



Send the Light

Standing Firm Despite Hardship

Mid to
Late 19th
Century
Missionaries

#NotConsumed® Homeschool

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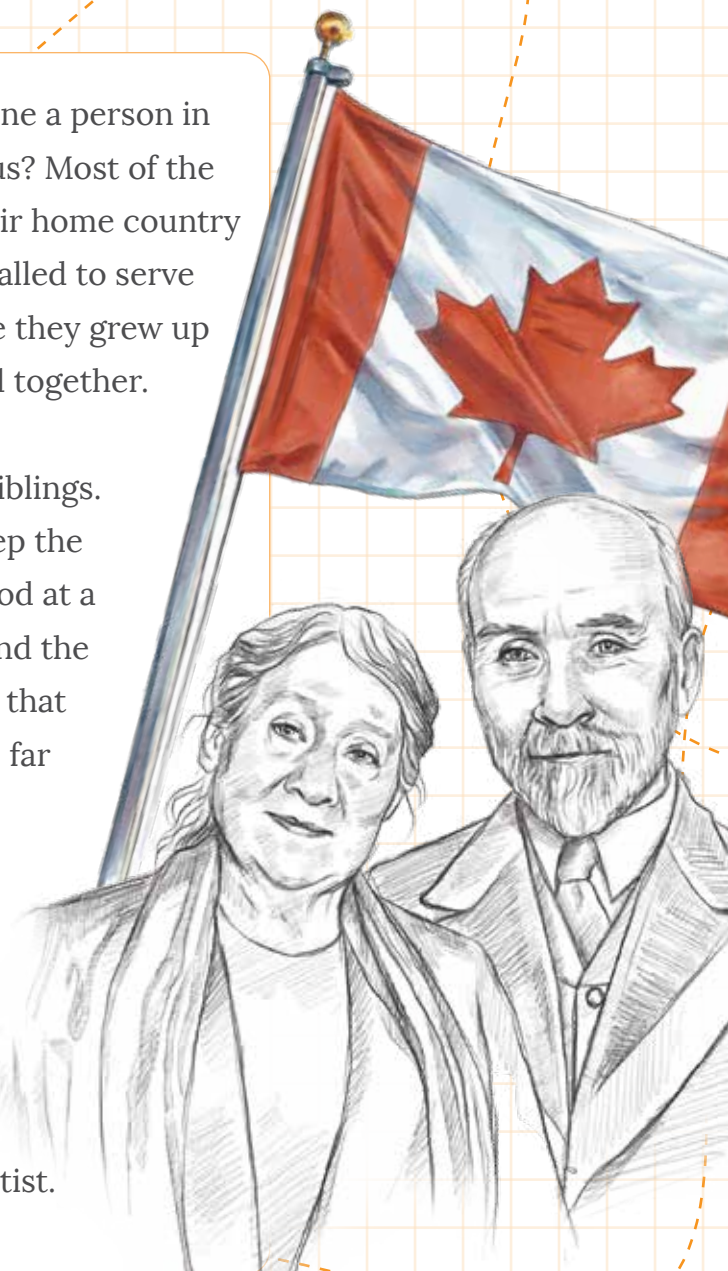
Jonathan & Rosalind Goforth

Beginnings

When someone says the word “missionary,” what do you think about? Do you imagine a person in a far away place like Africa or India making great sacrifices to tell people about Jesus? Most of the time when we talk about missionaries, we’re talking about people who have left their home country to bring the gospel to people who live somewhere else. However, all believers are called to serve God right where they are! Jonathan and Rosalind Goforth began serving God where they grew up and later traveled to China, leaving a legacy to inspire us through the work they did together.

Jonathan was born in 1859. He grew up on a farm in Ontario, Canada, with his ten siblings. His father had immigrated from England as a teenager and worked very hard to keep the family farm running. It was his mother’s simple faith that introduced Jonathan to God at a very young age. Another thing that fascinated Jonathan as a young boy was maps and the idea that people lived in so many other places around the world. Little did he know that God was preparing him not to be a farm boy, but to be a missionary to one of those far away places.

Rosalind Bell-Smith was the daughter of a very famous English artist. Her family had moved from England to Montreal, Canada, when Rosalind was three. She lived a wealthy lifestyle quite different from Jonathan and was well educated by her mother and private schools. Rosalind’s brother pursued art, and his breathtaking Canadian landscapes are now valuable records of the time period. Rosalind was a proper and refined young lady, and her family had big hopes for her career as an artist.



