



East Gates

INTERNATIONAL

Seeing Beyond the Impossible™

July - August 2021

*D*ear East Gates partner,

When you receive this newsletter, the 2021 Tokyo Summer Olympics will have begun (July 23-August 8). Despite the increasing politicization and commercialization of the Games, there's still something mesmerizing about the Olympics which started back in 776 BC. It was named after the highest mountain peak in Greece, Mt. Olympus, home to all the Greek gods and goddesses.

Immersed in the colossal Greco-Roman world, the Apostle Paul knew about the intense pursuit of reaching one's human potential but God had revealed to Him a far greater destiny for humanity beyond the physical. In that sense, Paul was thinking of the *Spiritual Olympics* while writing to the churches in Corinth. We also use "Olympic" analogies when discipling our Chinese brothers and sisters here and in China.

~ I CORINTHIANS 9:24-25 ~

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. So they do it to obtain a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable..."



Pastor "Y's" congregation in front of their church in Yunnan Province. Their theological training classes never stopped during the COVID-19 pandemic in the same way Olympians shooting for the next Olympics keep their vision, daily discipline and practice going 24/7.



The discipline and dedication Olympic athletes devote to their sport for a perishable crown can motivate Christians to press forward for a far greater purpose that is eternal and not just for themselves but humanity.

About 20 years ago, our East Gates Project Director was informed that the Dai tribe, a minority group in Yunnan Province, was in dire need of Bibles. He went there to assess the situation and meet Pastor "Y." The rest is history. For the past two decades, East Gates has been providing Pastor "Y's" team of *Spiritual Olympians* with Bibles and Christian training materials. At present, many of the students desire higher theological training at Yunnan Seminary so they can return better equipped to serve their growing congregation. Many come from poor families so we're paying for their tuition. The cost is \$US500/student/year. A great harvest of winners continues on today.

~ I TIMOTHY 4:7 ~

“TRAIN YOURSELF TOWARD GODLINESS -- KEEPING YOURSELF SPIRITUALLY FIT.” *Amplified*

Here at Baoshan, Western Yunnan Province, we've been equipping and assisting Pastor “X” as God has used him and his co-workers to build many “Spiritual Olympians” over the past 30 years. During this period, he's had nine family members serve at the Baoshan Christian Training Center: his wife, daughter and her husband, son and his wife, niece and two grandsons. His two grandsons just graduated from China's national seminary - Nanjing Jinling Theological Seminary. What an amazing testimony given the challenges that face today's younger generation. It's been an honor and blessing to work with Pastor “X,” who not only is an excellent example of one who has passed the baton successfully to his own family members but to a myriad of students who will be training future “Spiritual Olympians” to obtain their imperishable crown.



The Baoshan Christian Training Center's 19th graduating class and ceremony - June 30, 2021

Pastor “X” recently wrote our Project Director from the Baoshan Christian Training Center and shared some good news:

早安，好兄长！我们昨天有七十五位毕业生照了毕业照，三十号毕业，这是您的支持的结果。感谢主！

Morning, good brother!
Yesterday, we took the graduation photos of our 75 graduates. The graduation ceremony was on June 30. This is the result of your support. Thank you Lord!

~ I TIMOTHY 4:8 ~

“FOR PHYSICAL TRAINING IS OF SOME VALUE -- USEFUL FOR A LITTLE;
BUT GODLINESS [SPIRITUAL TRAINING] IS USEFUL AND OF VALUE IN EVERYTHING AND IN EVERY WAY,
FOR IT HOLDS PROMISE FOR THE PRESENT LIFE AND ALSO FOR THE LIFE WHICH IS TO COME.”



As COVID-19 health protocols lift in more areas we serve, we find believers are so grateful to spend time praying together again as there are so many issues they feel need God's attention.

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a Chinese Christian couple we work with in Zhejiang Province started an online counseling service to help those undergoing various life stresses. The poster headline on the left reads:

FAMILY CARE HOTLINE
 Areas of Consultation
 ‘Husband-wife relationship,’
 ‘Parent-child relationship,’
 ‘Love relationship,’
 ‘Study-induced stress,’
 ‘Workplace pressure’
 ‘Emotional stress’

THE SPIRITUAL PARALYMPICS!

