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## Chapter Sixteen: Healing, 1978–1980

### **Going Home!**

As soon as we had decided to return to America, my spirits improved. I knew this was the right thing to do. We began to explore ways of making the journey as pleasant as possible.

I had long wanted to take a freighter across the ocean. These ships have room for about a dozen passengers who travel first-class and eat with the captain and his officers. I called the local office of an American shipping company and learned that one of their vessels, the SS *Michigan*, was to depart from Keelung soon. Sadly, they told me that there was no room on board. You have to book passage on these ships at least a year ahead of time.

Since we had received an anonymous gift that would enable us to afford travel by ship (which is quite expensive), I did not give up. We purchased airline tickets to Honolulu, whence I hoped we would find sea passage to the West Coast.

Once we had decided to stop over in Hawaii, we began investigating hotels there. We went to the US Information Service library to find travel guides. One rainy day, after perusing such material, we thought we would drop in on Dr. P, as her house was just down the lane. We remembered how Winnie the Pooh would have “just a little something” in the afternoon and were joking to ourselves about how we would ask her if we could have “a little something” when she opened the door. Seeing us, she said, “Hello! I was just about to have some tea. Would you like to come in and have a little something?” We chuckled with delight as we accepted her invitation, which we saw as God’s little gift to us.

I mention that incident as just one example of the gentle way God treated us over the next few months. He knew what we had been through and was starting the healing process.

Our missionary and Chinese friends showered us with love and affection as we got ready to go. No one chided or criticized us for failing to complete the full four-year term of service. Richard Chang, who had been my faithful Chinese language partner for two years, came to say farewell. He was a leader in the church who had taken time to befriend me. Just before he left our apartment, he said, “Actually, I would have preferred to speak more English with you, but I knew you needed practice speaking Chinese.”

His kindness and unselfish love struck me powerfully. I was deeply moved.<sup>1</sup>

OMF Director Ben Draper took us to the train station after warning us frankly that we would not be invited back unless and until I had fully recovered. Rosie King, a Chinese woman from the Philippines, was there to see us off. I shall never forget her smiling face as the train pulled away. Little things mean a lot at such times.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We are still friends now, nearly forty years later.

<sup>2</sup> Rosie was still serving God among Chinese residents of Taiwan in 2001.

We landed in Honolulu in the morning and immediately loved the place. The hotel we had booked was just right and within easy walking distance of Waikiki Beach. As soon as possible, I found a travel agency nearby and went to book passage on a ship. The lady laughed at me and said, “The *Lurline* (a famous luxury liner) made her last voyage months ago. There is no way you can get a place on a ship at this late date.”

Undeterred, and convinced that God wanted us to take a ship home, I said, “Well, please keep trying.”

Two days later, she called me up. “You won’t believe this, but a freighter is coming in, and a couple on board have to leave the ship and take a plane home. Their daughter is about to have her first baby, and they want to be there in time. You can have their cabin.”

Well, I *did* believe it! I had thought all along that God would provide an ocean journey for us, and he did.

After a lovely five days in Honolulu, we boarded the SS *Michigan*, the same ship I had asked about in Taiwan. We had a cabin in the stern, where a porthole gave us a view of the rolling sea. Meals with the captain and the other officers were sumptuous feasts, much more than one could eat. The gentle motion of the ship relaxed me. I loved watching the waves and the seagulls sporting in the wind. Once we saw a school of dolphins playing alongside our ship. There was plenty of time to read, to think, and to rest. I took all this as a gift from our loving Father in heaven.

We landed in Seattle and then flew to Pensacola, Florida, to visit my mother. I learned later that when my mother saw me she almost fainted with shock. I was as skinny as a rail, even after almost a week in Hawaii and five days eating the captain’s fare on the *Michigan*. She could hardly control herself when she saw how emaciated and weak I was. As we boarded the plane for North Carolina, she handed Dori a five dollar bill and said, “Get him some meat!”

When we arrived in Raleigh, North Carolina, a crowd of friends from Chapel Hill met us at the airport. I shall never forget the way they greeted us with love. One of them came up with a smile and said, “Here’s your toolbox.” He had been keeping it for me and wanted to return it right away.

They had arranged for us to stay a while in an apartment until we could find our own place. The tenants had gone on vacation. We found their tape player and began to listen to the recent Christian music. One tape – “Praise Strings” – especially spoke to my heart. As the soothing melodies surrounded me, I could almost feel God’s kind hand upon me. It seemed as if he had truly led me “beside still waters.”

After a week or two, we drove north to Ohio to visit Dori’s sister Jean and her husband Tom. Her other sister Ann was also there, along with her husband John and their children. It was a great

family reunion, for Dori's parents came, too. One night we decided to show them our slides of Taiwan.

Just as we were about to begin, I said to Dori, "I don't think the children should see the slides of temples." She heartily agreed. Then we both realized that if children shouldn't see those pictures, adults shouldn't either. That was when I started to think that we had been casualties of spiritual warfare in Taiwan. God would open our eyes further to that startling reality in months to come.

### **A Word of Promise**

Tom was going to a conference of Presbyterian and Reformed charismatics in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He invited me to go along and I accepted. What a thrill it was to worship with about five hundred devout believers as we waited upon God for his Spirit to work in our hearts! I had not been in charismatic circles much since the early days of my Christian life, more than a dozen years before, but I was not at all opposed to the idea that God's Spirit still moves in marvelous ways today. Since I am Reformed<sup>3</sup> in my theology, I thought I would be at home with these people, and I was.

The meeting on the last night of the conference sticks in my memory. Not too long after it had begun, it seemed as if God's presence had come upon us. We all grew silent. Many of us fell to our knees on the floor. We said nothing. The entire room was hushed and silent. We knew we were in the presence of a holy and loving God. The glory of God was upon us, weighty but not oppressive.<sup>4</sup>

When that sense had passed from us, we all resumed our seats, still silent. Then the elder presiding on the platform told us to worship God, which we did. After that, he told us to listen for God's voice and speak his words to each other. The young man sitting next to me, with whom I had spent some time during the conference, turned to me and said, "You are going to be healed."

His words seemed to come from God himself. I know that we must test such statements carefully, for many of them are merely the products of human imagination,<sup>5</sup> but I believed that I would indeed be healed.

### **"Mixed Motives"**

Back in Chapel Hill, we immediately sought counseling. We knew that the real reason for our early return to America was not my physical health (though that made a return necessary) but my emotional and relational problems.

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<sup>3</sup> Reformed theologians believe in God's providence and sovereign grace.

<sup>4</sup> The word for "glory" in Hebrew means "heavy."

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:30-32

Our pastor told us about a man at Duke University Hospital in Durham who counseled under the supervision of Dr. Bill Wilson, a Christian whom we had seen once before. We made an appointment right away. On the day we were to see him, we first had to register. I was shocked when they made me pay eighty dollars just for signing up to receive counseling, and we hadn't had even one session with our counselor yet!

Anger churned in my stomach as we entered the office of our counselor, whom I shall call Bob. After less than one minute, he looked directly at me and said, "You are a very angry man." He had read something about our history and had come to this conclusion for reasons which I shall share in a moment.

I shot back, "You are right! I just had to pay eighty dollars, and I am not happy about it!"

My reply took him by surprise, and he settled down a bit and explained why he had surmised that I was angry. He had just finished his PhD in counseling, with a dissertation on chronic pain sufferers. Among his findings was the fact that 80 percent of those who suffer from chronic pain, like the low back pain which I had, were filled with resentment. They tend to develop a "victim" complex: The whole world has failed them and owes them something in return. Knowing of my physical condition, he assumed that resentment had caused my pain.

He thus violated two fundamental rules of counseling: First, establish a warm and accepting relationship with someone; then, continue to listen until you begin to understand his difficulty. He had failed to communicate love and acceptance to me, and he had spoken too soon, before hearing my story.

Despite this initial blunder, however, Bob proved quite helpful to us. His main contribution was to show us that Dori was grieving our lack of children. Her sadness at being childless affected her outlook on life, including her reaction to culture shock.

Meanwhile, I began reading *Effective Biblical Counseling* by Dr. Larry Crabb, which our pastor had recommended to us. It seems that everyone in the church was reading Crabb's books. Although I learned a lot from his teaching, what struck me most was the discovery that I had some poor reasons for going to Taiwan.

Somehow – I am not sure exactly how – Crabb alerted me to base and selfish motives I had for becoming a missionary. I had thought I was going overseas in obedience to God's leading in my life, which was of course true. What I did not know, however, was that my heart was divided. Competing claims struggled for mastery within me. What the theologians call "total depravity" became suddenly real to me. I looked into my inner being and saw selfishness, pride, ambition, laziness, and many other sins.

I began to cry out to God for "mixed motives." Usually, that term refers to the sad fact that when we do things for a variety of reasons, not all of them are good. But I was asking God to give me *some* admixture of good in my otherwise totally bad motivations! My perspective had radically

changed. Instead of admitting that my motives were not always pure, I now realized that only God's grace can impart *any* godly desires within us. Otherwise, all we do is driven by sin.<sup>6</sup> We regularly deceive ourselves, though we seldom fool those who know us best.

Another insight came to me as I read Crabb's book. I do not know what passage gave me this insight, but I realized that I was applying an impossible standard to myself as a student of Chinese. One reason I did not want to speak the language as often as Dori did, and thus did not progress in the language as quickly as she or my friend Peter Anderson, was that I was afraid of making any mistakes. We had been warned that people with advanced degrees often suffer from pride, which hinders them from acting like a little child and saying what comes to mind, regardless of grammatical correctness.

When I examined my own expectations, I realized I had assumed that if you were going to say anything, you should say it right. I had learned this from my father, who spoke flawless English. He would correct my grammar or choice of words, thus sending me a clear message: Don't make mistakes. My training as a preacher and years of advanced studies in Latin and Greek had taught me to be very careful. In fact, when I left Chapel Hill for Asia, I was quite proud of my ability to speak educated, even elegant, English.

That sort of standard may be appropriate for someone with a PhD in his mother tongue, but you can't apply the same standard to someone learning a new language. Language learners are like children: They will make countless mistakes as they acquire their new tongue. Once I saw this, I relaxed and began to allow myself to "fail" as a speaker of Chinese. The liberating effect was profound.

### **Inner Healing Through Prophecy and Prayer**

In addition to giving me insights that changed my way of looking at things, over the next few months, God worked in my heart through two remarkable women.

Dori's sister Jean and her husband Tom invited us to a prayer counseling conference in Virginia. Prayer counseling – an approach that emphasized prayer more than the giving of advice – was new to me.

In the mornings we heard extensive instruction on the various components of sound, healthy Christian living and on the spiritual aspect of mental health. We learned that evil habits can create chains to enslave us, and that, additionally, any involvement with the occult will hinder us from knowing and doing the will of God. From this teaching we saw that people need more than insight; they also need to renounce the ways of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

In the course of the conference, we were led to renounce all activities forbidden by the Bible, such as fortune-telling, palm reading, using tarot cards, gazing at crystal balls, reading the horoscope, and any other behavior that seeks to know the future apart from the Word of God.

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<sup>6</sup> See Romans 3:9–20 and 7:14–24.

In the afternoons we each met with three counselors – two of our own sex and one of the other sex. The presence of three people enabled one to counsel and two to pray, and the person of the other sex could give insights from a different perspective. First, the counselors would listen to whatever was on their subject’s mind. Then, they would pray for their subject. As they prayed, they asked God the Holy Spirit to show them how to pray.

I do not remember what I shared with them, but I do recall what happened. In the course of their prayers, the woman on the team asked me, “Do you tend to want to control others, events, and yourself more than most people do?”

“That is what I have been told,” I replied. In fact, it occurred to me that a lot of my problem in Asia came from being out of control so that I was not able to protect Dori.

