



## NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2005

### *Three months in Chengdu. Why us? Why now?*

David Wong, M.D

My family and I spent three and a half months this summer on a MSI short term trip to Chengdu, Sichuan. Before we departed, many asked us “Why go as a family? Why so long?” Others asked “China has millions of people, what can you accomplish in such a short time?” We don’t have all the answers; but we will take you along our journey.

I went on short-term trips with MSI in 2000 and 2001 to a small town in Sichuan called Gulin. I could not forget the physical needs of the people. Furthermore, the moral vacuum and spiritual needs were palpable. It reminded me of Mark 6:34, “because they were like sheep without a shepherd,” and Romans 10:14, “And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?” In a conference held in my church in 2004, Dr. James Taylor challenged us to step out of our comfort zone to answer His call. I gave an affirmative answer to God. Soon, the opportunity to serve in Chengdu came along.



In May 2005, my wife Gloria, my children Justin and Alison, and I arrived in Chengdu. Chengdu is the capital city of Sichuan with a population of 8.9 million. It is famous for its fiery hot dishes, its passion for playing Mahjong and its beautiful scenery. We lived in a two-bedroom apartment about 10 minutes walk from the hospital. The streets are usually bustling with merchants hawking their trade, food peddlers, bikes crisscrossing rapidly, kids playing on the sidewalk, and stray cats wandering around. Satellite dishes, MP3 players and mobile phones are everywhere.

I worked in West China Hospital which has more than 3400 beds and 190 anesthesiologists! It was a daunting task to get to know the anesthetic colleagues whose faces were usually under masks in the operating rooms. I spent time teaching patient evaluation, anesthetic techniques and medical English. There was a tremendous hunger to learn both conversational and written English. On many occasions, I found myself talking to them in PuTongHua while they responded in English. We laughed at each other’s mistakes and learned from each other.





God taught us some important lessons. First, *the importance of building relationships*. Being there for 3 months provided us with time to know the doctors and graduate students. They knew that we were Christian volunteers from Canada. We spent hours together in the operating room, classrooms and over meals. I visited their dormitories and they came to our home. Many students became close friends and were very honest, open and eager to know about the West. One student told me the story of Beijing's destruction by the foreign imperial armies in 1860. I gave her a book about Hudson Taylor who came and gave his life to China out of love. She found a picture of Hudson Taylor in Chinese dress which made an

indelible impression in her mind. Many students asked good questions about what they had read in novels like "The Da Vinci Code". That gave me an opportunity to share with them the real story. I am so thankful that God has provided us with the privilege to share His love.

Second, *the local Christians taught me much*. Although there are millions of believers in China, the percentage figures are relatively small. The Chinese Christians understand the price one has to pay to follow Christ and have a hunger for His word. When I attended the local churches, Christians would come at least an hour early to sing hymns and to read scripture to prepare their hearts. I was put to shame to see so many Christians in the West who do not make knowing Him a priority and are unwilling to pay the price to follow Him.

Third, *God desires our willingness to obey, not our abilities*. For months before leaving for China, we struggled with the practical issues of moving to a foreign home. Although it was for only three and a half months, the amount of work was a bit like emigration. We had to fill out numerous application forms, attend preparation courses, receive vaccinations, plan teaching material, look for a place to stay, find someone to look after our home and our cats. We worried about the hot spicy food, toilets, getting sick, lack of PuTongHua, and kids missing school. Yet, when we stepped out of our comfort zones into a city in which we didn't know anyone, we experienced His provisions and the power of prayer support. Although we did not have much money, all our basic needs were met. Our small apartment provided an environment which allowed me to spend a lot more time with each family member. We did not have a car and didn't need one. We did not experience any major health issues and hot spicy food was quite appealing after all. God put Christians and non-Christians in our lives to supply our needs and with whom to build bridges. We realized our physical and spiritual protection were entirely God's doing for which we are very grateful.



Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he asked Peter three times, "Do you truly love me?" Peter answered affirmatively and Jesus commanded him to "Feed my lambs." There are many "sheep without a shepherd" in our country and beyond. Matthew 9:37-38 says, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field." Brothers and sisters, do we truly love Jesus enough to rise up to this challenge?

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# Soccer story

Ian Sutanto, John Lui, Chris Yong

*~Ian, John and Chris spent a month running a summer soccer program at the Youth Center for children in Zhaojue.*

We have so many great memories of the soccer program and the people we got to interact with during our one month's stay in the Youth Center. I'll just recount one story of many which we will cherish forever...