When it comes to the *Spiritual Olympics*, we all begin “spiritually disabled.” So in that regard, we all start out on the same playing field. What’s so wonderful is that God knows just the right program and workout to ensure we fulfill our eternal destiny and calling. For East Gates, this is clearly seen through Pastor “T’s” Wei-hai Sign Language church and Olive Leaf ministry which adopts and provides a home for disabled orphans. East Gates assists in any way we can because our King and “Coach” states in Matthew 25:40, “Truly I tell you, ‘Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

About a month after this young boy was born (right), he was abandoned by his family. On a chilly winter day, in a very desolated area, they left him by the roadside. Upon discovery, the child was found to be congenitally deaf with a cleft lip and palate. Olive Leaf adopted him and after two operations, the boy’s cleft lip and palate were corrected. As an abandoned child, he didn’t have a Hu-kou (registered residence) which significantly reduced his ability to enter society. Pastor “T” says Olive Leaf does its best to compensate for this boy’s unfortunate past with God’s love, counseling, a mentorship program and more but he still has many lonely, alienated and tear-filled days.

~ I THESSALONIANS 5:24 ~

FAITHFUL IS HE WHO CALLS YOU,
AND HE ALSO WILL BRING IT TO PASS.



Pastor “T” coaches his team and they learn about their eternal worth in God’s eyes. He impresses upon them the fact that with God, ALL things are possible (Luke 1:37) and to not be governed by the fear of man but by the AWE of God.



Olive Leaf celebrates this young boy’s birthday. “God wanted you!”



Pastor “T” and his staff knows there’s always a need for down time, so recently they took all their “kids” to enjoy the beach.



The Wei-hei Sign Language church and Olive Leaf orphans praise and worship together.

Places like the Wei-Hai Sign Language church and Olive Leaf are rare in China if not in the world. At present, East Gates assists with the expenditures for Pastor “T’s” ministry since he hardly has any outside financial help. This involves covering the monthly rent, utilities, specialized staffing, orphans’ meals, healthcare, clothing and field trip excursions. Annual expenses are RMB180,000 or \$US27,860. To rent a larger home to meet growing needs would add another US\$3000/year. Pastor “T” asks for our prayers and that others would see the Kingdom purpose and value of serving the “least of these...” These precious brothers and sisters win just by crossing the starting line!

*D*ad or “Daddy Bill” as extended family members would call him, was once asked what he would have done differently if he could have lived his life all over again. Back then in his 90s, he replied, “I would have spent more time with the One I will be spending eternity with.” Our Chinese brothers and sisters understand these words of wisdom from one of their late, great “coaches.”

Today, the life of a *Spiritual Olympian* in China is challenging. All aspects of religious administration are under Communist Party control. Our staff and co-workers say churches in China and Hong Kong are in an “observation period.” During this season, many of China’s larger churches have separated into smaller groups to avoid attention. Non-registered groups have stopped singing hymns so neighbors won’t report them.



Unlike the Greco-Roman Olympians of the past, who set their hearts on all their gods and goddesses at Mt. Olympus, as *Spiritual Olympians* for the Kingdom of God, our Chinese brothers and sisters have set their body, mind, soul and spirit on the One, Living, True God who came to visit their forefathers on Mt. Sinai and will soon bring heaven down to earth on Mt. Zion!

*I*n Hong Kong (HK), there has been much protest and turmoil over China’s June 30, 2020 implementation of a “new” National Security Law (NSL) which enables China’s central government to crackdown on anything it considers subversive, “out-of-line” or contrary to its definition of Rule of Law. This unilateral decision was put into action a year ago, on the eve of Hong Kong’s 23rd anniversary of being handed over from the United Kingdom to China. Since then, HK citizens have seen major overt and covert changes to their freedoms. With respect to the HK churches, a year of COVID, NSL and continual social unrest have caused much internal strife within families and fellowships. As a result, many HK citizens, including pastors and congregants have emigrated to other countries.

~ DO NOT QUENCH THE HOLY SPIRIT ~

*O*ur King is on His Throne. Like all stellar coaches who want to pass on their knowledge and experience to their athletes so they can excel beyond what they did, Jesus Christ was the same. He encouraged His *Spiritual Olympians* with, “Truly, truly I say to you, the one who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12).



*T*hank you for running beside our Chinese brothers and sisters. Through your heartfelt prayers and support, we show them that God’s promise of, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” is true. May we all be able to confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” (Heb.13:5-6).

Ned and Christina

Ned and Christina Graham