“I thought so,” she said, “because I seem to see a little mechanical man, almost like a gingerbread cookie man, inside you. He is very rigid. Do you mind if I ask God to remove this desire to control from you and replace it with a willingness to let yourself, others, and events be controlled by the Holy Spirit instead?”

I gave my consent, and she prayed accordingly.

“There! He’s gone!” said the woman shortly afterwards.

Inside, I could feel a sense of release. From that day forward, I noticed a substantial deliverance from the compulsion to control my life and the lives of those around me. When we had a child, the tendency to manipulate and protect showed itself again, and I still have to be careful not to fall back into that sin; but I can testify to an amazing degree of freedom from my former ways.<sup>7</sup> By God’s grace, I now tend to ask the Spirit to give me self-control, and I ask him to work in people and events much more than I used to.

This has taught me two things: First, the prayers of God’s people can bring us great freedom. Second, we need to be vigilant, always careful not to give in to our habitual patterns of sin. Otherwise, a one-time experience of deliverance may not have permanent effects. I am still trying to learn how to entrust myself, others, and situations to the sovereign control of God.

The next remarkable woman came by my house unexpectedly one day. Our good friend Caroline Raby, who had been healed of *grand mal* epilepsy, called one afternoon to ask whether she could bring a sister named Grace to see me. They had both just attended a conference about healing, and she thought Grace could help me.

You will remember that I lost my voice for a while in Taiwan and refused to say anything with religious content in Chinese. I didn’t tell Grace about any of that. I only told her what she already knew from Caroline, that I had had a hard time in Taiwan and had come home early because of back trouble and generally poor health.

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<sup>7</sup> See Romans 8:4–6 and 8:13–14 and 2 Corinthians 3:17.

Grace offered to pray for me. I gladly accepted because I liked and trusted her right away. She seemed very sane and sensible. Not long into her prayer, she said, “Have you ever had trouble speaking?”

“Yes,” I replied, surprised by her question.

“I seem to see the gospel locked up in your throat, unable to come out. What do you think that is about?” she asked further.

I then told her of my laryngitis and my fear of saying anything about Christ in Chinese. Grace prayed further and asked, “Did anyone ever place a curse on you in Taiwan?”

“I don’t think so,” I answered.

“Think hard,” she insisted. “Was anyone ever hostile to you? In my prayers I see someone cursing you in a small temple.”

I tried to remember whether anyone Chinese in Taiwan had every shown me anything but courtesy and kindness. They had all been so good to me that I almost gave up, until I suddenly remembered one incident.

“Well, there was a vegetable seller, a woman, to whom I offered a tract one day when we were all distributing tracts. She was the only person who refused to accept one. More than that, she looked at me with something like hatred. Dori told me later that she often saw this woman worshipping at the little temple behind our house.”

“You had a temple behind your place? Then this woman is the person I see in my mind as I pray for you,” Grace said. “I believe she may have cursed you. I am going to ask God to break that curse and deliver you from its effects.”

She did pray, and since then I have been totally free to express anything connected with Christianity in Chinese, despite my lack of full fluency. Her prayer and my previous insights combined to give me liberty to make mistakes as I spoke about Christ in Chinese.

### **Some Questions**

You may have some questions about the previous paragraphs. I’ll try to anticipate and answer them.

*Do I believe in prophecy for today?*

If by “prophecy” you mean any word that claims to come from God as authoritative, NO! There can be no authoritative word from God other than the words of the Bible. Furthermore, if



anything anyone says in the name of God or Christ contradicts the written word of God, we must reject it out of hand. No one should say to us, “God told me that you should do thus-and-so,” and expect us to believe and obey them. No so-called “prophet” has any authority to say, “Thus says the Lord,” or to command others to do what he says.

This is the main reason that Evangelicals oppose the pope, liberal theologians, cults (such as the Mormons), and extreme charismatic preachers: All of them claim some authority of human words beyond – and sometimes against – the clear teaching of the Bible.

There can be no new revelation of truths that we are obliged to believe and obey about God, Christ, man, salvation, the will of God, or the future other than those written in the Bible.

On the other hand, I do believe there is a kind of prophecy – unlike that of Old Testament prophets, who spoke with God’s authority – which does not carry authority but which can be useful for God’s people. This is a complicated subject, and godly people differ in their views. I respect but do not agree with those who say God does not speak to anyone today through the Holy Spirit.

If he can speak through preachers, which we all agree he does, why can’t he also speak through people who are not standing in the pulpit? If he can speak through fallible teachers, why can’t he speak through fallible “prophets” (in this sense of the word)? If he can guide us through impressions in our minds, why can’t he guide us through words? Why couldn’t he reveal to those two women the inner reasons for my bondage so that they could pray more effectively for me?

I myself constantly experience God’s guidance through what I think to be words from him, not audible, but clearly perceived in my mind. But – and this is important – I ascribe no authority to these “words”; I do not expect anyone else to believe them or act upon them or to believe that God has thus “spoken” to me. I reject any such “word” that contradicts the Bible, which I read diligently each day as the primary way of knowing God and his will.

Furthermore, I am extremely wary of people who rely on subjective guidance (including dreams, visions, and opportunities) to make important decisions. When I think I have received a “word” from the Lord to do something, I am very careful to check it out with what I know of the Bible, myself, and my circumstances. I ask advice from others whom I respect. I do not make any important decisions based on some subjective sense, for I could be self-deceived.<sup>8</sup>

In one way or another, I believe that God used the unnamed woman in the prayer counseling team and Grace to bring me to a new place of peace with God and effectiveness in ministry.

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<sup>8</sup> For those who wish to study this further, I recommend former Dallas Theological Seminary Professor Jack Deere’s *Surprised by the Voice of God*. In this long and scholarly book, he draws upon the Bible, church history (including the history of “prophets” in the Reformed tradition), and his own personal experiences to build a strong case for this type of “prophecy” in today’s Christian church. Though I do not agree with everything he writes (he seems to think all Christian should speak in tongues), I find the book as a whole quite convincing. No one should speak confidently against this point of view without reading Deere’s book carefully and with an open mind.

*Do I believe that believers can be cursed?*

We cannot be cursed by God, for Christ has died to deliver us from the curse of the law and to give us the blessing promised by Abraham. In that sense, we are more privileged than the nation of Israel was.<sup>9</sup>

Can we be harmed by curses against us? I did not previously think so because of words in Proverbs. My experience with Grace made me wonder whether I fully understood that passage, however, so now I have to say I do not know. I do know we can ask God to protect us from all spiritual harm, and if we think someone may have cursed us, we can ask God to shield us from the effects of the curse, if any.

### **Physical Healing**

Bad health had forced me to return from Taiwan two years earlier than planned. Rebuilding my physical strength became my first priority. Lessons I learned during the following two years would benefit me as well as others in the decades to follow.

Our old friend Hank Lesesne served as our volunteer family doctor. He gave me a thorough examination, then sent me to an orthopedic surgeon. The latter looked at my skinny arms and chided me for getting out of shape. He showed me exercises to strengthen my abdominal muscles, which do most of the work of holding the upper body erect. When I told him about the exercise the neurosurgeon had made me do, he confirmed the necessity of that prescription, also. He assured me that if I did a minimum of sixty sit-ups each day, I would have no more back trouble.

A chiropractor in Virginia who attended the church where Richard and Debbie McClintock now worship gave a similar diagnosis and prescribed additional exercises, as did my mother's chiropractor in Pensacola. I supplemented their words with books and articles on recovering from back injuries, so that I became something of an expert on the subject. In the forty years since then, I have done those exercises almost daily. As a result, my back has not caused me to miss a single day of work, though a weakness remains and I have to be careful.

My entire body had suffered from those years of stress in Asia, however, so I also began investigating total health. Reading books on nutrition convinced me that I must pay attention to what I ate. I began to consume less meat and more fresh fruits and vegetables. I insisted on whole grains for bread and breakfast cereals, as well as brown rice with Chinese food. My readings made me believe that I needed to supplement my diet with vitamins and minerals. Through a friend, I learned that Shaklee offered the most scientifically-based products, so I signed up as a member. I have found their nutritional supplements to be extremely beneficial ever since.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Galatians 3:13

<sup>10</sup> If you want to know more about Shaklee products, write to me through the China Institute.

I was still curious about the acupuncture I had received in Taiwan, so I searched the world-class library at the University of North Carolina Medical School for articles on that form of treatment. Research on acupuncture in the West was at its infancy then, so I only found a few studies. From these, I wrote an essay on acupuncture which I submitted to the *Chapel Hill Weekly* for publication in their Sunday supplement. When I saw my article on the front page of the magazine, I was glad my experience could be put to some use for others' benefit.

What had I learned? Mostly that acupuncture can help to reduce pain – a finding which stands today. Acupuncture can also treat other maladies, but the main use seems to be pain relief. I would not recommend that anyone receive treatment from someone who was not thoroughly trained in this procedure, however, nor do I endorse the theory and especially some of the spiritual beliefs that often attend Chinese acupuncture.

### **He “Heals All Your Diseases”<sup>11</sup>**

As a Christian, I knew that God had created our bodies, and that Jesus had healed many sick people. I myself had witnessed several miraculous healings through prayer. Convinced that God wanted me to learn more about total health, I embarked on a search of the whole Bible to see what it teaches about physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

You will remember that I read five Psalms and one chapter of Proverbs each day. I began by making notations of all passages that had bearing on this subject from these two books of the Bible, then broadened the scope of my investigation as I read other parts of the Scriptures. Whenever I came across something that seemed pertinent, I would write it on a note card and file it in its category.<sup>12</sup> After copying down the words from the Bible, I meditated upon them, praying that God would work out his truth in my life. I found this work to be most helpful and believe that it greatly sped my full recovery.

I am convinced that my physical breakdown served God's purposes, not only in my life but also in the lives of the many whom I have been able to encourage and advise, both in person and through the books that grew out of my study of the Bible.

### **Starting Over Again**

I had failed in my first attempt at missionary work. OMF Taiwan Director Ben Draper had made it very clear that we would not be allowed back to Taiwan unless and until I had completely

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<sup>11</sup> Psalm 103:3

<sup>12</sup> Eventually, I compiled a list of more than one hundred relevant passages. I later typed these out and gave them to a publisher in Taiwan. He told me that the Bible verses were not self-explanatory and asked that I write a commentary on each one. The results were published in a book entitled in Chinese, *Living More Healthily*. That edition went out of print, but another version, expanded and revised, is currently available in Chinese, published by Olive Press. You may obtain a greatly revised and expanded English version, titled *The Lord's Healing Words*, from Amazon.com.

recovered my health and had dealt with all other matters which had affected our adjustment. The US director confirmed this and told us to take an extended leave of absence from OMF.

Thus, for the time being, I was stuck in America. I had to start all over again, with no certainty that I would ever be able to return to Asia. What should I do? God, who wastes none of his children's time or abilities, immediately opened two doors.

First, the Bible Church graciously invited me to become its director of Christian education. The church was growing and had more children, and there was no one to supervise the children's education program. Nor was there an adult education plan. I was told to work on both, and I set to the task with enthusiasm.

When I began, I met with two people who had been working with children for several years, my old friends Mary Frances Boyce and Elaine Eckel. They told me what had been done so far and gave me advice on how to proceed. Then I began reading books on Christian education. I found this new field fascinating – new because my seminary had given me almost no training in this vital aspect of ministry. The book I found most useful, even profound, was *A Theology of Christian Education* by Lawrence (Larry) O. Richards.<sup>13</sup>

Richards made two points that especially struck me: first, that parents bear the main responsibility for teaching their children the Christian faith; and second, that they and their children should be learning the same truths simultaneously. In practice, that means that children and adults should be studying the same passage of Scripture on any given Sunday. The sermon and Sunday school classes should be integrated to involve the whole congregation in the learning process.

