

Strong, Firm & Steadfast

Life in the midst of SARS is interesting and unpredictable. Despite certain restrictions, I think people in my city are getting over the initial fear and settling down to dealing with the problem. Few people wear masks on the street now. The weather is lovely and that helps to soothe away worries. Many foreigners have left already or are planning to leave.

Our fellowship has started a program of providing care packages for SARS victims. We have put together 200 to be distributed. We plan to do this for several days. It feels good to do something positive about the situation. We also have some cards created by the youngsters saying thanks to the doctors for their hard work. A situation like this does bring people closer and often brings out the best in them.

Footnote: Please hold Kath in your prayers at a time of tremendous pressure, as well as amazing opportunity, to show forth and speak of the love of Jesus.

Kath has taught in the Far East for a number of years. After a period of teaching she is now studying Mandarin in China.



And in response...

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Thank you for your support in delivering the care packages and T-shirts to the hospital. The head nurse in charge of SARS work in the hospital and the teachers in charge of Master students are truly grateful. One of my Chinese friends, who had received a care package told me how excited he was to receive something "material" as well as "spiritual".

My friend shared with me that the book and the magazine in the package were his favorites. He asked me, "Why do you and your friends do this for us?" And I had an opportunity to tell the real reason, how much God loves them.

The T-shirts will be delivered to the nurses and doctors who are currently quarantined. Nurse QH expressed her thanks on behalf of the nurses and doctors.



Students confined on campus and literally climbing the walls!



There is fear in people's eyes!



Taking the temperature of a teacher leaving the Beijing Airport.

Footnote: Please pray for Helen. Life for Helen and so many like her has been turned upside down. At such a time as this they need to know and look to the Rock on which they stand; the One who is the same yesterday and today and forever.

THE SOLID ROCK

Helen is an experienced History teacher and went out to China in 2001. Her account of the fear and anxiety caused by SARS gives insight to how life in China has changed so dramatically.

You have probably seen much about the disease on the news, but I cannot stress enough to you the sense of fear that is pervading the nation. My university gates are now locked and guarded, as are all the others in the city. Students cannot go in or out. Teachers can, but we have to sign papers and we're not supposed to go further than Home Club, the supermarket 50 yards around the corner. We have to take our temperature every day and phone the Foreign Affairs Office to tell them what it is.

Out of 40 foreign teachers at the university, almost half have decided to go home, and within a week have booked flights, packed up their flat and are already gone. Flights are being cancelled every day, and some train routes have been closed altogether. All large gatherings have been cancelled or postponed, including many big exams. They're even considering postponing the major college entrance exam. And all internet bars are closed. There's fear in people's eyes. The implications of all this are huge.



Robert has taught English in China since 1998. He returned to the UK last Christmas and plans to return to China later this year to study Mandarin. Here he writes about the mind set of many Chinese students.

“So Mr. Robert, do you believe in science or Christianity?” was the question lobbed at me by one of my students during an afternoon ‘free talk’ session. Wow, what a false dichotomy, but most young Chinese have been brought up to see science and technology as providing all the answers to mankind’s origins, development and future. Confirmed as they apparently are in their rationalism, many young students do see a place for the supernatural or have vague hopes that there is a God out there who will help them. In Buddhist temples I have seen hardened atheists bowing down to idols, putting a garland of flowers around their neck and going through other rituals if they thought it might induce God to bless them with prosperity.

This utilitarian attitude of ‘if you bless me and make me successful then I will follow you’ is not only found in China of course...just one of the devil’s distortions. To me these students are at least being honest in saying one of the main reasons for turning to God would be to get a ‘leg up’ in life. God isn’t a killjoy. He wants to bless His people but perhaps not in the way of their choosing. Students need to hear that there is more to life than a big pay check and that God has an exciting, stretching, fulfilling plan tailor-made for their lives (which may include a high salary but may not) if only they will go His way.

Those graduates who land a job with a prestigious joint venture company (i.e. part foreign owned), leave the university with great optimism and determination to make their mark. Their ‘can-do’ mentality is to be admired, also their hard work and application; I dare say the majority will succeed, but down the line I wonder how they will have coped with the harsh realities and corruption of the business world.

China considers herself to be a developing country, the economy is growing at 8% per year, but many wealthy students are still impatient to emigrate to Canada, Australia or New Zealand. Why? They cannot wait for China to catch up economically and pursue their own agenda which usually involves around getting their son or daughter to experience the advantages of life in the ‘developed’ West NOW. Others head for Europe to study but they know that opportunities to settle there are very limited.

I discovered that my students and the wider society **love** winners and have little time for, or interest in, those who come in second place. For example at the Sydney Olympics the Chinese sports reporters didn’t acknowledge their own silver or bronze medal winners unless China also won gold in that event. As academic and work pressures increase, pray that Chinese Christians can be the salt and light conveying to the wider society the message that **EVERYONE** is valuable, not just those at the top of the class.

Footnote: *Robert thanks all those who have prayed and supported him over the years and says “We move forward together and grow as each member of our multinational army plays his/her role, our destiny secure thanks to our victorious Captain – praise Him! Please pray that in the coming months Robert would hear from the Lord regarding a long term vision, that he would have a balanced walk with Him and make solid progress with language studies.*

SUMMER SCHOOL

Give thanks for a wonderful time of teaching and fellowship at Bawtry Hall despite the uncertainty caused by SARS. Pray for the Lord's guidance for those who came, particularly those who feel they may have a longer term call to China.

Pray that we may be able to take 2 UK teams into China mid-July and for the Lord's hand to be upon all the new arrangements that have to be made.



Future China Days:

July 19, 2003 — The Wirral

Sept. 20, 2003 — Colchester

Oct. 11, 2003 — Taunton

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