

Chapter 7
What's Next?

I stood utterly baffled as I contemplated life in the big, wide world before me. Chefoo School was history! No bell to wake me in the morning; no teachers to direct my every decision; no schedule to demand that I use my time in a prescribed manner!

Dad and Mother had saved a considerable amount of money toward our college education and put it away safely in Chase National Bank to be available when we were ready. One day late in the fall of 1934 Dad went for a three-week pack-mule trip in the Western Hills, taking with him an outstanding Chinese evangelist, Charles Lee. I stayed home with Mother, aiming to use the time in my study of the Chinese language. That day at about noon the mail arrived, with a week-old newspaper. The headline on the front page told of the failure of Chase National Bank. There went my college fund.

There was no telephone by which I could forward the message to Dad, although I was sure he would want to know about the bank failure. Since I knew the road well, and the inn where Dad and Charles Lee would stop that night, I took my bike and rode the thirty miles to the inn. I found both men exhausted with their trip, preparing to eat their supper. As tired as they were, I felt ashamed about bearing bad news. On the other hand, I am glad I was able to help them set up their camp beds on the kang, when they were so weary.

But some time in that year I latched on to a verse, Psalm 138:8 (KJV), a verse that would provide stability hundreds of times during the next half-century: ***“The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me!”*** This immature boy standing on the very threshold of life needed that promise, I would not have to worry about the future. Almighty God, the omnipotent Creator of the universe, the God who loved me so much that He sent His Son to die on Calvary's cross so that I would not have to take the eternal consequences of my sins, this God promised to take care

of every detail in my future! Yes, “the Lord will *perfect*” all the details! Gradually I realized He had a plan for my life, He would open every door, and all I had to do was to watch Him and follow!

During the last two years at Chefoo I came believe that the Lord wanted me to return to China as a missionary. Now that high school was over it was time to start working toward that goal. Dad took me back home to Siaoyi. Because I was born in the interior of China, it was only natural that my first language was Chinese. Until I was six years old I had little need for anything but Chinese. Almost all the conversation I heard was in Chinese. Mother later told me how when I was five or six, a new missionary lady who came to Yu-Tao-Ho deliberately got me to speak Chinese to her, as she considered that my speech, however childish, was genuine Chinese. But when I went to Chefoo for my schooling, English replaced Chinese. All conversation was in English, and unfortunately I had almost no contact with the Chinese who lived around us and served us in so many ways. Now Dad tried to re-introduce me to the language.

He hired a Chinese teacher to guide me into the intricacies of the language. Chinese is a highly idiomatic language, and I quickly plunged into a study of the basic idioms. I found myself using a Chinese brush as I began to struggle with the beautiful Chinese characters. I learned how to moisten the ink slab, preferably with a few drops of vinegar, and rub the stick of ink till it reached the right consistency. I appreciated the way the brush flexed to produce the artistic characters. I learned to find my way in the Chinese Bible and began to understand part of the messages in the church service and began to join in singing the hymns. Slowly, pathetically slowly, I began to learn just a bit of the language.

Talking with my delightful Chinese teacher, I began to learn something of how the people thought. He told me about a friend of his who met a foreigner traveling on foot in the

Western Hills. With the brusqueness typical of so many foreigners, the traveler ignored the preliminaries of ordinary courtesy. First he should have asked the Chinese about his worthy name, his honorable age, about where he lived, whether he had eaten or not, and several other basic facts of life before getting to the point. Instead, with no introduction, he rudely asked the way to a certain town just a short distance down the road. My teacher's friend was not too happy about such a rude approach and told the foreigner, "I'm afraid you are going the wrong way. You need to walk back to that crossroad about two miles back and then turn east. A mile and a half down that road you will find another crossing. Turn south and the town will be just over the hill."

My teacher laughed, "I don't know how far that foreigner went, but I'll bet he will learn some manners the next time he asks for directions!" I filed that lesson in my mind under "Manners," and realized that a missionary would have to learn a whole lot more than just the language.

I began to realize that it was a rare foreigner who really enjoyed the total confidence of the Chinese. Dad and Mother together aimed to do all they could to make sure that this year at home would provide the very best preparation for returning as a missionary. They arranged for me to spend three weeks that winter with two young men in the town of Huai-Lu (*rhymes with "why you"*) on the eastern border of Shansi. During the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, Mr. and Mrs. Green of Huai-Lu had been captured. The rebels tied their hands behind their backs and then ran a pole under one armpit, carrying them through town on those poles for the ridicule of the populace. Unlike some victims of the Boxer Rebellion, the Greens survived, but suffered severely from their treatment. One summer while I was a student in the Prep School in Chefoo, the Greens visited and spoke to us at the Children's Special Service Mission meetings. Now,

however, Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Thompson were in charge of the mission station, and two young men, Percy Bromley and Albert Grant worked with them.

