

MSI Canada Newsletter

July 2003



From the editor

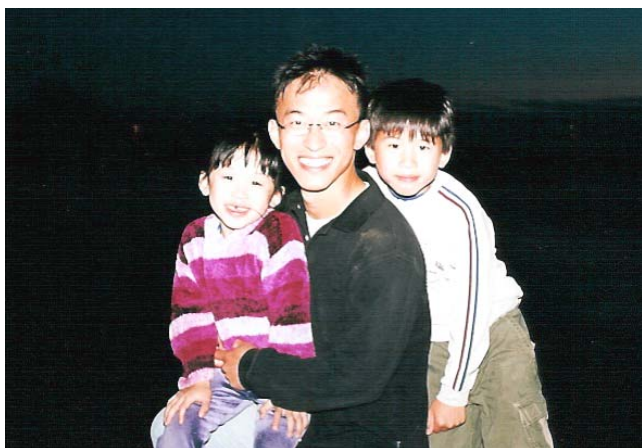
Like many people, I watched the news about SARS with great concern during the last few months. I was saddened by the lives lost in China, Hong Kong, and here in Toronto. The courage and sacrifice by health care professionals in Hong Kong, many of them Christians, touched and inspired me. MSI's short-term teams had to be cancelled due to the travel advisory imposed by the World Health Organization. On the surface, the last few months appeared to be a time of inaction. In fact, the English teaching team members, led by Ed & Josephine Saley and Anita Tong, have been meeting regularly and were busily preparing a curriculum for the English teachers in Gulin. We are thankful for their faithfulness and dedication. We are also pleased to have recruited Mr. **Charles Chan** from Edmonton to be MSI Canada's Director of Mobilization.

We have two articles on prayer in this issue of the Newsletter. This is a timely message as we face crises such as SARS. We also need to pray for MSI long term colleagues in China, some of them working in the front line in hospitals. In his article, *Pray Persistently*, Charles draws on his own personal experience and biblical teaching to remind us of the importance of praying boldly and shamelessly. With permission from MSI HQ, I have included an article written by **Dr. James H. Taylor III** titled *The Power of Prayer Partnership*. This article was originally published in the Spring 2003 issue of MSI HQ Bulletin.

~Wendy Cheung

Pray persistently

Charles Chan



As I lay in bed, I could feel the agonizing pain at the back of my neck. We had just finished the first full day of VBS with 20 First Nation children in a reserve near High Level, Alberta. Little Johnny surprised me by jumping behind me; in fact, his whole body went over my head. He is a 4-year-old from the reserve and is extremely active. We all suspect that he might have fetal alcohol symptoms. This surprise really hurt my neck. Within seconds, I could feel pain shooting from my neck. I could not move

for over 10 minutes. As an occupational therapist, I knew that I needed to go to the emergency room to have an x-ray and get a neck collar; but I was the only full time male member on the team, and there were many children who needed our care. I started to pray. I asked God to heal my neck, and bargained with Him that I needed to have good health to lead the short-term team. I boldly asked God to heal me. The next day I felt a bit better but was still in a lot of pain. We prayed again. We asked others to pray for my neck. In two days, I was moving around without any noticeable pain. It was a miracle to experience such a speedy recovery. God did answer our prayer. Prayer indeed is an essential foundation in our work.



Luke 11:5-13 records that after Jesus prayed in a certain place, the disciples approached him and asked him to teach them how to pray. Jesus used two illustrations to teach them the attitude of prayer and how God answers their requests. In verses 5-8, Jesus used the story of the friend to encourage us to pray persistently and boldly. Culturally, taking care of and providing accommodation for visitors is the hospitable thing to do. Here you have a friend who traveled a long distance and finally arrived at midnight. He is tired, thirsty and hungry. The host has no bread at home. Bread is usually baked daily in the market in the community oven. Most households only have one day's supply of bread. This host shamelessly goes to his friend to ask for bread to feed his visitor. Knocking at the neighbor's door in the middle of night will definitely wake up the whole family since they usually live in one big room. In Palestine during Jesus' days, most people do not have the luxury like many of us to have a living room, bedrooms and a kitchen. Houses were like a big square box where all household members stayed together. Only the rich had two-story houses. It is natural for the friend to not open the door at this hour.

Jesus used this illustration to teach his disciples that even if the friend would not get up and give the host the bread, our Father in Heaven will answer our prayers and provide our daily needs. It is a mystery that God desires for us to pray; yet, He alone reserves the ultimate final decision. We are to pray like the host asking his friend at midnight i.e. we should pray persistently and boldly. In another translation, "boldly" is translated "shamelessly." We are to pray to God about our needs without shame. We should dare to ask. When I asked God to heal me, I was shamelessly asking for God's healing. It is the promise from God: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. We should consistently bring our requests to God without shame.