This vision is hard to implement – indeed, I have never seen it worked out – but worth contemplating. I went to work on a few basic ideas, such as the role fathers play in family education.<sup>14</sup> I organized a men's breakfast where participants could hear a talk from other Christian men and share their faith with each other. Working from the other end of the age spectrum, I led children's church during the sermon. There I tried to carry out some of Richards' ideas. I loved being with the little ones!

At the beginning of 1979, I was again elected to the Board of Elders. That brought me into the leadership of the church again, where I learned valuable lessons. I will write more on that later.

Beyond providing me with the opportunity to work in children's ministry, God also opened a second door. During this time, we had heard about a Chinese Bible study group, which met at the University Baptist Church downtown. We found their location and joined them one Friday night. It was great to be hearing Chinese again, though we found their study of the Book of Revelation hard to follow sometimes. After a few weeks, when we learned that there was some problem with continuing at the Baptist church, we invited them to meet at the location of the Chapel Hill

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<sup>13</sup> I have not found all his works equally useful. I especially disagree with his feminist interpretation of Scripture.

<sup>14</sup> See Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21; and Proverbs 1–8.

Bible Church. They accepted and have been meeting there ever since – more than forty years as I write this paragraph.

We soon entered into the Bible study and discovered a new way of ministering to the Chinese: Sharing God’s word with those who live in this country. The next two years gave us valuable experience in what became the second major phase of our missionary work among that great people.

### **Four Big Mistakes**

Lest you think that everything went well while we lived in Chapel Hill, I should tell you about four major mistakes I made. Each one violated a clear principle of the Bible and brought sadness in its wake.

The first mistake came from intellectual pride. Not long after we arrived in Chapel Hill, I met an old friend on the street. He asked what I planned to do next, and I said, “Among other things, I want to improve my Chinese, Greek, and Hebrew.” He was very impressed with my intelligence and knowledge; so was I! I left the conversation with a vague sense that I had been a bit boastful, but repeated the error when I attended the first class of Hebrew at the university. The teacher asked the students to introduce themselves and say what other languages they had studied. When my turn came, I said, “Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, French, and Chinese.” Everyone expressed admiration for me, and I swelled with pride.

God hates pride and will abase the proud.<sup>15</sup> I could not continue that Hebrew class because I injured my foot by walking too far one day in new shoes and also got sick the next week. In later years, I have often tried to recover the ability in Hebrew I had when in seminary, but without success. I must still use a lexicon, and sometimes even an interlinear version, when I read the Hebrew Old Testament. I keep working at it because I know it is important, but I shall never be a competent Hebrew scholar.

My second mistake also flowed from pride, this time spiritual pride. I had rented an office in Chapel Hill so that I could concentrate on studies and meet with men outside our home, which was a very small apartment in the town next to Chapel Hill. The arrangement worked well for many months. During that time, I was able to meet regularly for Bible study with several men and also to review a thousand Chinese characters. Dori had the freedom to be at home and see her friends there, and our life together was tranquil and peaceful.

Then one day, as I was walking home, I sensed that I should save money by moving my books back into our home. I had purchased a very large desk which I thought would fit into our bedroom. When I got home, I told Dori I had made the decision to cease renting the office and to begin working at home in our bedroom.

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<sup>15</sup> See Proverbs 15:25, 16:5, and 21:4; Isaiah 2:11–12, 5:15, and 13:11; Luke 14:11 and 18:14; James 4:6; and 1 Peter 5:5.

She thought this was not a wise decision and told me so. I did not resent her advice because I believe a wife should submit to her husband, but only after offering her opinion on important matters. Nevertheless, I ignored her counsel and insisted upon my action. That was a huge mistake, as I discovered later. Having my office at home meant constant phone calls, visitors, and a lack of peace in our bedroom. How can you relax at night when you are staring at your work desk? It is not easy! Our marriage, which needed much nurturing, suffered as a consequence of my folly.

I had violated two biblical principles. First, “Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.”<sup>16</sup> Since this had to do with our marriage and our home, I should have deferred to Dori’s wishes. She is not a selfish or ungodly woman, but she did not want to have me working from our home. The second principle is, “A wise man is he who listens to counsel.”<sup>17</sup> I not only did not heed Dori’s advice; I also don’t think I ever asked others what they thought of my proposal. I just assumed that my own subjective sense of God’s leading, based upon what I considered to be common sense (that is, saving money) was right. I didn’t even contemplate the possibility that I could be wrong!

The third mistake also reflected pride and arrogance, as well as ingratitude. You remember how much I said I was helped by the prayer counseling conference. What I didn’t tell you is that, not long after returning from that meeting, I sent the leaders a letter in which I criticized them for various flaws. I particularly objected to having a woman do all the teaching.

Perhaps some of my criticisms were right, but who was I to write such a letter? They had taken the trouble to minister to me, and here I was, attacking them with harsh words! I had offended not just the common laws of courtesy, but a clear statement of Scripture: “He who returns evil for good, evil will not depart from his house.”<sup>18</sup> I do not know how much “evil” came to me because of this hasty letter, but I am ashamed of my action.

The last mistake I want to mention brought the greatest pain, though God eventually used it for our good and his glory. We went to the beach for a brief vacation with Ross and Christine Paterson, who visited us for a month. One day, as I read Paul’s First Epistle to Timothy and prayed for God to speak to me, I sensed that I should resign from the Board of Elders. I have forgotten the particular reason for this impression, but I knew right away it was from the Lord. The words of the Bible spoke to my mind and heart as if the Spirit himself was addressing me.

I resolved to obey immediately.

When I told Dori, she disagreed. She wanted me to benefit from the association with other godly men, as well as to make a contribution to the church. Like Adam, I listened to her rather than to God.<sup>19</sup> This time, she was wrong and I was right. I violated another principle, that “whatever is

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<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 5:28

<sup>17</sup> See Proverbs 12:15, 13:10, 19:20, and many other related passages.

<sup>18</sup> Proverbs 17:13

<sup>19</sup> Genesis 3:17

not from faith is sin.”<sup>20</sup> I continued on the Board, but with an uneasy conscience. Paul and the other apostles spoke often of keeping a clear conscience, and with good reason.<sup>21</sup> If you disobey your sense of what is right and wrong, you will lose a degree of wisdom and may even end up doing things that are self-destructive, perhaps as discipline from God or perhaps as a kind of self-punishment. Like Abraham, I would repeat the same error later, as you will see, and bring upon myself unnecessary suffering.<sup>22</sup>

My aim in sharing these mistakes is to remind you of certain biblical truths so that you might avoid some of my errors and save yourself a great deal of trouble!

### **Surmounting Three Barriers**

OMF had made it very clear that we could not return to Taiwan until my health and our marriage improved. We were enjoying our ministry in the Bible Church and the Chinese Bible study. I loved living in beautiful North Carolina. Would we stay on indefinitely? Three barriers stood in the way of our return to Taiwan, two of which were hidden to me.

God is so wise that he can use anything to lead us into paths of righteousness. In this case, he used my sin of violating my conscience and sense of his leading in order to send us back to the mission field.

In the fall of 1979, the Bible Church was looking for an assistant pastor. Since I was on the Board of Elders, I participated in the interviews and the decisions. One man came with his wife. Everyone liked the man, but his wife had enough problems that our pastor decided that she would hinder her husband’s ministry in the church. Reluctantly, we decided not to ask him to come help us.

Many people, including most of the elders, thought that the next candidate who came with his wife would be suitable, but I disagreed and said so. Then the elders entered into a long and painful debate. I was the only one among five elders who believed this man should not be hired. I objected not only to his personal style – he was from California and both he and his wife seemed out of place in our Southern culture – but more importantly because of his views on divorce and remarriage.

In my understanding, remarriage after divorce violates the teaching of Jesus. Most Protestants disagree with me, but a growing number of scholars are re-examining the position of the Reformers, which allows divorce, and thus remarriage after divorce, for only two grounds, adultery and desertion.

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<sup>20</sup> Romans 14:23

<sup>21</sup> See 1 Corinthians 8:7, 10, and 12; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Timothy 1:5, 1:19, 3:9, and 4:2; 2 Timothy 1:3; Hebrews 13:18; 1 Peter 3:16; etc.

<sup>22</sup> See Genesis 12:12–20 and 20:1–7.

Our pastor accepted the traditional Protestant view, as did the other elders. They wanted to ask the California pastor to come. I said I could not, in good conscience, approve of appointing him as a minister in our church.

Our Board of Elders operated by consensus. Hitherto, that had meant that if we did not all agree on something, we would not go forward with it. Now, however, they wanted to re-interpret consensus to mean that if someone didn't agree, he would submit to the others. I objected by calling for a vote, which would allow the majority to carry out their wishes but prevent them from presenting their decision to the congregation as unanimous.

As the weeks wore on, I felt more and more lonely. Great pressure was applied to me to conform, but I would not. I nearly broke under the strain. Finally, the elders decided not to ask that candidate to come.

Why was this all part of God's plan for me? Dori and I had been very close to the leaders of the church, but this conflict put a distance between us. Furthermore, the pastor made it clear to me that he did not welcome my continued presence as an elder. That put into question my future role in the church as a leader and minister. The agony of it all helped to expose our excessive attachment to the church and to show that God wanted us to give it up and depend entirely upon him. The first barrier was down.

The next obstacle also lay within my heart, deeply hidden from view. I discovered it when we received a letter from Dr. James H. Taylor, III, the president of China Evangelical Seminary (CES) in Taipei. I had met him in Taipei when we discussed the possibility of my working in the CES Chinese Church History Research Center. Now he was asking me to take his place as instructor in Greek, since he had been appointed as General Director of OMF and would soon be moving to Singapore.

When Dori saw his letter, she exclaimed, "This is it! This is what you have been wanting to do! All your training in Classics can be used!"

I surprised both her and myself, however, when I replied, "NO! I am not going back to that place! Do you think I want to go through hell again?"

Then we realized that the deep wounds of our first term in Taiwan had not yet been fully healed. As I searched my soul for the reason for this strange reaction, I saw that I did not believe God would give me sufficient strength to endure the stresses of life there. My brother Peter joined Dori and others in urging me to accept the invitation, but I stubbornly refused.

I was reading through Isaiah at the time. One day, I came upon a verse that leapt off the page:

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Isaiah 41:10



The light of faith pierced to the center of my soul, dispelling the darkness of doubt and fear.

Within an hour, I had written a letter to Dr. Taylor, accepting his invitation to join the faculty of CES.

The final barrier – the only one of which I had been conscious – collapsed when we spoke with the new USA OMF Home Director, Dr. Dan Bacon, at Urbana '79. He could see that my health was good, my spirits high, and our marriage sound as he discussed with us our desire to return. Finally, with a smile, he said, “It’s a risk, but I’m willing to take it. You can go.”

## **Chapter Seventeen: A Second Chance, 1980–1982**

### **A New Beginning**

I felt like John Mark, who had failed in his first missionary service but to whom Barnabas gave a second chance.<sup>24</sup> We had great peace as we prepared for our second term with OMF in Taiwan, for we believed God would strengthen and use us.

As I reviewed the previous two years, I thanked God for his gracious provision. My health was restored; our marriage was stronger; and I had gained valuable church ministry experience. More importantly, the Lord had shown me some of my sins and given me a greater sense of dependence upon himself. He had provided us with thirteen different vehicles in succession, some of them free and the most expensive one being an old Volkswagen “Beetle” which we purchased for \$300 and sold for the same amount!

