



# East Gates

*Seeing Beyond the Impossible™*

INTERNATIONAL

January - February 2016

*D*ear faithful East Gates partner,

We hope your New Year has gotten off to a good start. Ours certainly has. Typically, before January 1st rolls around, one writes down New Year resolutions and resolves to fulfil them in ways they were not the year before. For East Gates, our 2016 resolutions are the same as they've always been -- to stay resolute, committed, steadfast, and faithful to the calling we were given 25 years ago.

It's not an easy task given the cyber culture most of humanity, including China, is presently immersed. 25 years ago, technology such as Google, GPS, Ebay, digital cameras, MP3, smart phones and 3D printers did not exist. Only two to three decades later, we're in a totally different world. God revealed this time period to the prophet Daniel around 2600 years ago when He admonished him to keep His Words "shut up" or "encrypted" (Heb. *עָתָם*, *catham*) until the end time when many would be going "to and fro" and knowledge would increase (Dan.12:4).

The Hebrew word for "to and fro" is *shuwt*, שׁוּט. It has the connotation of a "lashing back and forth in an unstable manner," much like a drunkard that reels or lurches violently on his/her feet. Metaphorically, it can also have the meaning of "one's eyes twitching incessantly back and forth." The context is a mind and soul that is restless and in constant search for deeper meaning.



This *Instantmania* culture of instagrams, instant coffee and instant download creates a mindset that is always looking for new stimulation (II Tim.4:3). In time, God and ministries that seemingly do not assimilate or produce something "new," get set aside and replaced *or* this culture creates God and ministries in "their own image" which is quite dangerous and the ultimate form of idolatry.

So from East Gates' point of view, this New Year is not so much about doing something new or setting new resolutions (which can so easily be broken) as it is about staying continually faithful to a faithful God.

Most people will never forget the May 12, 2008 Wenchuan earthquake that measured 8 on the Richter scale in Sichuan province. It killed 69,197 people and left 18,222 missing. This seminal event significantly "moved" Brother Zuo. At the time, he was a retired manager of a local bank. He retired because he would not adapt to the corrupt business practices. Soon after, he came to know His Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and began contributing most of his time, money and heart into helping the earthquake victims.

He began by building a Bible transfer station so victims would have access to the Bible. Then he built a small library/reading room for the hundreds of youth in the disaster zone. It provided a welcome pastime and comfort for many of the children who became orphans overnight.



East Gates helped Brother Zuo equip his initial Bible transfer station and children's library and reading room.

Time passes by quickly. It has been seven years since the devastating earthquake occurred. Most of the Christian volunteers have all gone back home by request of the local government or they've moved on to other projects. Brother Zuo invited East Gates to come for a visit. He shared how by God's grace, his small library and reading room still exists. It's now located in his small apartment which also functions as a church. An official plaque (right), hangs outside his front door, making known to all that his ministry has been authorized by local authorities. The top plaque reads, *Love Book House Service Center*. The bottom one, *Child-Youth Service Center*.



Brother Zuo says that even though everyone knows he is a Christian, he wants his books to cover all different topics. This way, people from all walks of life will cross his threshold, giving him greater opportunities to share the Gospel. On our last visit, we were impressed with his additional inventory. We increased it even more and helped him start a whole new section -- the Hebrew roots of Christianity. He was extremely grateful. He also hired an assistant to help manage an Elderly Home he started just after the earthquake. Brother Zuo says, "Please pray for me and my family since sharing God's Truth and relief work are never ending!"





After leaving Brother Zuo's home, our East Gates staff headed to Mianzhu, Sichuan Province. Seven years ago, we featured the earthquake's devastation on the main church in this city. Today, the church and Cross have been totally restored. Services have resumed and more than a thousand attend each weekend.

BEFORE



AFTER



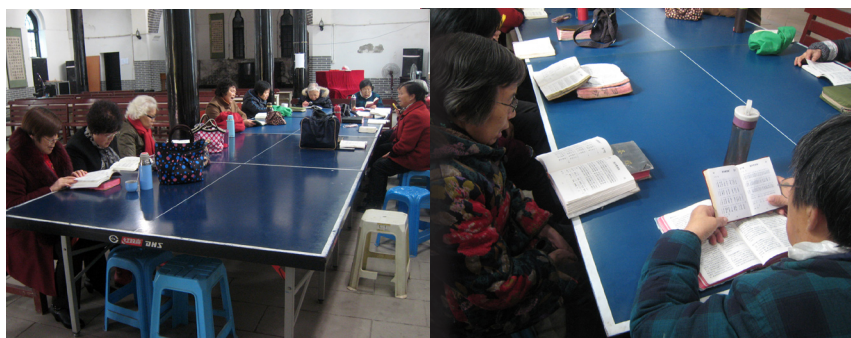
Due to the Christian growth in the area after the earthquake, the Gospel Church was completed in 2012. It is now the main church.



Pastor Gu (pink jacket) believes God has big plans for the congregation and sought God and East Gates' counsel.



A few months ago, a group of elderly women gathered around the church's ping pong table for Bible Study in preparation for Christmas (below).



Pastor Gu is the Chairperson of the Mianzhu Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and Senior Pastor at Gospel Church. Because of the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, she stopped her post-doctorate studies at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary to care for her flock and the church. She said she doesn't know when she can continue her studies because "a Shepherd's work is so busy and heavy, I don't have enough time for rest!"

She shared with us how being a Shepherd is not for the faint-hearted these days because believers are not eager for God's Word or serving in the church's ministries. With a big sigh, Pastor Gu said she has to constantly find ways to encourage the congregants to study the Bible, as well as provide different kinds of training so they can learn how to serve God, their family, church and community. We told her that the global culture would continue to provide many distractions. We identified with her challenges but told her not to lose hope.

GOD IS FAITHFUL, THROUGH WHOM YOU WERE CALLED INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

*I Corinthians 1:9*



**“SET YOUR MIND ON THE THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON THE THINGS THAT ARE ON EARTH.”**

*Colossians 3:2*

Encouraged through our time of prayer and fellowship, we advised Pastor Gu, her husband and staff to count the cost and not look at what lay before them as obstacles but opportunities. Take one day at a time. With that, they laid out a big wish list of “opportunities,” to which we helped them lay out guidelines on how to proceed.



The Gospel Church budget allowed for a training center to be built. Prayers and funds are now needed for the more difficult phase, to equip the center with quality staff and training materials.



Once the training center opens, the small library must expand in space and resources to meet the teachers and students' needs.



The Gospel Church has additional land. They need funding to build apartments, so pastors and others who come to serve, train and disciple will have a private place to stay.

Serving the Lord in a part of the world that has gone through such rapid geopolitical, economic and religious changes, in such a short period of time, can sometimes feel like sweeping water uphill; but we're reminded that this is probably how Jesus' disciples felt also.

God continues to work in miraculous ways throughout China. As we ministered in Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, our co-workers brought God's Truth and joy to the Tibetans (pop. 3.18 million). Pastor Yang and his team shared Bible stories, sang hymns and prepared a Christmas feast for hundreds to attend.



We share with seekers and new believers, to release living in the comfort of their fears. Instead, trust in God's complete love. In this cyberspace world, listen to the One who has “wired us” for eternity!

**“BEHOLD, GOD IS MY SALVATION; I WILL TRUST, AND WILL NOT BE AFRAID; FOR THE LORD GOD IS MY STRENGTH AND MY SONG, AND HE HAS BECOME MY SALVATION.”**

*Isaiah 12:2*

 Christina

Ned and Christina Graham