Jesus continued to illustrate that God answer prayer by telling the story of the father and son. It is a hook to the disciples when they hear what Jesus said... a snake for a fish... a scorpion for an egg... a stone for bread. It would make the disciples laugh when Jesus said such a ridiculous thing. This is exactly the point that Jesus wants to make. God will not replace good with evil. In fact, He will answer our prayers with the best gift of all... the Holy Spirit (v. 13). When we ask in Jesus' name, God will give us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will be with us; He will guide us, teach us, remind us of our sins, and lead us into the truth of knowing God. The Holy Spirit, who is God himself, will know the will of the Father and the Son. He will bring us to the will of God when we follow him closely. It is such a comfort to know that we will not walk astray when we have the Holy Spirit in our heart and mind.



Many businesses around the world were profoundly affected by the SARS epidemic, and tragically, many people died from the illness. Some people still do not feel safe talking face to face with others. The fear of catching the disease isolates and separates people, keeping them apart from one another. The occurrence of SARS has also affected MSI's plans, as our medical and English teaching team programs had to be cancelled. It seems like we cannot do anything except wait for some breakthrough in medical research. However, there is one thing that we should keep on doing: We should continue to pray. We should not give up. We should pray persistently and

shamelessly and ask for the breakthrough to come from God. I am certain that God will change curses to blessings. I pray that through the worldwide scare of SARS, people will turn to God and know that God is their only security.

Introducing MSI Canada's Director of Mobilization

Mr. Charles Chan is an occupational therapist specializing in home care rehabilitation. He and his wife Vienna, also an occupational therapist, have a great burden for the Great Commission. In the past, they have gone to Ning Via, China as well as to Cambodia for short term professional and youth work. Charles also spent three months working with First Nation youths in a Northern Alberta reserve. He recently completed his M.Div. degree in Intercultural Ministry with Taylor Seminary in Edmonton. Charles is a deacon responsible for youth ministry at Edmonton Chinese Christian Church. We are glad that Charles will join the MSI Canada family as a full time Director of Mobilization starting July 2003. He will function as our national coordinator mobilizing Christian professionals to go to China to serve the people there. Please join us to pray for Charles and his family as they take on this important role.

The Power of Prayer Partnership

Dr. James H. Taylor III

A few days ago my dear friend Ajith Fernando, Director of Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka, sent me an email note. In it he wrote, "You are regularly in my prayers". Attached were some thought-provoking reflections he had as he celebrated his 54th birthday. At that point of passage, Ajith had been asking himself the question, "What am I going to do when I am too old to run around... when there is no 'job' for me to do?" Like so many of us, he naturally thought of intercessory prayer. However, as his thoughts carried him on, he began to see that praying for people is not a prescription for retirement but an important part of his job description now, like teaching or writing a report or visiting a sick person. Ajith concluded, "It is the most powerful thing I do. (James 5:16) When I finish praying for the day, I have a sense I've achieved something."

This got me to thinking.

Intercessory prayer is not just work, it's hard work. Paul describes Epaphras as 'always wrestling in prayer' for the church had helped plant in Colosse. It was sustained spiritual struggle. This sort of perseverance bears fruit. It makes a difference in a marriage and family, at school and at work, in a church and in a nation, as well as in the fulfillment of God's global purposes. Praying for people is a powerful job every Christian has.

An insurance company in Hong Kong likes to focus on 'the power of partnership' in its attention grabbing TV ads. Jesus taught His disciples about 'the power of prayer partnership'.

"Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for; it will be done for you by my Father in heaven."

This is the invitation to and promise of a powerful prayer partnership. The church fully recognizes its importance when sending people out in cross-cultural service overseas and urges members to sign up as prayer partners. Unfortunately, a limited understanding of the role of Christian professional service as it relates to the Great Commission drastically limits the scope of this powerful prayer partnership. Because most do not look upon Christian professionals, or those in the corporate world and business, in

civil service or politics, teachers, workers housewives as being an integral part of the Great Commission, churches don't ask people to sign up and provide prayer support for them. This is indeed a vast mistake!

Yet these Christians have an incalculable role to play. They go where few full-time Christian workers can enter, and their lives and work touch every stratum of society. Like salt and light they can permeate the whole. The people of Antioch were so impressed by the lives of the new believers among them; they called them "Christians"- little Christs. Paul told the Colossian converts he had not stopped praying for them, 'asking God that they would live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work.' (Colossians 1:9-10) Paul knew the power of prayer partnership. We too can experience it as we form prayer groups for mutual intercession, accountability and encouragement. In this partnership we need to include prayer for Christian professionals, businessmen, civil servants, teachers, workers and housewives in our churches; that they will integrate their faith and life so effectively and winsomely that others will be drawn to Christ. Doctors, lawyers, businessmen and people in government and politics are exposed to insidious temptations, to compromise biblical, ethical and moral standards. But if we support them in prayer as we do full-time Christian workers, the difference for them, their families and for the advance of the Kingdom would be profound. Read Daniel 2:17-19, Esther 4:15-17.

When we understand this, it will not be difficult to do the same for Christian professionals, people in the corporate world, businessmen, civil servants, teachers, and others who, at personal sacrifice and risk, have left home and serve overseas for the Kingdom.

The Lord has invited us to experience the limitless opportunities of His power in prayer partnership. How will we respond? If you are not already part of a prayer group, why not consider forming one? There is power in prayer partnership.



Dr. James Taylor III is the founder and Executive Director of MSI Professional Services. He lives in Hong Kong where MSI Headquarter is based.