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Jonathan & Rosalind Goforth

Salvation and Calling

Jonathan attended high school where he met a pastor who came to teach the Bible to the students. While visiting the pastor's church, Jonathan understood that he needed a Savior and finally accepted Christ. He was amazed to see the Bible come alive as he read it. The pastor invited Jonathan to teach a Sunday school class, which became the first of many ministries. God called Jonathan to become a missionary, and he went to college. At first, he was mocked for his humble upbringing, but he soon became loved and respected by the other students for his kind attitude and faithful work. In fact, it was his classmates who supported him financially to go to China! God used Jonathan's time at Knox College to prepare him for the life of adventure, trials, and service ahead of him.

Rosalind gave her life to Christ at a revival meeting when she was twelve. However, for a while, she struggled to know if she really was saved. Was she too young? Would Jesus really receive her? Proverbs 8:17 and John 6:37 assured her that Jesus had saved her and would never cast her out. In her early twenties, she had another question to wrestle with. Should she pursue art, or should she fully pursue God? Rosalind made the decision to fully commit her life to God, no matter where that path took her.

Sunday School Classes—

Teaching a Sunday school class was a simple but impactful way for Christians to serve in the church. Young men and women were given a class of children to teach every Sunday. It was through Sunday School that many families first heard the truth of God's Word! Serving in similar programs is a great way to learn how to teach others about God.



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Jonathan & Rosalind Goforth

Together to China

Jonathan met Rosalind during his last year in college. Both of them worked as part of the Toronto Mission Union, and it was there that they got to know each other. Not only did Rosalind play the organ beautifully, but Jonathan was also impressed by her sacrifice and willingness to serve at the mission. Before long, Jonathan knew he was in love with Rosalind. The question was, would Rosalind give up her promising career as an artist to be a poor missionary in China?

When Jonathan proposed to Rosalind, he said, "Will you join your life with mine for China?" Rosalind said yes, and even agreed that sending books about the needs in China to churches in Canada was more important than an engagement ring. Rosalind had prayed for a man who followed God with his whole heart, and she found that in Jonathan. Jonathan and Rosalind married a year later, and just three months afterward, they were sailing to China. They had no idea what awaited them on the other side of their ocean voyage, nor could they have imagined the life ahead of them. But they did know that they were boldly following God's will together.



Christianity in China—Christianity was introduced to China as early as the 7th century! A group of Catholic missionaries, who called their teaching "The Teaching of the Light," brought the earliest recorded teaching of God to China. They translated the Bible into Chinese and taught them important doctrines, such as the Trinity. However, it wasn't until the early 19th century that Protestant missionaries came to China. It is estimated that from this time until the 1950s, when all of the missionaries were forced out, around 50,000 foreign missionaries both Protestant and Catholic worked in China.

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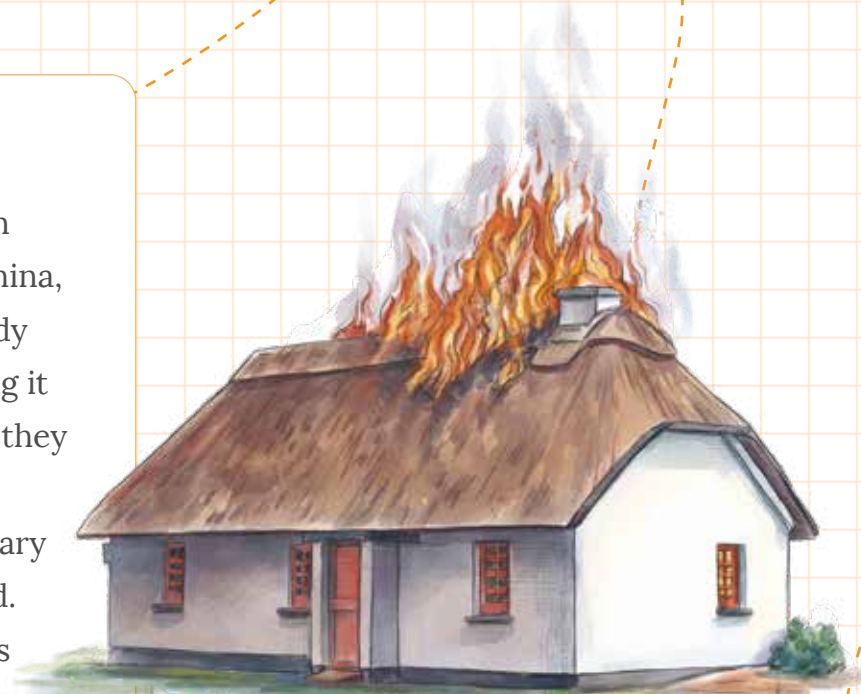


