

MISSIONARY #6501

September 2015



Turning a Corner

Our first year in Asia could be summarized by the words "overcoming obstacles." It didn't take long for us to discover that corporate and government cooperation in our host nation inches forward at a snail's pace. It took us weeks to get electricity and running water. It took a couple of months to open a bank account. It took four months merely to obtain the necessary permission to stay. It took five months to get an automobile. It took about six months to get WiFi and even longer to get natural gas turned on. (Yes, for eight months we dealt with sponge baths in cold water and went without heat.) It took us about a year to obtain the license to operate our language school. So much time and energy were spent in our efforts to fulfill bureaucratic regulations that little was left over for language acquisition, without which effective ministry is all but impossible.

Don't get me wrong. We had and took opportunities to witness. We continued to disciple people who had been reached by us or by others. We made scores of valuable contacts. In fact, the frustrating dynamic of being sent on one governmental goose chase after another had the counter-balancing effect of introducing us to many key people who have ultimately helped us. Now, after months of laying the groundwork I feel the liberty to report, we have turned a corner. Allow me to relay a few highlights: (1) God allowed us to move into a much nicer home, where the utilities actually work more often than not. (2) God provided a facility for our school; the location of which could not be more strategic. Much of this month has been spent remodeling that facility, and it is starting to look fantastic. (3) God allowed us to help another team family get settled and to accomplish for them in a few weeks what had taken us many months. (4) God has worked in the heart of our liaison, who is now planning to move here with his family. Pray for them, as they are closing in on the halfway mark of needed support. (5) God has allowed us to get involved in a very important Bible project. We are helping to review a translation that has been 40 years in the making but has not been distributed in this country. (6) In recent months God has allowed us to travel some and preach in four countries. (7) The students in our school are people of significant standing in the community, and there is an ever-growing interest in enrollment. (8) We have seen national visitors in our Sunday assemblies. (9) The language skills, while still far from what we wished they were, are finally taking shape. (10) We are distributing copies of the Gospel of John and have even seen some of the nationals with whom we're working get involved in this dangerous but essential effort.

Allow me to share a story of something that happened just yesterday that demonstrates how God continues opening doors for us. The two team families, along with a guest, took children on a field trip to a hands-on museum of science and technology. The staff there showed so much enthusiasm about the number and behavior of our children and repeatedly expressed how happy they were to make our acquaintance. When one of the staff members learned that we operate a language service center, he expressed a desire for every one of their guides to learn English. They offered to bring us into their place of business on an ongoing basis to teach English to their employees. Eventually the PR manager came out to meet us. We spoke with her for at least a half hour. I was able to share with her about how our faith in Jesus informs our lives and worldview. She allowed me to quote from the Scriptures and readily exchanged contact information so we could continue our dialogue. Her head-scarf ensconced countenance seemed to glow as we talked with her.

We thank all of you for your patience and continued support. We expected it would take a long time to establish a foothold here, and those expectations have proven well-founded. But there is an ever-growing sense that, while we have a long way to go, we are finally turning a corner.

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