Although we knew we would once again face the full force of Satan, who would try to distract us from ministry and even destroy us, we were going this time with our eyes wide open. We would not enter temples or ignore the spiritual battles raging around us. By God’s grace, we resolved to put on the whole armor of God so that we might stand against the wiles of the devil.<sup>25</sup>

We took one precaution that we hoped would prevent us from being put into another undesirable living situation: We asked OMF not to find an apartment for us before we arrived. We wanted to choose a place for ourselves.

### **A Rocky Start**

We arrived in Taiwan, landing at the new Chiang Kai-shek airport in Taoyuan. Much had changed since our departure two years previously. Jimmy Carter had unilaterally abrogated the Mutual Defense Treaty with the Republic of China on Taiwan, so American military forces had departed. Ten massive construction projects were underway as part of Taiwan’s self-strengthening campaign. The railroads had been electrified, and many new and impressive buildings lined the avenues in Taipei. China Evangelical Seminary (CES) had moved into a shining six-story campus near the OMF mission home.

We had arrived in the summer, however, and a heat wave was suffocating the city of Taipei at the time. The mission home was cool enough, but Dori was overcome by heat exhaustion after walking the streets during the day. My heart filled with dread as I watched her lie on the bed, utterly weak. I feared she was going to die. Had I made another mistake by bringing her to Taiwan again?

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<sup>24</sup> Acts 13:13; 15:36–9

<sup>25</sup> Ephesians 6:10–20

After a few hours of misery, someone thought to tell her to take some salt tablets. That simple remedy worked and her vitality returned. Nevertheless, the experience reminded us that Satan would not allow our re-entry to his kingdom uncontested.

After the first night in the OMF mission home, imagine our shock when we learned that the OMF leaders had rented an apartment for us already! Our disappointment mounted as we found out that the apartment was in a suburb, two bus rides away from the language school. Disappointment turned to dismay when we saw the place for the first time. It was on a dusty lane across from a construction site, which we knew would be noisy.

We could do nothing about this, however, for the lease had already been signed. We struggled with bitterness as we moved in. The first day started poorly. As in Taichung – but much earlier – a terrible noise startled us out of bed. Something like a huge machine was rumbling just below us. After all the doors had been opened up for business that morning, we discovered that we lived right over a cookie factory!

The owners began work each morning around 4 o'clock, which is why we heard the sound of their machinery cranking up so early. Our hearts fell as we realized we had been thrown back into a situation in which we would find getting enough sleep difficult.

Things didn't get any better right away. The view outside our back window was depressing – just another high-rise apartment building less than ten feet away. I tried to block that ugly scene by putting up opaque sheets of fiber-glass, but I couldn't prevent the noises from reaching our ears. The worst sound came from an apartment on our same level, where a mother kept beating her young daughter, day after day, evoking terrible screams of pain which pierced our ears and our hearts.

Our spirits sagged further after our first day at language school. We liked the teachers, but the trip wore us out. Riding two different buses each way on busy Taipei streets, with acrid fumes assaulting our noses and lungs, aggravated our fatigue. The final blow came when we learned that we would not be attending the local church, just two blocks away, but a large church closer to the city. We protested that decision as vehemently as possible, but to no avail. Our OMF director firmly believed he had made the right choice.

Dori was struggling with depression again. I ached for her, unable to protect her from mistakes made by others (as I thought). Anger and resentment began to poison my heart. An old fear returned: Would we be able to cope? Worse, I began to wonder whether God had forsaken us.

He hadn't, of course.

### **Sufficient Grace**

Just as we were beginning to lose heart about the place where we lived, a Chinese couple on the fourth floor came down to see us. Our good friends, the Andersons, had lived in the apartment

before us and had made friends with this couple, the Liaos. Over the next few months, they became friends of ours also. Sometimes we would eat together; the husband and I occasionally climbed the path up the mountainside nearby; and they even joined us for a Bible study on Romans. The wife later became a believer and was baptized; her husband is still closed to the gospel, but they remain friends to this day, forty years later. God had not made a mistake when He allowed OMF to put us in that place.

Nor had he made a mistake in OMF's selection of a church for us. We found out later that the congregation in our neighborhood had been plagued with problems and conflicts. The church to which we had been assigned, on the other hand, was one of the best in all of Taiwan, and it still is. We began worshiping there immediately, and Syin You Tang (Friendship Presbyterian Church) remained our church "home away from home" for many years thereafter whenever we returned to Taiwan. The pastor and his wife took us under their wings and lovingly cared for us, as did other members of the church, several of whom became close friends also.

As in Taichung, so also in Taipei, we found the other members of OMF to be a constant source of encouragement. We met weekly for prayer, Bible study, and honest sharing of our joys and sorrows. This group lived out Paul's command to "rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."<sup>26</sup> United by a common purpose, to declare God's glory among the Chinese, we helped each other deal with the inevitable challenges of living and working in another culture.

We soon noticed a difference between Christian fellowship at home and on the mission field. Both in the Chinese church and in OMF, we focused not on ourselves and our own needs but on the lost condition of the unsaved masses around us. As we concentrated upon how to serve God's kingdom purposes, we became less self-absorbed.

It is true that Dori and I at first felt uncomfortable with the way some missionaries and Chinese believers would only talk about "the work" because we thought they sometimes hid their true selves behind the mask of service. On the other hand, there is also a danger that, for American Christians, our preoccupation with our own trials keeps us from experiencing the truth of Jesus' words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."<sup>27</sup> Over time, the love between us and our fellow-soldiers in spiritual warfare became very strong.

But what about that long commute to school, church, and my seminary (about which I shall tell you more in a moment)? We didn't enjoy the crowded buses and sidewalks, especially in the rain or heat. We grew weary of the journey and longed to live closer to town. We made our request known to the OMF director, and within a year he had found us a place much nearer to all that we had to do. The move came after we had learned to rely on God's strength each day and after we had built a relationship with the Liaos upstairs.

Meanwhile, the Lord had cheered us with the coming of John DeVette. We had met John in the Chapel Hill Bible Church as he was finishing college at the University of North Carolina. He and

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<sup>26</sup> Romans 12:15

<sup>27</sup> Acts 20:35

I had become friends, especially after I learned that he was thinking of going overseas to work among the Chinese. When a letter came from him announcing that he would soon be arriving and would need a place to stay, we wondered whether our apartment would be big enough for him. We knew we had no alternative but to let him live with us for a while, however, so I cleared space in my small study and it became John's bedroom.

Dori and I lost privacy for the weeks that John was with us, but God blessed our marriage while also giving us a lifelong friend and helper. John attended the English section of Friendship Presbyterian Church and took classes at the Mandarin Training Center. He had to un-learn much of what he had studied when he took Chinese at UNC, for his instructors had not corrected his pronunciation; but he quickly overcame that disability and entered wholeheartedly into the life of Chinese young people.

John became like a son to us. By helping him adjust to life in Taiwan, we helped ourselves, too. We tried to set him a good example, which forced us to watch our attitude and our actions. John, by accepting challenges with humility, faith, and cheerfulness, set us an example also. Truly, we had entertained an angel unawares.<sup>28</sup> We were sad when he moved into his own room in the home of a Chinese family.<sup>29</sup>

### **Starting at the Seminary**

After a summer of full-time language school, I switched to part-time study so that I could begin teaching at CES. The moment I entered the doors of the school, I received a warm welcome. The faculty, staff, and students all treated me with the utmost courtesy and kindness.<sup>30</sup> Thus began six years of very happy service there.<sup>31</sup>

Since Dr. Taylor had gone to Singapore, I was asked to teach elementary Greek. He had mailed the textbook to me months before. It was the Chinese version of Machen's *New Testament Greek for Beginners*. To prepare for class, I read the Chinese text, getting help from a student with the words I did not know. That way, I at least knew the technical Chinese vocabulary to speak about Greek grammar.

My twenty-one students were the largest group for that course since the seminary's inception. They were all very eager to do well but fearful of Greek, which is a notoriously difficult language to learn, especially for the Chinese. Not only are the alphabet and vocabulary new to them, but the grammar bears almost no resemblance to Chinese grammar. I tried to make the class interesting by relating the vocabulary words to the Bible, but it was still hard for them.

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<sup>28</sup> Hebrews 13:2

<sup>29</sup> John later became Asian manager for a major American company and married a local Chinese woman whom he had met at church. They became active in a Chinese church in Taipei where John served as a deacon. They later moved to Malaysia with their children and lived there for several years before re-locating to the United States again.

<sup>30</sup> Even now, each time I return I feel at home.

<sup>31</sup> I taught there for seven years. The last year was not so happy, as I shall explain later.

My ability in Chinese did not match my understanding of Greek, so I struggled to express myself clearly and even more to understand and answer their questions. I shall always be grateful for their great patience with me as a new learner of Chinese. You could say they taught me Chinese as I tried to teach them Greek! I should add at this point that the Chinese have always been extremely gentle and understanding with me as I have so often mangled their beautiful language. How different from my experience with that Parisian bookseller! One reason I enjoy working among the Chinese so much is their courtesy towards foreigners. May God himself reward them!

My poor Chinese was not the only challenge for them: I had other habits which they found equally strange. For example, I would often walk into the classroom carrying my jacket over my shoulder – something the Chinese do not do. Another, more serious departure from Chinese culture was my readiness to say, “I don’t know,” when asked a question which I could not answer. To make matters worse, I would frequently throw up my hands or shrug my shoulders when I admitted ignorance – gestures that do not have the same meaning to the Chinese as they do to Americans.

I discovered how weird they considered my personal style when, at the end of the year, they put on a skit about our Greek class. The student who played the role of Mr. Doyle did a good job, especially at the climactic conclusion when he said, “I don’t know!” before throwing his hands up and walking out with his coat over his shoulder. Everybody, including me, roared with laughter, but I think my laughter contained embarrassment as well. It is good to know how others see us; it makes us a bit less proud.

I loved those students, and I think they loved me, too. Some of them have gone on to teach in seminaries and Bible colleges. When I see them, they inevitably thank me for introducing them to Greek and brush aside my apologies for having had such poor Chinese and so little knowledge of Greek at that time.

Either that year or the next, I also began teaching New Testament Greek Reading to students who had already learned elementary Greek. We went through 1 John, 1 Peter, and Colossians, in that order. These students had more ability, and instructing them forced me to deepen my own understanding of New Testament Greek. In the process, I realized just how little I knew, since I had never really studied this subject with an expert but instead had basically taught myself. As the years passed, I tried to grow in my knowledge by reading commentaries and consulting the lexicons and grammar books. I am so grateful that God used my ignorance to drive me deeper into his word.

Gradually, I discovered the importance of Greek sentence structure for understanding the New Testament. I began to teach them how to analyze a passage, using the grammar and syntax to unlock the meaning of the text. This was probably my greatest contribution to the advanced students. It certainly helped my own preaching!

Let me show you what I mean through the example of 1 Peter 1:13, first as it is written in the New King James Version:

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

From this translation, you would think that we have to do three things at once: Prepare our minds; be sober; and set our hope on future grace. The Chinese translation conveys the same impression.

However, what Peter actually said was this: “*having girded* up the loins of your minds, and *being* constantly sober, set your hope...” In other words, there is an order to this: First, we change our mindset; then, we maintain a clear mind by keeping ourselves from any excessive attachment to food, drink, or pleasure. Only then can we set our hope on future grace. The grammar makes a huge difference in how you would apply this to your life.

While teaching that class, I committed a major mistake one day. I am not sure which passage we were studying – perhaps 1 Peter 2:13, which tells us to submit to governing authorities. For some reason, a comment made by one of the students led me to ask him, “So, do you support Taiwan independence?” He did not respond, and I thought nothing of it.

A few weeks later, the Taiwan OMF director sharply rebuked me for that remark.