It would be my privilege to spend two weeks in January and February with Percy and Albert to learn what I could. We rode bicycles to the village where they had already set up a large tent for holding meetings, with a small tent beside it where the three of us would live. I marveled as I watched Percy on his bicycle stop to talk to some dirty-faced youngsters. He invited them and their parents to the meetings, and then kept talking with the children. When Percy asked one of them about when she had washed her face, she said without the slightest hint of embarrassment, "I washed my face yesterday, or the day before."

Together we visited in the home of a nominal Christian. In our land where we have had the Word of God preached and taught for centuries, we have little idea of the power of Satan and his demons in countries that have been under his control for millenniums. Demon possession is a stark reality in many places where the Gospel of Christ has not been proclaimed. The man we visited was the only one in that village who claimed to be a Christian. It is tough to be the only Christian in a heathen village, but it is even worse to be a compromising Christian. As Albert and Percy talked with him he showed us the marks on his throat. The other men standing around all seemed to know what was going on. In front of them he told us his story, "In the middle of the night a demon comes in to this room. He pounds on that coffin over there (a standard piece of furniture in any home), then jumps over to this 'kang' or brick-bed, and fights with me." We prayed with him but I never heard another word about this poor man. I do not know whether he committed himself to the Lord or not.

The area where we were visiting was known for its peanuts. Eating eggs fried in peanut oil was a new experience for me, but by the time our two weeks were finished, I had come to enjoy the taste and found it disappointingly bland to go back to eggs fried in lard.

There was another outcome to those two weeks. Both my mentors had graduated from Prairie Bible Institute, a school I had never heard about, located in Three Hills, Alberta, Canada. By the time the two weeks expired I knew I wanted to go to Prairie. When I got home in the early spring of 1935 I talked with Mother and Dad and very soon the first letter went on its way applying for admission at PBI. Today we find it hard to understand how slowly mail traveled in the '30s. In fact when the time came for me to start my trip to Canada I had not yet received definite word from Prairie.

Meanwhile I continued my Chinese studies and watched as Mother and Dad served. I remember seeing a youngster perhaps a year and a half old, whose mother brought him to our house with a terribly burned arm. In the ordinary poor Chinese home consisting of one room, the kang or brick-bed, raised about thirty inches above the floor, would take up a third to a half of the room. Just inside door, and against the kang stood a brick stove with a cast iron lid. Often that lid took the shape of a large pot with a capacity of two or three gallons or more. The fire itself was fed through a five-inch square hole in the top of the brickwork.

When the mother brought her baby to our home she explained, "My baby crawled on the 'kang' to the stove and fell in such a way that his arm was actually in the hot coals." The arm was terribly burned up to and above the elbow. Mother was still treating the baby when I had to leave for Canada. Such victims of poverty provided Mother with a great opportunity to show her love and concern.

During that short year, all the time I was home provided opportunity to learn the language, but Dad also provided other learning experiences for me. In the spring of the year he took me with him as he went by pack-mule to some of the outstations in the Western Hills. Although he was not in the best of health, he handled the trip remarkably well. I remember clearly the end of the first day. We had covered close to thirty miles, and I admit I felt utterly exhausted.

“There it is!” Dad said, as we came round a hill, and could see a tiny light in the distance. “That’s the inn where we will stop for the night.” That little light shining in the darkness provided a real encouragement to the weary travelers.

We had been traveling all day, part of the time walking and part riding. It was well after dark and both of us were cold and almost unbearably tired. At the time I was seventeen. Dad was fifty-four and had served as a missionary in China for thirty years. His work as a missionary involved not only the church in our town, but also towns and villages scattered over a large area in the Western Hills. This was just the first day of three long weeks as we visited isolated churches in these hills. I remember feeling desperately tired as I sat on that mule and thinking how tired Dad must be as he rode on the mule behind mine. My eye was focused on that little light in the distance as it slowly – painfully slowly – came closer. *Three weeks of this! Can I take it? How does Dad do it?*

I began to think of the day when I shall see the Lord face to face. *Right now, I thought, that hope seems to be a mere glimmer in the darkness, but day by day it becomes brighter. Soon we shall see Him in all His glory. What a day that will be!*

Finally we reached our destination with all the fragrances and stench of a Chinese inn. The steaming bowl of hot noodles hit the spot. As we ate I looked at the little flame whose light

we had been watching so long. Incredible! It was just a little smoking flame from a wick floating in a shallow saucer filled with mutton tallow. It seemed impossible that this tiny flame could have been seen from any distance, yet in the darkness it had given us just the encouragement we needed for the last mile of our day's journey. It set me thinking. *Sometimes we think our light does little good; but the darker the night, the brighter the light! Even a tiny light like this!*

This year's activities included a wide variety of learning experiences. Not only was I studying the Chinese language. In Huai-Lu I had been able to spend two weeks learning something about a tent ministry, and now I was traveling with Dad on a three-week trip to the churches. In between these obvious phases of training, I watched as both Mother and Dad went about their regular daily activities, talking with people, praying for people, teaching people, and caring for people. There were occasions when I walked into the room while they were on their knees, and I saw how all their work depended on the power that comes only in answer to earnest prayer.

