

DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONT

“NO REGRETS, NO RETREAT” Small Group Discussion Guide

LESSON 1 | Open Bible, Open Map

1. William Carey’s observation that in order “to know the will of God, we need an open Bible and an open map” sounds very similar to Jesus’ charge to His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20a: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations [an open map], baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you [an open Bible].” What other biblical texts reinforce Carey’s idea (e.g., numerous geographic references in the book of Acts)? Do you find yourself emphasizing one component of Christ’s charge (going vs. teaching) more highly or more often than the other? How does missing one of the components impact the advance of the Gospel?

LESSON 2 | I Must Go

2. George Stott, amputee and missionary with Hudson Taylor said, “I do not see those with two legs going, so I must.” It would have been understandable for a person with an obstacle such as Stott’s to remain in England with its superior medical care, better living conditions, and greater ease. But instead, Stott followed God’s call to China. What obstacle is keeping you from following God’s call to your family, co-workers, neighbors, or the world? Take a few moments individually to confess your lack of faith and to chart out some initial steps of obedience, then pray together that you would each have growing faith to follow God in obedience.
3. Samuel Zwemer, writing of pioneer missionaries, said that they had “this passion to call that country their home which was most in need of the Gospel. In this passion all other passions died; before this vision all other visions faded; this call drowned all other voices.” What passion of yours surpasses all other passions? What vision is causing all other visions to fade? What voice is drowning all others?

LESSON 3 | Lift up the Cross!

4. Modern day China boasts an estimated population of 1.36 billion.¹ China’s largest city, Shanghai, has an estimated population of 20 million. Nearly 20% of all people alive today live in China. These are staggering numbers. Would you join Hudson Taylor to pray for “willing, skillful laborers” to advance the Kingdom in China? Would you ask God to be merciful and save many of China’s millions? Pray that Chinese believers would know sustaining grace, persevering faith, and bold love.
5. What detriments and divisions might Uncle Zhao have had in mind when he mentioned that accepting the money and methods of western Christianity is harming the Chinese church? How would Uncle Zhao’s exhortation to “Follow Christ. Lift up the Cross!” serve to correct these issues in your own life, in the life of your church, and in the Chinese church?

¹ All statistics from the Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook. Accessed February 13, 2015. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>.

LESSON 4 | Brave Character

6. When asked to write the Chinese character for bravery, Mei Li responded by writing three quotes from three Gospel trailblazers: Hudson Taylor, Jim Elliot, and William Borden. Take a few moments as a group to adore the original Gospel trailblazer, Jesus, who emptied himself, took on the form of a servant, and endured the shame of the cross (Philippians 2:7-8 and Hebrews 12:2). Pray the following prayer of consecration from *The Valley of Vision* as you endeavor to follow the trailblazing example of the Savior.

“God’s Cause”²

SOVEREIGN GOD,
Thy cause, not my own, engages my heart,
 and I appeal to thee with greatest freedom
 to set up thy kingdom in every place
 where Satan reigns;
Glorify thyself and I shall rejoice,
 for to bring honour to thy name is my sole desire.
I adore thee that thou art God,
 and long that others should know it, feel it,
 and rejoice in it.
O that all men might love and praise thee,
 that thou mightest have all glory
 from the intelligent world!
Let sinners be brought to thee for thy dear name!
To the eye of reason everything respecting
 the conversion of others is as dark as midnight,
But thou canst accomplish great things;
 the cause is thine,
 and it is to thy glory that men should be saved.
Lord, use me as thou wilt,
 do with me what thou wilt;
 but, O, promote thy cause,
 let thy kingdom come,
 let thy blessed interest be advanced
 in this world!
O do thou bring in great numbers to Jesus!
 let me see that glorious day,
 and give me to grasp for multitudes of souls;
 let me be willing to die to that end;
 and while I live let me labour for thee
 to the utmost of my strength,
 spending time profitably in this work,
 both in health and in weakness.
It is thy cause and kingdom I long for,

² Bennett, Arthur. *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2007. 175. Reproduced by permission of Banner of Truth; Edinburgh Office.

not my own.
O, answer thou my request!

LESSON 5 | A Battle from the Start

7. What friends, relatives, co-workers, or acquaintances of yours are not trusting in Christ? Would you resolve to regularly pray a prayer like this for them? “Lord Jesus, God of Heaven, who died that sinners like me and this man might live, have mercy on him, break his chains, give him eyes to see You that he, too, might live.”
8. In the face of persecution, God’s promises provide a weapon to fight the unbelief and doubt that can encroach so quickly. “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). “They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength” (Isaiah 40:31). “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19:29). Believers like Mei Li, who has lost property and family in her pursuit of Jesus, are guaranteed a hundredfold return on their Kingdom investment. What resources (such as time, talents, and money) have you invested in ways that are yielding some return but might yield a much greater return when reinvested in Gospel risk-taking? What items are you investing in that are not producing any return at all?

LESSON 6 | Bless the Lord, O my Soul

9. Many Chinese believers are reaching out to their neighbors with the Good News while having no specialized training or formal experience. Do you find yourself using your lack of training or expertise as a reason not to speak about Christ? What steps can you take to remedy this?
10. The song “Bless the Lord” (10,000 Reasons) by Matt Redman is a paraphrase of Psalm 103. Take a few moments to meditate on this Psalm individually and then recount to one another some of the ways that you have found this Psalm to be an accurate portrayal of God’s character (e.g., How has God been rich in love to me? When has God demonstrated that he is slow to anger or full of steadfast love and mercy? etc.). How do these attributes of God encourage you to follow Him no matter what happens today and no matter what lies ahead of you in the days and years to come?

LESSON 7 | No Retreat

11. Mark and Chakha share the Gospel with the people they meet as they go about their day, even if those people are outsiders—people like Mr. Wang, the taxi driver; and the outcast woman invited to supper. Plan some ways that you could incorporate this practice into your schedule. Compare notes as a group. Propose strategies to encourage one another to follow through on these ideas.

12. Mei Li believes that if Mongolia is going to be reached with the Gospel it will be done by Mongolians. What is your “Mongolia”—that group of people that you are uniquely positioned to speak to about Christ? There is certainly a “you-shaped Mongolia” in your town, but have you considered that your “Mongolia” may be on the other side of the world?

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