Jonathan & Rosalind Goforth

Preparation

It was not long before the Goforths experienced the hardships of mission life themselves. Their house burned down a week after they arrived in China, destroying nearly everything they had brought with them. Language study was very hard for Jonathan as well, and he became frustrated by how long it was taking him. No one wanted to listen to him talk about Jesus because they couldn't understand him. Finally, he took his frustration to the Lord and prayed about it as he walked to a meeting where he and another missionary were to speak. As he spoke in the meeting, suddenly the language clicked. He understood what he was saying, and so did the Chinese! Jonathan was thrilled to see God answer his prayer.

The Goforths were assigned a section of China called North Honan, a place where missionaries had not gone before. While they were living in a nearby town to learn more about the culture and prepare, Hudson Taylor wrote a letter to Jonathan explaining that in order to reach North Honan, he must go forward on his knees. Jonathan took this to heart and prayed fervently. The missionaries were encouraged to see two people come to Christ just from their visits to the area! The Goforths were very excited to move to North Honan and see what God had in store for them there.



North Henan—North Honan, now called North Henan, is located inland in North China. In Changte, the city where the Goforths first lived, the temperature can get as low as 26 degrees in the winter and higher than 90 degrees in the summer. That's certainly warmer than the 79 degree average high in Toronto, Canada! Adjusting to the culture, environment, and weather in their field was the first lesson a new missionary had to learn.

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Jonathan & Rosalind Goforth

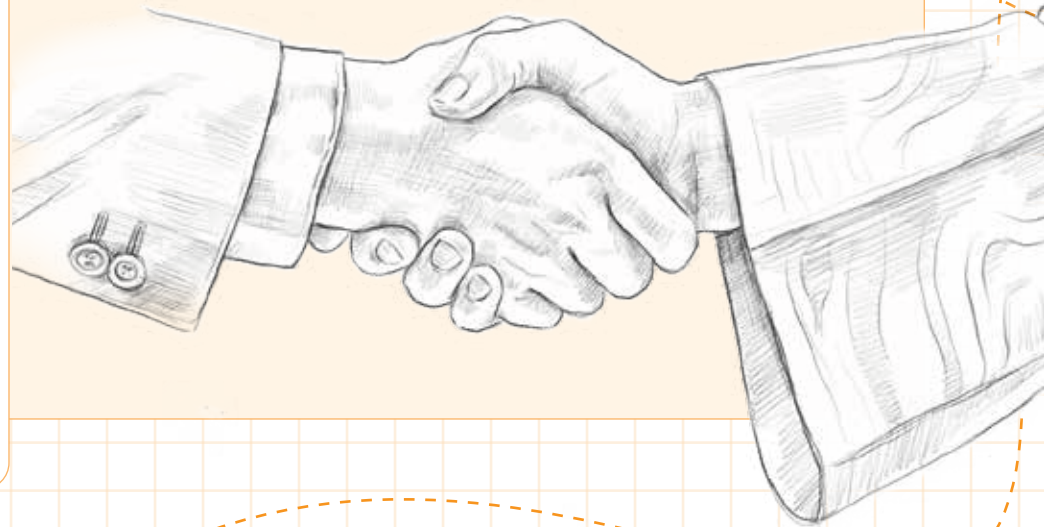
North Honan

Preparing for the mission field takes much work and even more time. Jumping straight into a city where no missionary had been before would be a bad idea if you didn't know the language or culture. You might accidentally do or say something that would offend another person. Because of this, by the time the Goforths finally moved to Changte in North Honan, they had already traveled home on furlough and had three children. However, when they moved into their new home, they were well prepared.

