made us fear and distrust native independence. We have imagined ourselves to be, and we have acted so as to become, indispensable (pg 143).

We can retire morally by leaving things more and more in their hands, by avoiding to press our opinion, by refusing to give it lest we should, as is often the case, lead them to accept our opinion simply because it is ours. We can retire by educating them to

understand all the working of the mission and by gradually delegating it. We can retire physically by going away on missionary tours of longer and longer duration (pg 158).

Sowing seeds and shaking dust:

Paul did not scatter seeds, he planted. He so dealt with his hearers that he brought them speedily and directly to a point of decision, and then he demanded of them that they should make a choice and act on their choice. In this way he kept the moral issue clearly before them, and made them realize that his preaching was not merely a novel and interesting doctrine, but a life...When once he had brought them to a point where the decision was clear, he demanded that they should make their choice. If they rejected him, he rejected them. 'Shaking the dust from the feet', the refusal to teach those who refuse to act on the teaching, was a vital part of the Pauline presentation of the Gospel...Can there be a true teaching which does not involve the refusal to go on teaching? The teaching of the Gospel is not a mere intellectual instruction: it is a moral process, and involves a moral response. If then we go on teaching where that moral response is refused, we cease to preach the Gospel; we make the teaching a mere education of the intellect (pp 75-76).

That's all for now. God bless you.

With love,
Marcus and Julia