“Don’t you know that it is illegal to support the independence of Taiwan?” he asked.<sup>32</sup> “You put this student on the spot and could have cost him considerable trouble. Your ignorance and naïveté could have ruined his life.”

Once again, I saw the danger of cross-cultural work if done without proper understanding of the people among whom we live. We absolutely must know which issues are vital and which of them might be taboo. Otherwise, we may inflict unnecessary harm on those to whom we are meant to minister and will damage our relationships with them. In this case, it took many years before that student would be willing to talk with me openly again. We are friends now, but only because of God’s work in his heart.

### **Learning from the Chinese**

Because the seminary had such fine teachers, I decided to make up for my own lack of an evangelical theological education by auditing some of their classes. Over the years, I attended a few sessions of Dr. Caleb Huang’s course on Romans, as well as classes on ethics, evangelism, theology, Old Testament, and Hebrew. I gained a great appreciation for the work of these excellent and hard-working instructors while I broadened my knowledge both of the subjects they taught and of Chinese theological vocabulary. I regret to say, however, that I did not persevere in this habit; my attendance was spotty and inconsistent. I especially wish I had continued in the Hebrew, New Testament, and theology classes. Both my understanding of these subjects and my ability in Chinese would be much better today if I had.

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<sup>32</sup> Later, the government changed that law, but it was in force at the time.

There were several required meetings which did provide me with rich instruction, however: chapel services, prayer meetings, and faculty meetings. We heard sermons from students and faculty three times a week in chapel. In the other meetings I listened to Chinese Christians talk about all sorts of matters for several hours a week, year after year. This exposure both improved my comprehension of the language and added to my understanding of how Chinese believers deal with policy and personnel questions. “He who walks with the wise will be wise.”<sup>33</sup> I certainly absorbed wisdom from my Chinese friends.

From the sermons I gained great appreciation for the zeal and dedication of Chinese believers. Many of the students had paid a high price for choosing to leave their careers and enter full-time Christian ministry. Their love for God and his church deeply moved me on many occasions.<sup>34</sup>

I also learned to have some fun. Once or twice a year, the entire seminary would go on an excursion or retreat to some place outside the city. The students would take over the program, which always featured lively games and contests. Watching them frolic in the great outdoors showed me another side of the Chinese character and made me realize that they are not only diligent workers; when they have the chance, they can have a great time at play.

The entire seminary community ate lunch together in the dining room. I joined them for several years. The food was mostly quite good, and the fellowship built strong bonds of love and appreciation for my students and fellow faculty. Eating together has that effect, which is perhaps why the early Christians often took meals in each other’s homes.<sup>35</sup> Conversations around the table (the tables were round, in traditional Chinese fashion) also afforded me many new insights into their way of life and increased my respect for them.

### **Embarking on a Major Project**

Not long after I began teaching Greek, I discovered that no adequate Greek-Chinese dictionary of the New Testament existed. Dr. Taylor had told me this and had given me a file of Greek words and Chinese definitions which he had started to compile in preparation for making such a dictionary. Using his cards, I began to write down definitions from various versions of the Chinese New Testament.

A few months later, I attended a meeting of Greek teachers from the major seminaries on the island. I was the junior member there and the only foreigner. Towards the close of the meeting, I brought up the need for a Greek-Chinese lexicon of the New Testament.<sup>36</sup> The other teachers all agreed that this was an urgent necessity, so I urged them to form a committee to produce such a

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<sup>33</sup> Proverbs 13:20

<sup>34</sup> It still does. Several years ago, I attended a CES graduation ceremony in Taiwan. As the choir sang, I was overcome with emotion because of the graduates’ dedication to God and his kingdom.

<sup>35</sup> Acts 2:42–7

<sup>36</sup> A “lexicon” is a dictionary that quotes passages from the literature – in this case the New Testament – as examples of various possible meanings of each word.



book. As we went around the room, each man said he was just too busy to undertake such a major project. Finally, the senior professor looked at me and said, “You do it.”

I was dumbfounded. How could I, a young foreigner with little understanding of Chinese, even think of attempting such a work? He insisted, however, and the others agreed with him, so I decided to try. Little did I know how massive an undertaking this would prove to be or how much I would learn from it!

Returning home, I told Dori of this new challenge. She expressed support, both then and for the following years of hard work.

At first, I thought I would just translate the *Shorter Lexicon* made by Gingrich. Then, at the strong recommendation of several people, including the seminary president, I decided we should translate the standard work, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, edited by Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker. This is a 900-page volume with two columns of fine print in English and Greek on each page.

Naturally, I could not hope to translate such a book – or any book – into Chinese. My only recourse was to enlist Chinese assistants to do the work. For that, however, I had to have people who knew both Greek and English well enough to render this book into Chinese. I turned to my students, several of whom eagerly accepted the challenge.

As editor, I laid down general guidelines, assigned portions to each translator, and checked the accuracy of their work. At first I tried to read their translations, but I soon realized that my eyes were wearing out and that my Chinese would never be fluent enough to evaluate the faithfulness of their renderings in Chinese, so I adopted another method: I would ask one of them to read the manuscript to me aloud while I kept my eyes on the English original. If I had questions, I would stop the reader, and we would talk the matter over until we had come to an agreement as to the suitability of the translation.

You can imagine how this task helped me learn both more Greek and more Chinese! It taught me something else, too, perhaps far more important (for I quickly forget all the Greek and Chinese definitions!): To rely on God. You see, I am not gifted in administration, but I had to oversee a project that took five years and involved more than a dozen people. Nor am I attentive to details, but a lexicon is nothing but a million details! I had to be scrupulously faithful, even making sure that small punctuation marks (such as commas and semi-colons) were transferred from the English edition to the Chinese edition without any change.

Our Lord demonstrated his faithfulness, wisdom, and power on several occasions. Right at the beginning, I decided that the Chinese edition should not include references to early church literature (other than the New Testament) or references to later scholarship, including German scholarship. However, the original edition was done by a German scholar named Bauer, and the German publisher holds all the rights to this book. I was thrilled when one of our German OMF

co-workers, after an hour-long conversation to Berlin by phone, was able to persuade the publisher to let us excise material that our Chinese friends would not really need.

The German publisher did insist on one thing, however: The Chinese translation must be checked not only with the English (from which we were translating) but also with the German original. Where would I find anyone who knew English, German, Greek, and Chinese well enough to do this job? I announced this need, and a Korean student from the seminary showed up! He had taught himself Chinese by listening to the radio while on duty as a soldier on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Clearly, he was a linguistic prodigy, just perfect for our requirements.<sup>37</sup> Only God could have furnished such an answer to prayer!

### **Serving in a Church**

When we first arrived at Syin You Tang (the Chinese section of Friendship Presbyterian Church), we were introduced to the pastor, Andrew Shen (Shen Cheng) and his wife Eileen. As I have said, they received with us warmth and courtesy, as did all the other members of the church. Pastor Shen invited us to attend the church meetings, including the prayer meetings, and told us he would decide on our place of service later.

Months went by, during which we wondered whether he would ever tell us how we were to serve in his congregation. As time passed, we grew a bit impatient. Finally, Pastor Shen announced his decision: We would be advisors to the Young Adults' Fellowship. Only later did we realize that he was pursuing the course of prudence. He wanted to observe us for a while before assigning us to any particular group.

We spent seven years in the Young Adults' Fellowship. In addition to attending the weekly meetings, I spent time with the leaders in planning and prayer. Over the years, we grew very close to many of the people in the group, many of whom remain good friends to this day.

Dori and I had considerable experience in small groups, and we believed that the fellowship would benefit by dividing into small groups for Bible study, sharing, and prayer. Months passed before I could persuade the chairman to hold a training session for potential group leaders, however. When the day came, I was ready with an outline and lots of good advice on how to conduct a small group meeting.

My ignorance of Chinese etiquette damaged my efforts right at the outset, however. Refreshments sat before us on the table. I was hungry, so I immediately began eating some of the delicacies in front of me. I did not notice that no one else took anything. I continued eating as I began to teach, chewing and speaking at the same time. It was several months before I observed that the Chinese seldom begin eating the refreshments as soon as they are put out at a meeting; they wait for a while, then follow the lead of the chairman before partaking.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> In addition to Greek, English, and German, he also knew Latin.

<sup>38</sup> It is like our custom of waiting to eat until the hostess picks up her fork and takes the first bite.

I thought the meeting went well and was pleased with the initial response. The next week, however, the chairman told me that the proposed small group meetings would be “temporarily discontinued.” I couldn’t get him to explain why, and I don’t know the reason even today. I do know, however, that I had not made a good impression by my breach of etiquette.

Several years later, the fellowship did re-introduce small groups. Once again, I was asked to give the training. This time, of course, I restrained my impulse to eat right away. I also included some more practical instruction, based on experience in our Chinese church and my knowledge of our fellowship. The groups succeeded that time.

I learned something new after that second training seminar, however. Eileen, our pastor’s wife, was also an advisor. On the way home, she said, “You know, we Chinese are not like you Americans. From youth, we are told not to express our opinions. That is why speaking up in a small group is hard for us.” If only I had known that much earlier, I would have addressed the problem more effectively. Actually, I could have deduced this problem from my own observations, but I was not culturally alert enough to do so.

Dori joined the choir not long after we began attending the church, as she had done in Taichung during language school. She loves to sing and quickly got involved in the fellowship of choir members. She soon became friends with a few of the younger women. They enjoyed having an “older sister,” and she was encouraged by their earnest love for God. Once again, I was very proud of the way Dori was able to learn Chinese characters well enough to sing hymns and anthems.

Within the first year of our second term, therefore, we were happily settled into a church, our work at the seminary, and the OMF group in Taipei. We thanked God for his mercy and kindness towards us, expressed often through the people, Chinese and non-Chinese, whom he had put into our path.

There was just one outstanding problem: We had no children.

**“Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD”<sup>39</sup>**

When we were first married, Dori and I planned to wait two years before having children. As time went on, we discovered that “family planning” does not always work. God has his own plan, which he will carry out despite our best efforts. By the fall of 1981, we had been married fourteen years without having children. Our Chinese friends had often asked us why we were childless; some of them even ventured to give us what they thought would be helpful advice. This only increased our pain.

Doctors had concluded that we would probably not be able to have a child naturally, so we began to investigate adoption. We made contact with an adoption agency and were told that there was a

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<sup>39</sup> Psalm 127:3

Chinese woman who was pregnant with a child by a European man. The social worker came by to interview us and gave us forms to complete.

During this process, we had peace from God that we were pursuing the right course. Before the second interview with the social worker, however, as I read the Bible I came across the story of Abraham and Sarah, his aged wife. I was reading in the Greek Old Testament where it says, “The word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘... one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.’”<sup>40</sup>

As I read this passage, it seemed as if God himself was speaking to me. Suddenly, I had faith that God would give us a child through Dori. The funny part is that the Greek word for “word” in that verse was *rhema*. I had just written an article refuting the common idea that *rhema* always refers to a particular word of God to someone, as distinct from *logos*, which (according to this teaching) means a general word of God to everyone. My analysis of the Greek was correct, but God has a sense of humor. He used this passage, with the word *rhema* in it, to speak straight to my heart!

A conversation with a seminary student fed my confidence. We met in the hall one day, and she told me that she and her classmates had been praying for Dori and me to have children. She said that she was convinced that God had answered their prayers. I knew he could work what would, in effect, be a minor miracle.

Years ago, our friends the Patersons had given us a lovely Chinese scroll with the words, “He is willing. He is able.” We believed in his love and power; we just did not know his particular will for us. Now I thought I knew.

I went to Dori with this message from God (as I thought) and told her to cancel the second interview with the social worker. She did not readily agree with me. How could we be sure God had spoken to us? I was convinced, however. We compromised: I told her to get a pregnancy test at a local laboratory. You can imagine how crushed we both were when the test came back negative. The cold, impersonal way in which the lab technician communicated this news increased our dismay.