Every day, people gathered outside to hear the Goforths speak. Jonathan often preached for eight hours a day, and Rosalind talked to the women until her voice gave out. Within five months of moving to Changte, they estimated that 25,000 people had come to hear the gospel. When Jonathan and Rosalind both needed someone to come help them, they prayed, and God sent them both Chinese Christians who were so excited to have the opportunity to preach about the good news that had changed their lives.

Chinese Culture—

If you were to visit China and wanted to say "hello" to someone, you could say "Ni hao" (it's pronounced Nee-how). While saying hello, you might shake their hand. However, if it is a person of importance or authority, a nod of your head or bow would show respect. It is customary to show respect to elders by addressing them by their title (Mr., Mrs., Dr.) followed by their last name. When you enter a house in China, it is customary to take your shoes off and wear house slippers instead. Pointing a finger at someone, whistling, and hugging or kissing people in public are all seen as rude in Chinese culture.

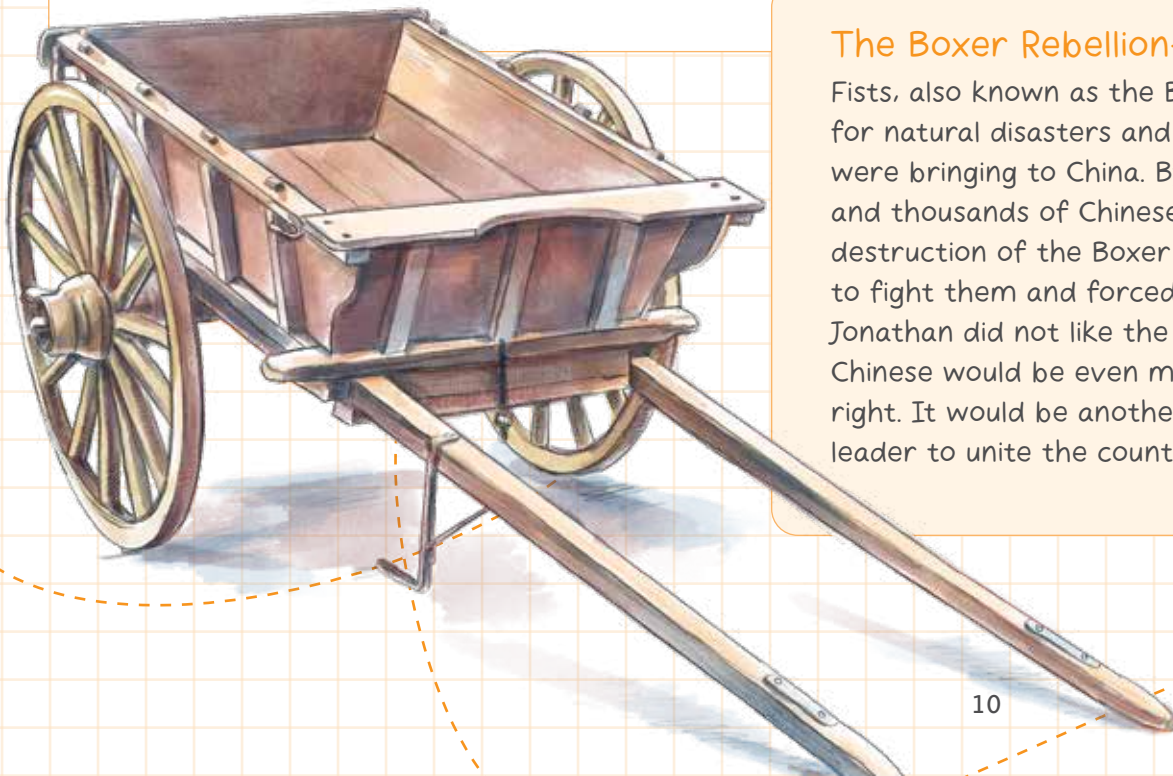




Jonathan & Rosalind Goforth

Escape

Very early in the morning in the year 1900, forty-year-old Jonathan tied the last of their belongings to the ox carts. Rosalind, their four children, and nine other missionaries climbed in one of the three carts. A movement called the Boxer Rebellion was stirring up the Chinese people to injure and kill foreigners, missionaries, and Chinese Christians. Jonathan knew that he needed to get his family out of China quickly. When everything settled down, they would come back. With tears in their eyes, the Chinese people who had been led to Christ silently said goodbye, and Jonathan wondered if he would ever see any of them again. The journey was dangerous and difficult, but God protected the missionaries. The Goforths were relieved to have safely made it to a boat sailing for Canada, but they were also worried about the Chinese Christians left behind.



