

WEEK 15: Follow Your Godly Desires

I was invited to a closed country in 1990. I had not previously sensed any call, but as the missionary continued talking to me daily, a longing rose in my heart. I began to pray, *"God, please send me!"*

God then confirmed His call to me through Psalm 2: *"Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord ... The One enthroned in heaven laughs ... (then God says to Jesus) You are My Son; today I have become Your Father. Ask of Me, and I will make the nations Your inheritance, the ends of the earth Your possession..."* (Psalm 2: 1,2,4,7 and 8 NIV)

Amazingly, that day this twelve-verse psalm was embedded into my memory within about ten minutes. It is a perfect description of the historic expansion of God's Kingdom: God laughs when rulers attempt to thwart His plans, and He sets up His Kingdom anyway! I knew God was calling me.

When I first set foot on this country's soil in November 1990, a great joy filled me. Though I had never been here before, I felt home! I was learning the meaning of God's promise: *"Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart"* (Psalm 37:5 NIV). My desire to come to this field was His gift. I learned this: my joy becomes full as I follow the desires *He* puts into my heart!

WEEK 16: Risk Is Part of Growing Faith

"...if you would believe, you would see the glory of God." (John 11:40 NKJV)

Bobby, who brought me to the mission field, told me, "If you want to see miracles, get out there on a limb where you need one." Risk is a vital part of growing our faith.

The first time I carried Bibles through customs, the borders were very tight. At that time, Bible couriers' success rate was only about 25%. I was fearful and packed only fifteen Bibles before our team of six set off for our first border crossing.

I was the only person on our team not caught. Approaching the scanner, I saw officials were temporarily busy and just walked ahead without putting my case on. At that moment I heard, "I'm opening the door for you." I thought maybe it was my own mind; but after living in China for years, being visited by police three times but never expelled, I knew God had spoken to me that first day.

In fact, the last time they came with three vans and twenty-five police at 5am, banging on the door and demanding we open up. We prayed, God gave us peace, and we let them in. But their chief returned the next day to express his regret to our landlord for disturbing his house!

God, our Wonderful Father, weaned me off fear and helped me learn to trust. He'll give us the right challenges to develop us.

WEEK 17: Dying to Self

God used Bobby, a missionary to Asia, to invite me to go with him to the field. He instructed me to write a letter

something like this: “Dear Mom and Dad, I’m dead, but I prepared this letter in advance to send to you... I went to the mission field of my own accord, and I want you to know that I have no regrets about what happened. I am asking you not to entertain regrets either...”

Jesus said, *“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me...”* (Luke 9:23 KJV). In Jesus’ day, the cross was not a beautiful religious symbol. Saying “Take up your cross,” Jesus was making clear that following Him would mean dying. But why on earth would anyone want to do this?

Before Jesus called me, I had already found out that just being close to Jesus is worth any cost. His kind, accepting, cleansing, energising love can’t be found in anyone else!

I also found that by following Him to Asia, He blessed me more than I ever imagined. My beautiful wife is from Asia, my three wonderful sons were all born and raised here... so many new friends, so much blessing! Everyone needs to know that God is not in the business of making slaves out of us, but of developing sons and daughters. People who are afraid of God just don’t know how good He is. Our job is to show them.

WEEK 18: God Provides as We Go

Monthly my wife must travel a thousand-mile round trip to our ministry base. One time when she had to go, even after nine days’ rest at home and a course of antibiotics, she was not fully recovered from bronchitis. Reason would have dictated a few more days’ rest, but she had to host a ministry team that was coming.

Psalm 91:11 tells us that *“He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways...”* (NIV). The Hebrew word *‘derek’*, translated *‘ways’*, means our ordinary ways, things we must do in our day-to-day duties. Going back to host the team was one of these ordinary things, so my wife went, trusting God’s provision.

A few days after hosting the team for four days (normally a tiring affair), my wife had to take a 40-hour bus and train trip to accompany one of our children to an interview at his new school. Of course, this would not help her condition... But God faithfully provided at the right time! A girl on the visiting team prayed for my wife, and by the next morning, she was completely well. This showed us again what we’ve experienced many times: if God has called you, go ahead—He will provide!

“Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases...” (Psalm 103:2-3 NIV)

WEEK 19: Suffering According to His Will

Due to my arrest in an ‘illegal’ meeting about five years ago, my visa applications to the country of my calling have been refused since that time. However, God’s call for my wife and me didn’t change, so we’ve made our home in a neighboring territory. For these years, she’s had to make a monthly thousand-mile round trip to our ministry base for about half the month.

Many times we've thought of quitting and switching to some more convenient ministry! After all, hasn't God closed this door? But we haven't been able to escape the fact that God entrusted the ministry to us. And whatever God trusts me with, I want to be faithful with, don't you? He never sent anyone to take over our responsibilities... and for me, there's still Skype...

Going through our tribulation, we have been sustained by His joy and by the encouragement of the body of Christ. Also, we see through this process that we are being molded by Him. Significantly, we seem to be more patient and self-controlled than before! It wasn't our desire to go through this, but "*...we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope*" (Romans 5:3-4 NKJV).

No suffering that we go through according to His will is wasted!

WEEK 20: Paying a Price for Your Children

I haven't been able to get a visa for about five years to the country of my calling. Yet God has not given us the instruction to leave and go to another field. We have a children's home in a poor area there, and our vision has been to rear our children to be God's servants. We've had to reside in neighbouring territory while my wife travels constantly back and forth to the children's home.

One of my thoughts for my children has been, "May God bless my children and allow them to go through the right amount of difficulty growing up so they will be strong men and women who can face the problems of life." But when they go through difficulty, I found it means we go through it too! In fact, it's usually *our* trouble that ends up being what they face. But the trouble provides a suitable environment for their faith to grow and for mutual trust and cooperation to be developed.

The Lord has sustained us with the joy of seeing His continual work in each of our children's lives. Our only son from the children's home who is already graduated from high school is now studying in seminary, with a vision to be a cross-cultural missionary, and others have expressed the desire to do full-time ministry.

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." (3 John 4 KJV)

WEEK 21: A New Creature, a New Motivation

My mother dedicated me to the Lord in my infancy. So from a young age, I had a strong desire to know God. When I heard about hell as a youngster, I was very afraid to go there, so I prayed and tried hard to be a good Christian. But although my father and mother were Christian missionaries, our family members were quite distant from one another, with lots of misunderstanding and silent regret. Growing up in this environment to me was normal. I didn't trust either of my parents with heart issues; instead, I learned to do as I thought best.

However, when about age 24 I surrendered my life to Jesus, God's love enveloped me and healed me. Overnight, I began to see the incredible beauty in the people around me. I began to love them without trying to get something from them. And I began to enjoy life... it was wonderful!

After surrendering, I discovered I had a strong desire to go and be obedient to authority somewhere. This was surprising, as I had never wanted such a thing; I was a 'good kid' and knew what to do myself! But now deep in my heart, I felt motivated to obey. God had made some great changes!

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV).

WEEK 22: How Valuable Are We to God?

The bizarre background of Hannah and Enoch, sister and brother in our children's home, helped them understand the Gospel even before they heard it.

Caring for her two grandchildren in a poor mountain village, Grandma learned she had cancer. She contacted us, asking that we take them before she should die. We did so, and Grandma believed in Jesus before passing on to glory. In the meantime, we learned their story:

Her mentally handicapped son had been the children's father. The mother had abandoned the family, so Grandma had come to help her son with his kids. But the pressures of the new situation still proved too great, and the father committed suicide. When the mother learned of this, she returned, stole her kids from Grandma, and sold them in a faraway place for the equivalent of about US \$1000.

But Grandma learned where the kids had been taken. Then she sold all her meager belongings, borrowed and scraped together all the money she could, went and paid for the kids, and brought them home. Only shortly after this, she learned she had cancer.

Jesus said, *"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?"* (Matthew 7:11 KJV). And if Grandma understood the value of her grandchildren, how much more does our Heavenly Father value us... What a wonderful Father we have!