Doubt assailed me once again. Had God spoken or not? Was I so deceived? I still had faith, however, that this was indeed his word to me, so I asked Dori to get another test the next week. This time the results brought us unspeakable joy: She was indeed pregnant!

**“In pain you shall bring forth children”<sup>41</sup>**

Despite our great happiness, the next few months were anything but easy.

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<sup>40</sup> Genesis 15:4

<sup>41</sup> Genesis 3:16

Within a few weeks after discovering that she was expecting, Dori began to have problems. I had begun a class on *tai qi quan* (shadow boxing) at the National Taiwan University. I loved learning how to do the slow, rhythmical movements. I was gaining some ability, too. Then the doctor ordered Dori to stay in bed as much as possible, so I had to quit the class and go home, which I did willingly.

Dori conceived in January. She was quite ill for the first three months or so, but after that she felt much better. I thought she was getting prettier and prettier every day. We took long walks at the nearby National Taiwan University campus for her to get exercise. Then summer came. We lived on the fourth and top floor of an apartment building, so the sun beat down on the roof above us, just as it had in Taichung. The heat became almost unbearable for Dori, despite the air conditioner we had put in our bedroom. Going to the market and then climbing four flights of stairs was too much for her, so I began to do the shopping.

She was going to have the baby at the Taiwan Adventist Hospital, which was run and partly staffed by foreigners. Her doctor was an American who believed in childbirth without anesthesia, so we attended classes on the Lamaze method. She did her exercises faithfully, and I did them with her. We were ready.

But God had other plans. The due date came and passed with no sign that the baby was coming. One week, then two weeks, went by. We were getting anxious. In the third week after the due date, Dori's doctor decided to induce childbirth. Dori went to the hospital after labor had begun. We were deeply moved when Dr. and Mrs. Paul Han came to visit us there, for we knew how busy they were. Dr. Han was the leading elder in our church and a physician. They left thinking that Dori would soon give birth, but they were wrong. The doctor gave more medicine, including anesthesia. Nothing worked, so he decided to perform a Caesarian section because the baby was showing signs of stress. As I watched Dori in pain, my heart went out to her.

Compelled by the physician to accompany Dori into the operating room, I watched most of the process. I was there when he took the little baby out and gave her to the nurse to wash and then place on Dori's breast.

Now I must tell you another funny story. Sometime in the spring, I had again been reading in the Old Testament, this time the story of the birth of Samuel. As I read, I seemed to sense God's voice saying to me that the child would be a boy and that we should call him Samuel. We had no sonogram to prove the sex of the baby, but the constant kicking which Dori felt convinced me that it was a boy. Dori did not like the name Samuel, but I was insistent. This was going to be our first conflict.

Imagine her relief, and my consternation, when the baby came out as a little girl! I had not heard God's voice after all! At least we avoided an argument, because we had agreed that a girl would be given the name Sarah Elizabeth (reminding us of two women in the Bible who had children in their old age).<sup>42</sup> I loved my little daughter from the beginning.

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<sup>42</sup> Genesis 18:12; Luke 1:5–25



The Young Adults' Fellowship,  
Taipei, 1982

With Janet Adams, who later joined OMF, 1982



A seminary couple whom I had  
introduced to each other,  
at their wedding, 1983

## **Chapter Eighteen: Diapers on My Desk, 1982–1984**

### **Diapers on My Desk**

Sarah's birth radically changed our lives, as all parents know.

To begin with, we lost a great deal of sleep. Dori was nursing her on demand, so she had to get up at all hours of the night to feed her. Because Sarah was so small, she slept in our room for several months. I wanted her to move into her own room sooner, but Dori was concerned about leaving Sarah alone. Thus we both woke up when Sarah cried at night. I have never been so tired in all my life.

Since Dori's mother could not come to Taiwan, OMF graciously provided help for us in the person of Ina, a missionary from South Africa who was also a nurse. Ina came daily and assisted with housekeeping and childcare for several weeks. She probably saved both Dori and me from losing our minds!

Dori quickly had to decide whether to abide by the Chinese customs for new mothers. They believe that a woman who has just borne a child is fragile and should be protected from all danger of disease. Thus, the traditional Chinese mother will not wash her hair, bathe, or leave her home for a month after childbirth. She will also eat special foods, particularly chicken soup, in order to rebuild her health.

We wanted to honor the sensitivities of our hosts, but Dori could not stand the thought of not washing her hair or leaving home for a whole month. Without any of the Chinese knowing it, she bathed as usual. She did wait a couple of weeks before going outside, and when she went she stayed close to home.

We also had to balance our desire for quiet and rest with the desire of our Chinese friends to come and visit us. Ina helped us keep well-meaning people from wearing Dori out with long visits. I hope we didn't offend anyone.

Please do not misunderstand me here. We loved our Chinese friends and greatly appreciated their love for us. However, Dori felt she needed time alone at home without having to talk with anyone outside the family other than a few close friends, such as Mary Jeanne Buttrey, a fellow missionary.

We had been concerned about our finances because OMF provided no medical insurance, and we didn't have enough money for the unexpected Caesarian section. The people in the Chinese section of Friendship Presbyterian Church surprised us by presenting us with a love offering of US \$1,200, which was just enough to pay the hospital bill. We thanked God for their generosity and love. Perhaps this is one reason we have always felt so close to them.

Having a little baby bound us more closely to the church in other ways. One young woman said, “Now at last we have a real baby doll.” Let me explain what she meant. The Chinese term for doll is *yang wawa*. *Yang* means “Western” and *wawa* is an onomatopoetic word for “infant” (it mimics the sound of a baby’s cry). At that time, most of the baby dolls available in Taiwan were blond and blue-eyed with white skin, which is why they called them “Western.” Our Chinese friends were delighted to have a little doll-like white baby in their midst to love and play with.

Sarah’s presence opened many new doors for us. Whenever we went out, people would smile at her and ask us about her. Waitresses in restaurants would pick her up and cuddle her in their arms, cooing with great pleasure. Once a waitress took Sarah completely out of our sight. She had gone into the kitchen to show her co-workers the little *yang wawa*. After five minutes or so, we began to wonder whether Sarah had been kidnapped! We needn’t have been afraid, however, for she soon appeared, squealing with delight as the waitress played with her.

It wasn’t always that easy, however. The Chinese believe that thumb-sucking is harmful and usually do not allow their little babies to develop it. They are right, of course, but Dori did not think so and did not see how she could prevent Sarah from keeping her thumb in her mouth. That led to some awkward moments, as Chinese people would tell us Sarah shouldn’t be sucking her thumb or would sometimes even pull her hand away from her face! They meant well, but we felt they were being intrusive.

As the months passed, Sarah did something even more embarrassing for us: She would pull up her little skirt and insert a finger into her navel! This undignified practice elicited even more comments and looks from the Chinese. In this case we did agree with them, but felt powerless to prevent the behavior.

Dori later commented that parents can get their children to do what they, the parents, have confidence to enforce. For example, the Chinese believe they can force their children not to suck their thumbs, to sit up straight, and to say “Hello, Auntie,” on command. We don’t. They also believe that teenagers can be made to show respect and to obey their parents’ wishes. We don’t have confidence about that, either. On the other hand, Americans often think we can get toddlers and young children to obey our commands not to touch things or run around in public places. Most Chinese parents don’t think this is possible, so they often let their little ones act in ways that we consider to be highly annoying.

Living cross-culturally teaches you a lot about yourself and your own culture. If you overcome being defensive, you begin to see the good points in both cultures. In time, you even become critical of some of your own culture’s ways of doing things. We often thank God that he gave us the privilege of living among the Chinese and learning from them.

Sarah’s arrival certainly changed our lives. Dori concentrated her time and energy upon being a mother for the next eighteen years until Sarah went off to college. She had always been committed to her ministry as a wife and homemaker and longed to serve God as a mother. Now



she found that bringing up a child was far more difficult and demanding than she had imagined. At times she wondered where she would find strength for this full-time task.

I tried to help as much as possible. After Ina completed her time with us, I had to learn how to do some of the cooking (though I soon forgot!) and to wash diapers. I shall never forget rinsing out the diapers on the balcony outside our kitchen on cold winter nights. My new role as a father was vividly symbolized for me when I realized one day that there were diapers instead of books on my desk!

The weather was cool when Sarah was born in October. As summer approached, the heat became almost unbearable again for Dori. How were we going to survive the long months of Taipei's torrid temperatures and stifling humidity? God showed his tender care for us by moving an American couple to offer us their home while they returned to the United States for a one-month vacation. They lived on a mountain outside of Taipei in a lovely house. We thanked God daily as we enjoyed the relatively cool weather and the quiet of their detached dwelling for that month. The Lord had stepped in to keep us from being tested beyond our strength.<sup>43</sup>

### **An Intense, Happy Year**

Living on the fourth floor of an urban apartment with no elevator posed such difficulties for Dori that we began to think of moving to a more convenient location. The seminary had faculty apartments and we were offered one. Our OMF director advised us to be cautious, for he feared that we would be overwhelmed by the intensity of life at the seminary. We decided to accept the challenge, however. I shall always be thankful for that year.

We lived on the fourth floor, but the elevator made all the difference. We installed two air conditioners, and there were two floors above us, so we didn't suffer from the heat. Our small living space was easy to take care of, relieving Dori of some work. We ate lunch in the seminary cafeteria, which also saved her time. We were surrounded by loving people who showered us with affection and bathed our lives with their prayers.

That year in the seminary cemented our bond with our Chinese friends, and we were accepted as full members of a vibrant Christian community. As before, I attended the almost daily chapel services, the faculty meetings, and other seminary events. Now Dori could take part as well. Naturally, our ability in the Chinese language grew by leaps and bounds, immersed as we were in a Chinese-speaking environment.

Across the hall from us lived Dr. Isaac Tam and his lovely family. The Tams were from Hong Kong and had spent many years in Canada, so they spoke fluent English and understood our cultural background. I had always greatly admired Isaac for his wisdom and fairness. Now we grew to love them as dear friends. They had three delightful children, and Isaac was a specialist in early childhood psychology, so we learned valuable lessons from them.

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<sup>43</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:13

I'll never forget one of his comments to me. Sarah and his young son were playing happily in the hall as we watched them. I commented that Sarah was a bit rebellious sometimes – she was almost two at the time – and remarked that perhaps I should have begun using corporal discipline on her earlier. He quietly said, “Yes, I think so.” Unlike most Chinese Christians, he believed that the biblical teaching about discipline and the injunctions to use “the rod” applied to little children.<sup>44</sup> What struck me more, however, was his willingness to administer this very gentle rebuke to me; clearly, he considered me to be an indulgent father.

### **Learning from God**

I had heard that becoming a father would teach me new truths about things, and that certainly happened. Perhaps a better way of saying it is that I learned some old truths with a new depth and perspective.

For example, one of my favorite verses became, “As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him.”<sup>45</sup>

Sarah was very thin as a baby. When she was only six weeks old, we took her back to the United States to meet the family. Dori's sister Jean, who is a nurse, took one look at Sarah and said, “She needs to be drinking formula instead of just her mother's milk.” We took her to see a doctor, who confirmed that judgment, and we began giving Sarah more nourishment.

Parents can't always protect their offspring, however. After visiting Dori's family in Richmond, we flew to Pensacola, Florida, to see my mother and siblings. One evening, a family member who had a very serious throat infection spent a lot of time with Sarah. I was concerned that she might give Sarah her illness, and my fear turned out to be prophetic. Sarah developed a respiratory condition that lasted six months. From then on, until she was fourteen years old, she was plagued with colds and infections in her throat and sinuses.