The Boxer Rebellion—The Society of the Righteous and Harmonious Fists, also known as the Boxers, blamed the missionaries and Christians for natural disasters and hated the westernization that foreigners were bringing to China. By the end of the rebellion, 250 foreigners and thousands of Chinese Christians were killed. In order to stop the destruction of the Boxer Rebellion, an alliance of 8 nations sent troops to fight them and forced China to sign an agreement with them. Jonathan did not like the way this had turned out and worried that the Chinese would be even more opposed to foreigners now. Jonathan was right. It would be another 50 years before China would have a strong leader to unite the country and he would force all missionaries to leave.

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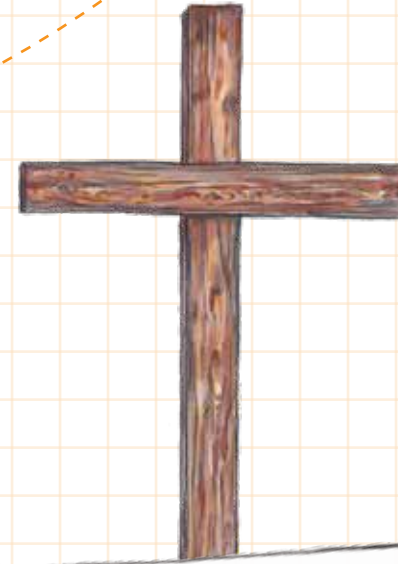


Jonathan & Rosalind Goforth

Return to China

In October of 1901, when China was open to missionaries again, Jonathan was one of the first to go back. He left his family in Canada until he could make sure it was safe for them. When Jonathan arrived in Changte, he was surprised to see that the church and their house were both still standing, although everything valuable had been stolen. As he looked around, he was even more surprised and delighted to hear someone calling his name. It was his friend, Mr. Ho! Before the rebellion, Mr. Ho had been one of the leaders in the church at Changte. Jonathan listened as his friend shared about his persecution and about how God rescued him and allowed him to share the gospel with many people.

As Jonathan found more and more Christians, he continued to hear stories of their persecutions and was very encouraged to hear that none of them had wavered in their faith. Whether they were hung by their thumbs, threatened, or beaten, they never stopped believing in God. Soon, Jonathan sent for Rosalind and the children, and the Goforth family began traveling to villages around Changte to preach. God continued to protect them and bless their ministry, and more and more Chinese people became Christians even when their friends and family persecuted them for it.



Persecution—When Jonathan was young, his classmates and teachers mocked him and challenged his beliefs. However, it was this persecution that led him to study God's Word deeply and strengthened his faith. Sometimes, it is persecution that God uses to make a missionary strong. Often, it is a person's faith despite persecution that God uses to help other people believe. While some Chinese were not happy that the Goforths came back, many more wondered what they had to say that was so important that they risked coming back to share it.

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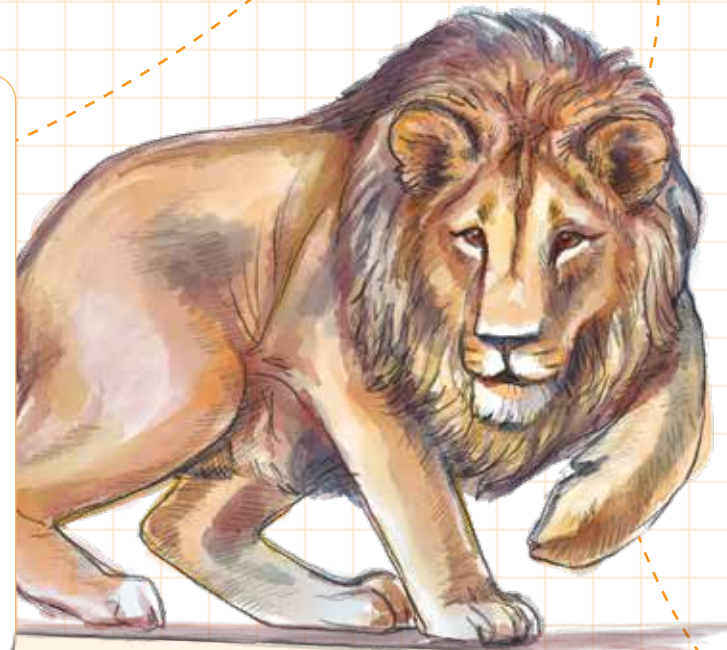
Jonathan & Rosalind Goforth

