

The Holy Spirit Told Us Exactly What To Do

Several high-ranking church leaders from Europe, one a bishop of his denomination, visited a pastor in Hong Kong. The pastor took them to visit some of the churches. They found them inspiring, and uniquely Chinese, but they wondered aloud if perhaps they weren't seeing the real church. They had felt the warmth of the heat through the vent, but they wanted to see the furnace where the fire raged. On the final day of their visit, the pastor hoped to show them what they wanted to see. He knew they would not really be satisfied, nor would their trip to China be considered a success unless they met a real church planter.

At their last stop, the pastor discovered that two young women had just returned from their mission station for a short visit, so he asked them to come to the hotel late, to meet the visiting church leaders. These young ladies had both become Christian as teenagers while listening to radio broadcasts, and they each had immediately felt the call to be a missionary. The pastor had met with them and attempted to teach them how to witness right where they were. "No," they insisted, "the Bible you gave us says Jesus said to go to all the world. We want to go." "But," the pastor argued, "you have only been Christians for 6 months, and you are so young." They replied, "Pastor, we have read everything Jesus said and nowhere does he ask people how old they are. We want to go." Smiling, the pastor asked them, "But can you give me an exegesis of the 5 classical appearances of the great commission in the New Testament?" Their disappointed faces made him feel ashamed. "Very well. We need some workers on Hainan Island." "Hainan Island, we have never heard of it."

The pastor said, "It is an island off the mainland. The people there are fishermen. It is very rough. There are no Christians there. For young ladies it might be dangerous." Excitedly they responded, "How soon can we go?" "Well, I have to go back to Hong Kong and make arrangements. There will be....." They interrupted him, "Oh no, no, we must not wait. Our Lord said 'go,' not sit around and plan. We will go to this place - what did you call it?" "Hainan. Hainan Island." They looked at each other, rolled the name around in their mouths, repeating it. "Hainan, yes Hainan. That is where the Lord wants us to go."

They had been there for 2 years and were now back for a short period of time to try to get Bibles and other literature for their new churches. The pastor had not seen them since the day they insisted that they "go now!"

After the arrangements were made, he went to the lobby at the appointed time and waited for the ladies to arrive so he could escort them to meet the visitors. While he waited, he watched the bellboys in their crisp, tailored uniforms, and the tourists who attempted to be casual in their designer clothes. Then he spotted the 2 young women. Oh no, he thought as they walked in. They looked mystified by the revolving door; then they saw the pastor. Their black pyjamas and broad-brimmed fishermen hats stood in stark contrast to the appearance of the sophisticated hotel, receptionist quickly making her way towards them. The tourists ogled with that 'how quaint' look so often directed to the nationals.

The pastor moved quickly to intercede. "It's all right, they are here to see me." Several people stood staring as he greeted them as politely as possible without drawing too much

attention. "Come, we will go to my room to meet some people from Europe." The 2 women looked at each other, then apprehensively followed behind, looking down at their bare feet sinking into the carpet. They attempted to step more lightly, as though they were afraid they would sink into this beautifully coloured 'mud'. The pastor pushed the elevator button, keeping his head down and afraid to catch any of the many eyes staring in his direction. The elevator arrived and the doors slid open.

The 2 women looked as astonished as they had at the revolving door. Several tourists smiled at them as they stepped on. There were more 'how quaint' looks. The elevator operator pretended not to notice his passengers as he asked for the floor number. The women's wonder changed to fear as the doors closed and their first elevator ride began to ascend.

Once in the room, the 2 European church officials graciously greeted them. They motioned for the women to sit down. The pastor pulled chairs toward them, so they would not sit on the floor. He gave a quick briefing to his guests and then proceeded to ask the young ladies questions, interpreting for his guests as he went along.

"Pastor, ask them how many churches they have established on Hainan."

The women put their heads down and answered, "Oh Pastor, we have only been there 2 years.....yea, 2 years. Not many. Not very many." Their voices were apologetic. "How many?" "Oh, not many, not many. We have only been there a short time. The people were not very friendly, no, not very friendly. Sometimes they became very vicious. Yes, sometimes they told us they were going to drown us in the ocean. Several men threatened us. Oh my, and because we were so young, even some of the ladies did not like us.

Yes, some even called us terrible names...so not many churches...no, not many." The pastor interrupted and slowly repeated the words, "How many? How many?" Again they both replied, "Not many, oh no, we have done very poorly, not many." The pastor fairly shouted the words, "How many?" There was a moment of silence, then one of the women looked up with embarrassment and anguish, as though confessing to a crime, "Only thirteen." The pastor looked astonished and interpreted for the guests. "Thirteen." One of the guests repeated the number, Only thirteen, only - my goodness. I haven't planted that many churches in my lifetime. One of the pastor's assistants interrupted, "No Pastor, she did not say thirteen. She said thirty."

The pastor looked at the 2 young women and asked, "Thirty?" "Oh yes, not many, we have done very poorly. Only thirty....." The 2 guests could only mutter, "Thirty churches in 3 years, my word....." Again the women began to apologise when the pastor interrupted to ask another question, "How many people are in the churches?" "How many?.....Oh not many....." Again both heads went down, apologising for their failure. "Not many." The process repeated itself until, again, the pastor looked like he was ready to shake them and practically yelled, "How many?" "Only 220 people. Not many, no....not many."

Quickly multiplying in his head, the pastor said, "Two hundred and twenty. Two hundred and twenty in thirty churches?" "Oh no, in only one, but that one is a very small church, very small. There are bigger ones....."

As the pastor interrupted he heard the numbers repeated by his guests;

“Two hundred and twenty is small? Dear Lord, I wish I had some that large.” “As do I.” “Very small....not many,” the ladies mumbled. “Ask them how many are in the big churches.” The process began....but with a more reverent inquiry: “And how many in the big churches? You know the biggest one?” “Oh....not many” “I know. ‘not many.’ But, please ladies, how many?”

“Oh, less than five thousand. Only four thousand nine hundred.....Yes, less than five thousand. We have just started.” From behind the pastor came the sound of weeping; “Dear Lord, forgive us.” “What did they do? How did they do it? Ask them what they did?” When asked, they looked astonished. “What did we do? Why nothing. Yes, we did nothing, nothing.” You did nothing? You have thirty churches - the smallest with two hundred and twenty people, the largest with almost five thousand new Christians! And you did nothing?” “No, nothing, we just prayed.” “I know you prayed, but what else did you do?” “After we prayed, the Holy Spirit would tell us exactly what to do. We would keep praying and He would tell us what to do, we would do it. Then we prayed and then He would tell us what to do.

We would do it and keep praying.....”

“Dear Lord, they JUST prayed and the Holy Spirit told them exactly what to do and they prayed.....” The pastor laid his hands on the shoulders of the two sisters. Behind him his two guests, on their knees, weeping, joined as they just prayed.

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