

Blossoming

It started with one Chinese man, a medical research scientist who came to our Sunday School class at the invitation of a co-worker. Soon his wife was attending with him, then two more couples, fellow scientists from mainland China.

They were spiritually and culturally curious. They wanted to learn more about the life and language of America. But having been raised in an atheistic society, they also came with spiritual questions.

We soon found that because of their limited language skills and biblical knowledge, our regular Sunday School class wasn't enough for them. So we began meeting with them an hour before class. It was Bible 101. We started by introducing them to the scriptures from the ground up. Then we watched the *Jesus* film together, discussing each scene one by one. At the end, our version of the film addressed dozens of basic questions about the Christian faith. We used those questions to lead our friends into a greater understanding of life in Christ. Next, we began reading through Genesis together, talking and teaching as we went.

Those two and one half years were memorable in so many ways. I remember our first Christmas with them. We brought in a small manger scene, and from us they heard that magnificent story for the very first time.

I remember the Sunday we encouraged them to pray the sinner's prayer along with us. With all the barriers of language and spiritual understanding, we wondered how much had gotten through to them.

But I particularly remember one man blossoming in his faith. In spite of a horrendous work schedule, Jinyu began praying daily. He read the Bible on his own, bringing in questions that showed he was thinking about it broadly and deeply. He began witnessing to his Chinese friends. He asked us about ancestor worship, knowing that when he next gathered with his family, they would expect him to participate.

But my favorite memory is the morning he came in beaming, saying that he had been asked to read scripture in our main worship service. We were pleased along with him, but also surprised. Jinyu was a gentle, sweet-spirited man who struggled with his English. Our church was large, and scripture readers were chosen for their speaking ability. We wondered how well his reading would be understood.

That morning service focused on missions. It included a parade of flags, special music, and a missionary speaker. When it came time for the morning scripture reading, a half dozen or so people came forward. Together they read Psalm 98, each one reading selected verses in a foreign language.

Jinyu read, not in English, but in Chinese, and we were stunned! We had only heard him speak in English, his second language. His speaking was always halting and broken. We had never heard the man who read that morning. He was bold, strong, and fluent. He was eloquent! He was speaking in his own native language. He was at home. He was fully himself.

As I reflect back on that morning, I think about the Body of Christ. I think about all the personalities and cultures that make it up, in all their God-given diversity. What would the Body be like if each of its members were fully, completely themselves? What if all that individuality could blossom into the beauty and variety intended by our Creator, yet still remain one in Christ? Squeezing living things into narrow, artificial molds is constrictive and stifling. It is unnatural. Becoming all our Creator intended us to be is wonderfully freeing and enriching, both to the individual and to the Body. An eye makes a better eye than it does an arm.

That freedom, that blossoming is coming. In fact, it is happening right now as the Holy Spirit nurtures and renews each individual. He assures us that the One who began this good work in us will complete it (Philippians 1:6). Each flower will blossom into its full uniqueness, lovingly nurtured by its Creator. Together, what a garden we will be!

Each of us will speak our own native language, fluently and eloquently. And in Christ all those individual expressions will blend into one universal language: the language of truth; the language of pure love.

At last we will be all that His love purposed us to be: His holy bride, stunningly beautiful, radiant in all His glory, perfectly prepared for an eternity of oneness with Him.

Hymn: [Christ and His Bride](#)

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