Bible Lesson

When I say the word “persecution,” how does that make you feel? As humans, we don’t want to be hurt or killed, have our houses burned down, or to face challenges. But as Christians, we should willingly embrace persecution! Why? Because it is moments of trial and hardship that teach us to trust God and turn us into Christians who are willing to face persecution in order to stand for God and make His name known.

PERSECUTION

Let’s read **Luke 9:23-26**. In these verses, Jesus is explaining what it looks like to follow Him. Jesus knows that real happiness and joy do not come from an easy life; they come from following Him. It’s like training a little child to obey. Sometimes children need motivation to help them obey. Parents do not punish a child because they don’t love the child, but because they do love the child and want them to be safe! God, our Heavenly Father, is the same way. He allows hard things in our lives to remind us to run to Jesus and find comfort and joy in Him instead of in sin or in ourselves.



Martyrs—It is rumored that in 64 A.D., Roman Emperor Nero started a fire in Rome and blamed the Christians. This was the beginning of an intense three and a half year persecution in which Christians were burned at the stake and eaten alive by animals. The Romans were cruel, but the Christians who were killed in Rome did not cower and shake in fear. We call them “martyrs,” a word that means “witness.” They stood up, faced the enemy, and died with courage and faith in Jesus. We have many stories of Christians who sang as they waited for wild animals to eat them and who embraced death willingly. If you trust Jesus, you do not have to be afraid of persecution!

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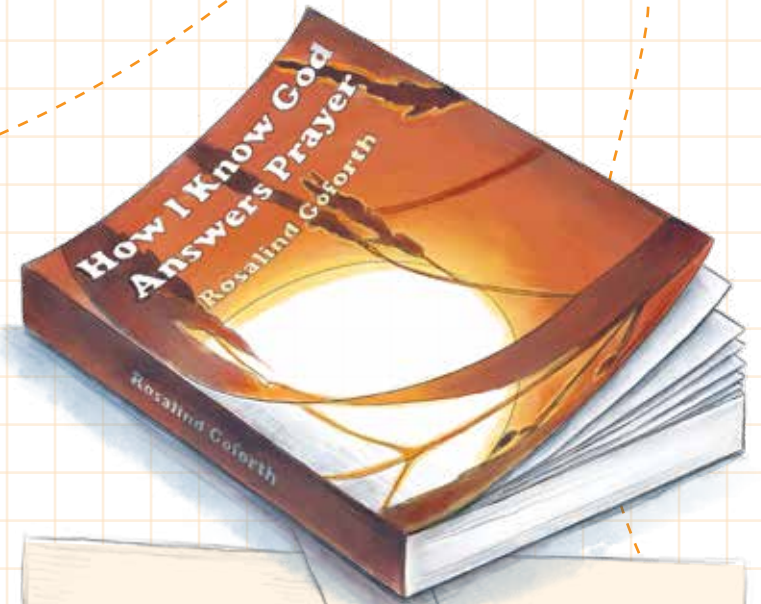


Jonathan & Rosalind Goforth

Legacy

Jonathan and Rosalind sensed that the time to evangelize China was short, so they worked as long and hard as God would let them, traveling around China and holding revival meetings. In 1920, a large section of China was facing a bad famine. Rosalind wrote a short letter appealing for funds to help with the famine. Then she took it to a friend who made 150 copies, and she passed them out to all of the missionaries staying nearby. In just a day, the letter had been translated into ten different languages and sent out all over the world. Rosalind's letter saved tens of thousands of lives and opened the hearts of many Chinese people to the gospel.

The Goforths spent their last years in China serving in Manchuria, located in the top northeast corner of China. Finally, Jonathan and Rosalind decided to return to Canada and encourage more people to consider missions. Jonathan would commonly ask, "Why can't you go?" as he preached all over Canada. By the time he died at the age of 77, the church in China was thriving and ready for the next challenge. Rosalind lived for six more years, and it is through her books that we have many inspiring stories of the Goforths time in China.