One more course of study came before it was time to leave for Prairie: Vacation Bible School. The school with about two hundred children included some courses we don't usually teach in VBS situations here in America. One activity was marching on our school playground. Because the graduation exercises at Chefoo included some intricate marching exercises, Mother and Dad suggested I take leadership responsibilities for this program for those two weeks. I had to ask my teacher how to give the various commands, and we had a good time with the youngsters. Only in eternity will we know the results of working with all those children.

All too soon August arrived; the time came to head for Shanghai to board the Empress of Asia that would take me to Vancouver. When our luggage was ready, Dad went ahead to Kiehsiu, ten miles away, and arranged for our transportation to the railhead. While he was doing

that, I walked the first three miles with Mother as I pushed my bicycle over the path through fields of tall sorghum. We stopped as we approached the “Ten-Li-Shop,” a tiny shop ten “li” or three miles from home. There Mother turned back to walk home – in tears and utterly alone. I rode my bicycle the rest of the ten miles to Kiehshu, glad no one could see my tears. There I rejoined Dad, and we caught a bus and were on our way.

I remember very little of that trip as we traveled on three trains, and then a coastal boat to Shanghai. There we made all the final arrangements. I was given a passport and instructed to go to the Canadian Consulate and obtain a Canadian visa, that would allow me to disembark at Victoria, B.C., while the liner would continue to Seattle, WA. I promptly forgot all about the visa. We stopped in Japan at three or four ports where we had the opportunity to go ashore and see the sights. Then from Yokohama we sailed seventeen days out of sight of land, coming fairly close to the Aleutian Islands but not close enough to see any land.

On the third day of that voyage I celebrated my eighteenth birthday on August 26. If it had been three days later, on the 29th, when we crossed the International Date Line, I would have had two birthdays in one year.

We were told we should be able to see whales in that area, but the fog was so heavy we saw almost nothing but fog. On the morning of the seventeenth day I woke up as the sun was rising, and looked out of our porthole. My first view of the USA consisted of the Olympic Mountains, but of course we could not touch land yet. The Empress of Asia stopped at Victoria, B.C., and the immigration officers came aboard. Suddenly I realized I had failed to secure the Canadian visa which was almost the only responsibility assigned to me in Shanghai. *How stupid could I be!*

I found myself sitting at one end of a long table in the Immigration Office in Victoria, B.C., while five or six officers asked me all kinds of questions. They were convinced that I was some kind of a crook masquerading as an innocent youth, trying to cross into Canada on some mysterious, nefarious business. Finally they issued me an "Order for Deportation on the Next Boat to China." Fortunately they gave me permission to go on to Vancouver where I would stay at the China Inland Mission home. I would have to wait there for official word from the Office of Immigration and Naturalization in Ottawa, Quebec.

At the CIM home Mr. and Mrs. Walter Judd graciously took care of me, introducing me to life in North America, and helping me survive the culture shock of seeing white men wearing overalls and doing manual labor. There in Vancouver I was introduced to the wonder of National Parks. I had seen nothing in China that would prepare me for the beauty of Grouse Mountain and some of the other parks around Vancouver.

I still faced a serious problem. I had arrived in Canada, planning to attend Prairie Bible Institute, but had never received official word that I was accepted. Quickly Mr. Judd helped me with that problem, and I soon received word that my application was indeed accepted. But I still had a problem. The immigration people were in no hurry. Weeks went by. School was to open in the first week of October, and still no word. On a Wednesday morning at the breakfast table, Mr. Judd remarked, "You should be at PBI on Friday to register, but I see no way the immigration people will let you go." I answered naively, "If the Lord has brought me this far, He can finish the job." Just then the phone rang, and Mr. Judd went to answer it. When he came back he said with astonishment in his voice, "That was the immigration people. They said you could go on to school and await the final decision there!"

It didn't take me long to get my rail ticket to Calgary where I changed trains to join a group of young people on their way to Three Hills. Students and faculty members met us at the station, making us feel at home immediately, though I had a strange mixture of English, Scottish, American and Australian slang that I had picked up in Chefoo. The immigration people still dawdled, and it took two more weeks for them to send me their final message: I would be allowed to stay in Canada six months. They spent six weeks coming to the decision to allow me to stay in Canada for six months. It required a while for me to realize that if they had given me six months a few weeks earlier, the six months would have expired a week before the end of the school year. God timed their delay perfectly. We serve a wonderful God!

I found it a traumatic experience to come to the end of my days of paddling about in the ankle-deep water. Life at home in Sichow and then Siaoyi was over. Grade school and high school were finished. China was in the background, though I expected to return soon after Bible School. Cutting the ties to home was accomplished. I was ready to test deeper water and the Lord led me into knee-deep water as I faced three years of Bible School and further preparation for life. – What's next?

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