During the last week of the program, a mother dropped by to visit us. Two of her kids were in our program, one in the morning session for older kids and the other in the afternoon session. Charlie, an exuberant 7 year old boy, is the smallest of our students. I think all 3 of us coaches can agree that he is one of our favorites. He brought us joy everyday and gave us a reason to keep doing what we do. When other kids were not listening, being rowdy or lazy, Charlie would be there trying his best and listening to what we said.



Charlie's mother came in to tell us how much she appreciated us coming from so far to run this soccer program. She told us how important these programs are for this area as it keeps kids out of troubles such as gang fights and drugs. Since this program was free, it allowed kids from different backgrounds to access it. Without it, her kids would probably waste their days watching T.V. (which is what we would probably be doing back home too had we not come). She said that on the day we gave the kids English names and handed them a piece of paper with their names written on it, Charlie came home so excited about it, he wanted to put it up on the wall! She also said that Charlie would remember this

camp for the rest of his life. Everytime someone says his English name he would be reminded of us and the program we held. For her other son, Owen, she said that he has lacked confidence in school but with this summer soccer program, his confidence on the field and in life has begun to grow.

For the rest of the week, this mother would come every day and watch her youngest son play. One of the days she came with gifts for all of us that Charlie and Owen had bought with their saved allowance! We tried to say that no gift was needed, but she insisted that it was a token of their appreciation. We were very touched by this and gratefully accepted. She also left a notebook for us to write a note to Charlie and Owen to read when they grew older.

The next morning we were to leave by bus. We were woken up with a nice surprise as Charlie and Owen showed up in our rooms to get us up. They had gotten up early on a Saturday morning to send us off!! Even though we parted with some sad good-byes, the memories will always be happy and we truly hope them all well as the grow up.



## To what purpose?

Wendy Cheung, MD

Have you ever heard of Dr. Emil Fischbacher? I bet you haven't. Neither had I, until I was given a book titled *To What Purpose*. This book, written by Marshall Broomhall, has only 87 pages, but it turns out to be a book that is having a profound impact on my life.

Dr. Fischbacher was born in 1903 to a Christian family in Glasgow, the fourth of eight children. His father had a burden for global missions, and desired that 5 of his children would be offered to that service. Emil's oldest sister was a missionary to northern China, but he had no burden to serve in China whatsoever. After graduating from medical school in 1926, he spent a few years honing his skills as a physician and surgeon. It was at this juncture, by a chance which God's hand did guide, that he took up an issue of *China's Millions* in May 1931. He read about the appeal for young men to the field, and felt God's call directly to him. He responded, and sailed for China in December 1931.



After a few months in Shanghai for language studies, Emil was assigned to go to Sinkiang in Chinese Turkestan. China was politically unstable at that time and travelling around was difficult. It took Emil and his teammates 2 months to cross the Gobi desert, during which time his auto-mechanic skills were fully utilized and challenged. There was much political turmoil and fighting in Sinkiang, and many soldiers on both the Chinese and Muslim sides were wounded. Emil ran a makeshift hospital there to care for these wounded soldiers. As the only doctor in the whole vast territory, his working hours were long and he had no time for language study. The hygiene condition was terrible in this remote outpost, and many diseases such as typhoid were rampant. Emil succumbed to illness and died 7 months later in Sinkiang on May 27, 1933 at the age of 30, almost exactly 2 years after he read that appeal in *China's Millions*.

When news of his death reached England, many wondered 'to what purpose' this life had been poured forth. Here was a bright young life, full of promise and purpose, fitted by a long and costly education for medical services, and yet cut down, as it were, at the threshold of his life's work.

The author offers light to this question in the story recorded in St. Mark's gospel 14:3-9. A woman came into the house of Simon the leper at Bethany with an alabaster jar of expensive perfume. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus' head. The disciples' reaction was indignation: 'Why this waste?' In contrast, Jesus viewed this as 'a beautiful thing she has done'. The word of Christ tells us that God's estimates are not as ours, nor His thoughts as ours. And He alone is qualified to judge.

At Bethany, an alabaster jar is broken; the fragrance of the ointment filled the house and satisfied the Lord's heart. In Sinkiang, the body of a young doctor was broken and his life poured forth; the fragrance of his testimony filled that remote territory and satisfied the Lord's heart. We ask: 'to what purpose?'; the Lord says, 'it is a beautiful thing and one that will bring forth fruit'.

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