The Chinese Church— In 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took over China, and all foreign missionaries were forced to leave. The CCP banned all religions and punished those who still held to their beliefs. Today, the CCP is trying to destroy all religions in China by slowly making all the religious groups more Communist. Chinese Christians who want to worship freely must operate in illegal underground churches. However, the persecution they face helps Chinese Christians to have a strong faith in Jesus and share it with those around them.

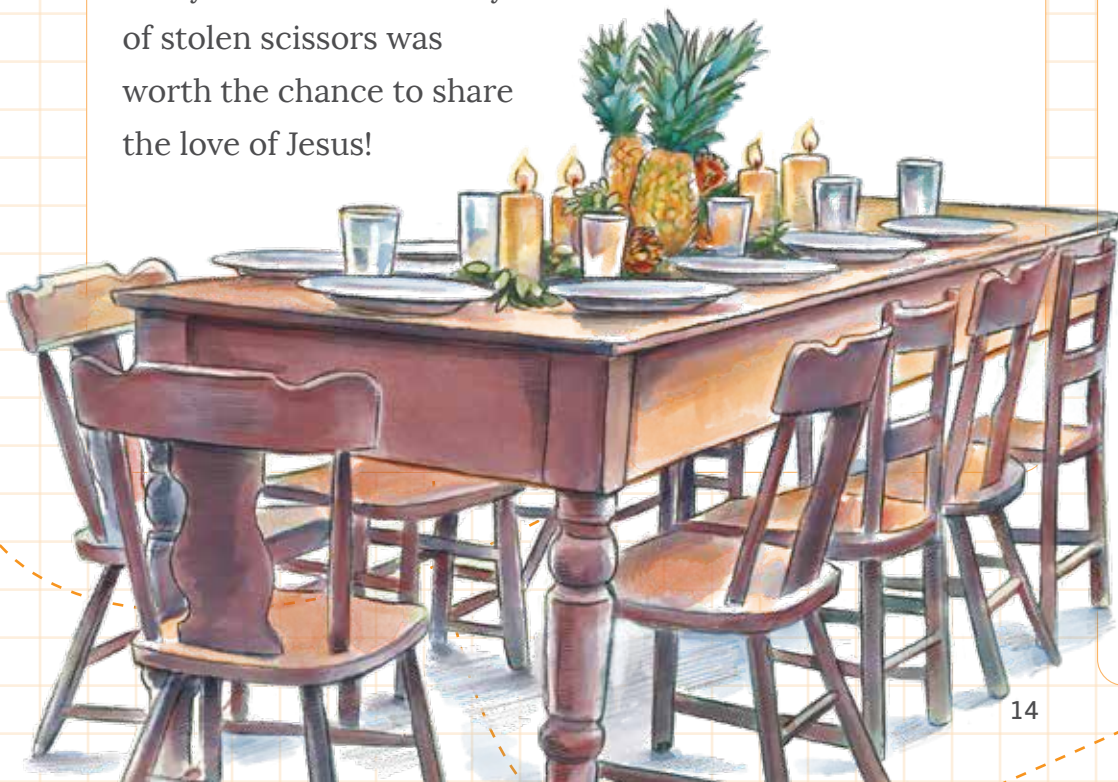
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Jonathan & Rosalind Goforth

Family Mission Challenge

When the Goforths lived in North Honan, they invited the Chinese people into their homes to share the gospel with them. Even though it wasn't easy, the Goforths chose to take advantage of this ministry opportunity. The curious Chinese people would open every drawer, and sometimes the contents of the drawer would not be put back. No matter where Rosalind hid her sewing scissors, they would always be stolen. But they decided that the inconvenience of stolen scissors was worth the chance to share the love of Jesus!



Spend some time in prayer as a family asking God to help you show a family who He is and point them to the gospel. Ask God to bring an unbelieving family into your life if you don't know one, so you can share the gospel with them through hospitality.

Sometime in the next week, invite an unbelieving family into your home.

- 💡 Share a meal with them, hang out in the backyard, or have a game night.
- 💡 Spend some time planning to share the gospel with the family while they are in your house.
- 💡 You could invite them to join family devotions after dinner or ask for prayer requests and pray with them.

Building a relationship with people is one of the best ways to share the gospel with them! If you don't know any unbelieving families, consider inviting a grandparent or family friend over so that you can all practice sharing the gospel with them.