I watched her suffer and shared her agony. Her cries pierced my heart with pain. Then I began to gain a better understanding of God's pity for his children. The scripture I quoted above refers primarily to God's mercy towards us when we sin, but the principle remains the same. He does not enjoy watching us suffer.

I also learned more about our heavenly Father's stern discipline of his children. She had been waking up in the middle of the night, crying out for her mother's milk. As the months wore on, Dori and I became more and more fatigued. Sarah didn't seem to be happy, either. How could we get her to sleep through the night?

One day I spoke with a young mother who worked in a neighborhood grocery store. I knew she had given birth to a baby not too long before Sarah was born. To make conversation, I asked how she was sleeping.

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<sup>44</sup> Proverbs 3:11–12, 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, 23:13, 29:15

<sup>45</sup> Psalm 103:13

“Fine,” she responded cheerfully.

Puzzled, I pressed for more information. “How is your baby sleeping? How often does he wake you up at night?”

“He sleeps through most of the night.”

“How did you manage that?” I asked in disbelief and wonder.

“Simple. After a few months, we put him down in his crib and let him cry until he fell asleep. The first night, he cried about fifteen minutes. It was hard, but we didn’t go in to respond to him. The next night, he cried ten minutes. The third night, five minutes. Since then, he’s slept until early morning.”

I went home, excited, and told Dori what I had heard. She was as surprised as I was, because Chinese parents (and their grandparents!) usually can’t stand to let their infants cry. I thought this young woman’s fortitude to be most impressive and urged Dori to follow her example. Dori wasn’t ready, however.

When we went to stay at the house on the mountain, however, we resolved that we must force Sarah to sleep through the night, or we would all go crazy. We followed the woman’s advice. The first night, we nearly died with pain as we listened to Sarah howl in her room. The next night was slightly easier on us, since she didn’t cry as long. The third night she fell asleep even sooner, and the fourth night she fell asleep right away and slept until morning.

From this I learned that God sometimes lets us “cry” in order to teach us obedience. He will discipline us until we learn lessons of submission and trust. His pity for us does not prevent him from training us in faith, hope, and love, usually through adversity.<sup>46</sup>

Just as I had read books about marriage each year in order to profit from the wisdom of others, so I now began to study books on parenting. One of the most helpful was Dr. Bruce Narramore’s *Parenting with Love and Limits*. Unlike most other works on the subject, this book attempted to lay out a complete theology of parenting. Using God as his model, Narramore showed us how to imitate our heavenly Father as we bring up our own children. Since then, I have often meditated on Paul’s words, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.”<sup>47</sup>

We saw Sarah’s original sin right away. Once, when she was only a few months old, we told her not to touch an electrical outlet. She looked at us, moved closer towards the outlet, looked at us again, moved closer again, and then reached out her finger towards the socket. We grabbed her hand and slapped her, eliciting a loud howl. She had obviously been testing us.

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<sup>46</sup> See Hebrews 5:7–8 and 12:5–11.

<sup>47</sup> Ephesians 5:1

I think that my affection for my daughter blinded me to the inborn tendency to rebel which all children possess, and it kept me from training her as strictly as I should have. I am grateful that she has grown into a very obedient young woman anyway, despite our faults as parents, but I know her life would have gone better if I had been more diligent in discipline.

### **Life Together**

Although we loved living in the seminary, we did have to put up with some frustrations occasioned by life in community.

The women's dorm was on the floor above us. Ordinarily, the students were quiet, but sometimes they tested our patience. Every once in a while, they would hold a late-night, or even all-night, prayer meeting. In their zeal, they would sometimes cry out with loud voices or pound their fists on the floor in importunate prayer. We could not criticize them, but we did wish that they had prayed elsewhere.

Another annoyance was more long-standing. One of the students brought a homeless relative in to live with her. This woman apparently wore hard-heeled sandals, which made a loud noise each time she took a step. As she walked back and forth at odd hours of the day and night, we heard every move. We had a hard time loving her in our hearts after she had interrupted our sleep many nights in a row. Later, when we heard her story, we were a bit more sympathetic, but we did ask her relative to alert her to the needs of those living below her.

A more humorous relationship existed between us and two of our next door neighbors, the president of the seminary and his wife. His bathroom was on the other side of the wall from Sarah's room, so she could hear him knock the water off his toothbrush in the mornings and evenings. On Sunday afternoons, the cacophonous sounds of traditional Chinese opera, which he watched on television, penetrated the thin walls between us. We didn't mind, however. We were glad he could get some much-needed recreation.

We did find that living in the seminary building imposed some pressures upon us. Chinese Christians do not talk much about the need for husbands and wives to spend time together, much less about couples going out for a meal or recreation. At least in those days, such activity could be looked upon as unspiritual.

I was a maverick in this, as in many other aspects of Christian living. I not only urged my students to spend time with their wives and to take them out on dates once a week, but I followed my own advice. Sometimes, as we left the building, we would respond to the question, "Where are you going?" with "We have something to do." We didn't dare to say that we were going out for dinner or a walk in the park.

## Hints of the Future

Dr. Carl Henry visited the seminary not long after we returned from furlough. After listening to his lecture, based upon a chapter from his massive series *God, Revelation, & Authority*, I purchased one of the volumes and ask him to autograph the book. I began immediately to read it. The first chapter was so powerful that I resolved to finish the entire volume, but my resolve failed me when I encountered philosophical and theological discussions that were difficult for me to comprehend. I stopped reading. Little did I know that I would one day make the promotion of Henry's thought one of the main goals of my ministry!

At about the same time, I began taking an interest in the un-evangelized people of Taiwan. Joseph Chen, one of the faculty members, let me sit in on several of his classes, during which he convinced me that Christians in Taiwan needed to carry the Good News beyond the large cities and into the dozens of towns with more than 40,000 inhabitants but no Christian church.

Another interest also developed in those days. I had heard of an orphanage outside of Taipei. It was run by Christians, so they welcomed people to come and share the Bible with the children. At first I rode there with others, then (in our next term of service) drove out there by myself on Sundays. My heart warmed as more than a dozen little waifs would run to the gate to greet me, crying, "Teacher Dai [my Chinese surname] is coming! Teacher Dai is coming!" They were so hungry for the word of God that they didn't mind my broken Chinese as I told them Bible stories. They would press closely around me just to be near me. Sometimes they would stroke my forearm, intrigued by its hair (since the Chinese tend to have less body hair than white people). Though these Sunday afternoon visits tired me out and took me away from my family, they greatly encouraged my faith.

Still another open door beckoned to me: The leaders of the Campus Evangelical Fellowship (CEF, sister organization to Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship in the United States) asked me to participate in their staff training program. I happily accepted, and thus began a relationship that has remained close since then. I trembled each time I entered the classroom, for some of the trainees knew the Bible better than I did, and my Chinese was still elementary. They had humble and open minds, however, and kindly encouraged me to share what I had learned from God.

## Ministry to Missionaries

OMF workers in Taiwan at this time numbered almost one hundred adults, plus children. Mature men were in short supply, however. After a year or two, I was elected to the OMF Field Council, a group of four or five missionaries who advised the director. We met quarterly for a full day. I always learned a great deal from these gatherings, for all the other members had far more experience than I did. God used this association with more mature missionaries to broaden my knowledge of both OMF in Taiwan and of missionary work in general.

OMF always operates on a relatively low budget and never asks people for financial support. Its two principles – faith in God and frugality – have served it well since Hudson Taylor founded

the mission in the mid-nineteenth century. Sometimes God tested our faith by bringing scarcity into our lives, forcing us to look to him in new ways. When giving was lower than usual, we all had to live on less. We never lacked essentials, but we learned to do without luxuries.

One year, the field did not have enough money to pay for a speaker to come from OMF International Headquarters in Singapore to address the annual Field Conference, as was the custom. Imagine my surprise when they asked me to serve as the main Bible teacher for the five-day conference! Conscious of my lack of knowledge and experience to open God's Word to such a fine group of fellow workers – many of whom were older and had served more years in Taiwan than I – I threw myself upon God for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

John Stott's book on the first three chapters of Revelation, *What Christ Thinks of the Church*, had captured my attention. As I pondered the vision of Christ which John described, I realized that we need a clear view of our Lord in order to worship and serve him better. Sometimes we are driven by pictures more than by principles, by images more than by ideals. A defective conception of Jesus will certainly hinder us from loving him, obeying him, and proclaiming the good news about him.

Other missionaries seemed to agree, for their responses to the series greatly encouraged me.

### **Storm Clouds**

One reason I wanted to take part in the CEF staff training was my growing disillusionment with the academic seminary approach to theological education. While I was still at Discipleship Training Centre in Singapore, I had written a short essay entitled, "Jesus' Seminary, or Ours?" but I had not shown it to anyone. As I compared how Jesus trained the future leaders of the church, I could not help but notice the contrast between his methods and those of even the best seminary. In brief, I thought that seminary education focused too much on the academic and did not allow students to integrate what they were learning with their life and ministry. The CEF program resembled Jesus' approach much more, so I felt an affinity with them.

I was thus developing divided loyalties. Even as the president of the seminary kept asking me to teach more courses – a great honor for a foreigner – I was spending time with another group. I could do so because our OMF director, himself once a staff worker with CEF, supported me. The president was not pleased, however.

Another potential conflict surfaced when I realized that the president had a very different view of the role of women in Christian ministry than I had. Again, to be brief, I thought the Bible taught a more traditional view (that women should not teach or lead men), and he believed that women should exercise all the offices and ministries that men did.

I believe firmly in loyalty and submission to authority, so one day I took the bull by the horns and asked to talk with him. I explained that I had noticed this difference of viewpoint between us and asked whether I was free to propound my understanding of the Bible on this issue. He very

graciously, even boldly, replied, “Of course! We have total academic freedom here. In fact, you can attempt to persuade them of your stance. I don’t think you will succeed, but you have my permission to try.” I left his office with even more admiration for him than before, convinced that we would have no conflict in the future. Looking back, I see that I was naïve, primarily because I did not understand the workings of the Chinese authority structure.

Our first conflict came from an unexpected direction. We had been in Taiwan for almost four years, the normal term of service for OMF missionaries. Home Assignment (the new name for furlough) was around the corner. I had told the president at the beginning that we would have to return home after four years. Now, however, he invited me to stay on. He liked me, he said, partly because I was a popular teacher and partly because I seemed to be unlike other Western missionaries: I appeared to be less confrontational, brash, and prejudiced than some missionaries he had known in the past. It also helped that I wore a Chinese-style jacket on occasion.

I reacted quite positively to his invitation to stay on. Dori was willing to live in the seminary campus for another year, despite all the stress of dwelling in such close quarters. I loved my work and the people around me. I asked our deputy director, a man with decades of experience in Asia, for permission to postpone Home Assignment for another year because the seminary faced a shortage of teachers and urgently needed my help.

His response surprised me. He told me that OMF had discovered that after four years, most missionaries began to show signs of fatigue and burnout. If we were to have an effective long-term ministry in Taiwan, we should follow the rules and go home for a year, both to rest and to rebuild our support base. As for the seminary’s need, he rather coolly observed that the president could have foreseen this lack and planned for someone to take my place ahead of time.

I was totally unprepared for the president’s response when the deputy director and I presented him with the decision.

Rejecting the concept of rest entirely, he told how he never took a vacation. He brushed aside the idea that missionaries also need to renew contact with their prayer and financial supporters, saying that the needs of the seminary took precedence and that missionaries in the nineteenth century had almost never returned to their homeland. We both left the president’s office quite shaken, but the deputy director assured me not to worry.

He was right, of course.

The president later behaved towards me as graciously as always, though with less lavish praise. My submission to OMF leadership had caused him to think less of my love for the Chinese people and, in fact, for the Lord.

## **Leaving on a High Note**

As we packed our belongings, we praised God for his kindness to us over the previous four years. I had enjoyed good health. Our marriage was strong, and we loved our little girl, now almost two years old. My ministry included popular seminary teaching, training CEF staff workers, serving as an advisor to the Young Adults' Fellowship in the church, writing occasional articles for Christian publications, and leading within OMF itself.

You will remember that when I left Taiwan in 1978, I could hardly open my mouth to speak Chinese. At that time, my natural ability had not overcome my pride or fear of making a mistake, and Satan had hindered me from speaking God's word in Chinese. When we returned in 1980, I had resolved not to worry about committing errors. Many hours of teaching and of listening in meetings had greatly increased my vocabulary.

Nevertheless, I was a bit anxious about the upcoming language assessment, given to all missionaries before Home Assignment at the end of their first term. Though this was my second term, I had not been assessed before. The tension of preparing to leave the island for a year kept me up most of the night, so I was very tired. As the language exam – an oral test administered by three experts – began, I decided that I was so weary I could not possibly do well. I gave up hope of impressing anyone and just responded as well as I could under the circumstances.

When the results were announced, I was shocked. According to this test, I had the best Mandarin of all OMF missionaries in Taiwan! This final success crowned the entire four years and demonstrated that God can indeed bring victory out of defeat, conferring honor in place of shame. I gave all the glory to him.

## **“Retooling” Missionaries**

Soon after we arrived home, we appreciated the wisdom of OMF's furlough policy. We had loved life in the seminary, but by the time we left Taipei, we knew that living in close quarters with so many people had taken a toll on us.

OMF had begun to offer something new to missionaries who had come home from the field: Furlough Institute. For several days, we gathered at the US OMF Headquarters in Robeson, Pennsylvania.<sup>48</sup> Living in the homes of OMF headquarters personnel, we met together for briefings several hours a day. Being out of the country had put us out of touch with the culture, so we learned a great deal from lectures about recent trends in society. Other workshops on effective missionary presentations prepared us to tell our story to our church supporters.

A clinical psychologist met with us for most of one day. He gave us the DiSC test (assessing dominance, influence, steadiness, and conscientiousness), which showed Dori and me that we were both high “D” and high “I” – that is, dominant and sensitive to others' reactions toward us. She ranked higher on both those scales than I did, which meant that she was both more dominant

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<sup>48</sup> OMF has since moved its headquarters to Littleton, Colorado.



and more people-oriented than I. We laughed at the results of one of the exercises he had us perform: Each member of a married couple was to describe the other in one word. Dori said I was “tense” and I characterized her as “intense.” No wonder we sometimes did not feel comfortable with each other!

We moved into a lovely little house in Carrboro, North Carolina, a community adjacent to Chapel Hill. We loved the house and the neighborhood. Thirteen pine trees in our front yard provided plenty of shade but also produced mountains of pine needles in the fall. Several other young couples from our church lived nearby. We settled into a comfortable and happy life together, glad to be free from the stresses of life in urban Taiwan.

### **I Should Have Listened to My Mother**

We came back to the United States in the summer. As fall approached, I heard that one of my younger relatives – the same one who had passed on to Sarah that awful infection – was in trouble. An alcoholic, she had not kept up with her classes in college. Her mother wouldn’t take her back into her home, and she had no place to go. I flew to Pensacola, then to Tallahassee, where she was in school. We spent a day together, during which she saw that I cared for her and seemed to understand her.

On my flight back to Pensacola, the little airplane ran into a huge thunderstorm. The pilots later said they had not been worried, but several passengers cried out in terror as tremendous winds tossed it around the black sky. I thought we might all die in a crash and was glad I knew the Lord.

Back in Pensacola, I told my mother that I planned to invite the young woman to come to Chapel Hill, where Dori and I could watch out for her. My mother strongly recommended that we not take this risk. “She’s a bad apple,” she said, solemnly. In my youthful naïveté, I thought she was too prejudiced and pessimistic.

I returned to Carrboro and persuaded Dori, who had serious misgivings, to invite the woman to come up to North Carolina. We would help her find a place to live and a job, and she could benefit from the resources of our church. Perhaps God would heal her.

I was wrong. Without going into much detail, let me just say that I should have listened to my wife’s hesitations and my mother’s stern warning. For one thing, women are more perceptive than men. For another, my mother knew this young woman better than I did. Finally, I should have taken more seriously Dori’s concerns about how this move would affect our little family.

In retrospect, I see now that I made a huge mistake. The woman came and lived with us for two weeks before she found an apartment. She could not stop drinking. She did not come to faith in Christ or change her ways. Helping her consumed vast amounts of time and energy, which should have gone to my immediate family. Because I had to honor Dori’s request that we limit

our welcome to her, the woman rightly felt less than fully accepted by us. She also sensed my own ambivalence toward her.

I think that I had not yet come to recognize my limitations. I saw myself as, in some ways, the savior of this young relative, whereas only God can save. I had not yet applied to myself the powerful words of John the Baptist, “I am not the Christ.”<sup>49</sup>

As a result, we were not able to derive the maximum benefit from our time at home. In particular, our marriage was not stronger when we returned to Taiwan. I had failed to protect my family from unnecessary stress, and we would all pay the penalty in the future.

### **“Home Assignment”**

OMF had changed the term for furlough to “Home Assignment.” At least two reasons lay behind this change: For one thing, “furlough” sounds like an extended vacation. The president of my seminary seems to have had this idea when he objected so strongly to our return to America when the needs of Taiwan were so great.

The more important reason is the reality that while at home, missionaries usually work very hard. OMF did grant us one month of vacation at the beginning and end of each year’s time away from the field. Usually, missionaries took this time to visit family, which does not always provide much rest. The other ten months are filled with activity.

In addition to spending time at OMF Headquarters, we visited churches that had been praying for us. Unlike most missionaries, we had only a few sending congregations. At that time, only the Chapel Hill Bible Church, the Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama, and the Faith Bible Fellowship in southern Virginia gave us regular monthly financial support. The last of these, though very faithful in prayer, sent a relatively small amount, but the other two, especially the Bible Church, contributed a substantial portion of our total income. Thus, we were able to live in the Chapel Hill area and attend the Bible Church almost every Sunday. We thank God that we do not have to “itinerate” around the country like most other missionaries. This close attachment to one major “home” church enables missionaries to know and be known, to serve and be served, and to love and be loved as “real” persons, not idolized models of Christian zeal.

We did attend the annual World Missions Conference at Briarwood Presbyterian Church, where my brother Peter had served as an associate pastor for several years. We loved being with dozens of missionaries and more than a thousand committed believers for this week-long event. On the other hand, little Sarah found it tiring, and we could not possibly build deep relationships with so many people. We concentrated upon getting to know a few people as well as possible. Some of them have now been praying for us for forty years.

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<sup>49</sup> John 1:20

We spent most of our time in Chapel Hill, where we plunged right into the life of the church. I taught an adult Sunday school class; Dori sang in the choir; and both of us met regularly with old friends for Bible study and prayer.

As on our first home assignment, we also became active in the Chinese Bible study, which met on Friday nights. In fact, you could say that we took a leadership role again, though dedicated Chinese members assumed most of the responsibility.

By this time, we were beginning to feel more at home some of the time with Chinese people than with Americans. To put it another way, we were becoming “third culture” people – fully comfortable neither in Chinese nor in American culture. The Chinese members who came from Taiwan – as described almost all those in the Chinese Bible study at the time – could understand us best, since they also knew both cultures.

Perhaps the most painful part of being a “third culture” person is that even your family and friends don’t understand you anymore. We eagerly anticipated sharing details of the previous four years with those whom we loved. To our dismay, we found that most of them either were not really interested or couldn’t maintain interest for very long. They all seemed to live in their own little parochial worlds.

There were exceptions, of course. Some family members and friends knew to ask questions and to follow up with more questions. They seemed desirous of making the effort to understand missionary life. But they were rare. We had to accept this sense of alienation and isolation as part of the cost of serving God overseas.

Our comfort comes not from being understood by those closest to us, but by being understood by God, as the following experience illustrates:

We were in Chapel Hill on one of our brief visits home. We stayed with an old friend who had a lovely house near the country club. One day I took a walk down a road that led to the tennis courts. As I looked around, all I could see were green trees.

Like an arrow, pain pierced my heart. The smog, noise, congestion, and ugliness of urban life in Taiwan flashed before my mind. Revulsion overwhelmed me, and I broke down sobbing. I poured out to God my desire to live in a quiet, green place like Chapel Hill, rather than amidst the gray cacophony of Taipei.

Once again, though without words this time, I sensed God’s presence. As I realized that he knew how I felt and accepted my willing sacrifice, divine peace came over me. For the sake of the Chinese people whom I loved, I would return to a place that I loathed, assured that God would go with me and grant me strength to endure with joy.

You may be interested to know that now, many years later, I thrill with excitement each time I exit the doors of the airport outside of Taipei. The heat, pollution, noise, and crowds make me

feel at home, and I rejoice to be back! Walking the streets of that great city now seems like the most natural activity in the world to me. Not only do I no longer loathe the place, I love it. What miracles God can work in us!

### **Working on the Lexicon**

My major project continued to be the translation of the Greek-Chinese lexicon. Translators in Taiwan sent me their work, which I tried to correct. Again, I needed a helper to read the Chinese translation tome, as in Taiwan. When I learned that a Chinese woman in the Bible study had worked as an editor, I enlisted her help. We worked quite well together and made rapid progress on the lexicon. By the time I returned to Taiwan, the work was almost done.

### **“Will You Do It for Me?”**

You will remember that when we came home from our first two years in Taiwan, God showed me how impure my motives for going to Asia had been. He still had more work to do in my heart. One day, as I encountered a very slight traffic jam on the outskirts of Chapel Hill, I thought of how awful the traffic was in Taipei. All of a sudden, my mind revolted at the thought of living there again.

As I waited for cars to move, I reviewed all the reasons for being a missionary: the romance, the adventure, the challenge, the esteem from other Christians, the affection of the Chinese, the sense of accomplishment. None of these now seemed sufficient to warrant the cost of life overseas.

Then I seemed to hear a voice in my heart, saying, “Will you do it for Me?” I knew it was Jesus speaking.

“Of course, Lord,” I immediately replied in my mind.

That settled the matter. I would serve in Taiwan for no other reason than obedience to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who had lived, suffered, and died for me and my Chinese friends.

### **“Only Three Years”**

The time came for us to return to Taiwan. Although sad to leave family and friends once again, I was eager to return to the work to which God had assigned us. Dori shared that excitement.

On our last day of packing, I took Sarah to a set of swings not far from our house while Dori put our china into boxes. The early summer weather added to the quiet charm of the play area. Looking back over the previous year, I thanked God for his many blessings to us, despite my faults.

I was pushing Sarah on the swing when I seemed to hear the Lord speaking to me again. “Only three years,” he said several times (internally and inaudibly). I considered for a while what this

might mean, then realized the significance of the phrase. The normal term of missionary service is four years, as you know.

Glancing back towards the house where Dori was, I saw in a flash what God was trying to say. Life in Taipei placed even greater stress upon her than upon me. Being from Vermont and having lived in Chapel Hill, with its abundance of trees and flowers, Dori fought to survive in the urban jungle of Taipei. She was willing to make that sacrifice in order to follow God's leading, but it cost her a great deal. Now the Lord was telling me that we should plan to stay only three years this time, rather than four.

I gladly accepted his guidance and told our OMF superiors as soon as I could. They gave their consent. Then we all forgot about it until a crisis arose.

Sarah with the children from across the hall in the seminary, 1984



The church people loved little Sarah!  
1984

Sarah's first encounter with snow,  
Carrboro, 1984

