



Chapter **1**

ALL BEGAN
WITH GOD'S CALLING

When I was in kindergarten, I remembered I seldom saw my dad. My mom told me dad had to concentrate in his important studies. At that time, we had three children at home. Apart from me, there were my second sister and third brother and my fourth sister who was still inside mom's womb. It was a very lively family. Every week, dad could only stay home overnight on Saturday and had to live in his school for the rest of the week.

At that time I wondered what kind of school dad was in that required students to live there. Mom told me dad was taking a four-year Bible course and the seminary made the students live there so that they could concentrate in their studies and had more quiet time, not to be disturbed by the outside world.

As I grew older, dad and mom told me how they became pastors. Dad was already a Christian when he was in school. He took up business after graduation. In a summer camp organized by his church he heard God's calling and was willing to dedicate his life to serve God fulltime. At that time, he was already married and had three children. To give up his career and spend four years in a seminary not only meant that he had no income but had to support his family. Many relatives and friends advised them to think carefully, not to act on impulse and fall into an irrevocable situation. But dad and mom knew the calling was from God and God would surely provide them and guide them. Finally, they decided to walk together to serve God.

Four years was not a short time, especially when you had to live on a tight budget. In order to earn more income, they built an attic with a new entrance and rented out the bigger storey below. Our whole family lived in the attic. Although it was a bit crowded, we lived happily. In

addition to our attempts to earn more income we also had to save money. We only took the bus when we were going to school. Very often, mom chose to walk.

Those four years were not easy. But difficult circumstances made dad and mom learn to have faith in God, and they also taught us to do the same. Dad concentrated on his studies whilst my mom and grandmother took care of us wholeheartedly. During this time, God was especially gracious to us. At that time his seminary needed someone to copy notes and because my father's handwriting was good they invited him to take up this job and it became our steady source of income in those four years. When we were in financial difficulty, God prepared some people to come and help us. Though God did not have us live affluently, we lacked nothing in our family. The difficult four years at last came to an end. The trials we had gone through those four years strengthened the faith of my parents and it helped them a lot later when they got involved in church planting.

When dad graduated from seminary, he began to think of the road ahead of him. After praying about it, he decided to plant a church in the villages of the New Territories. He realized that in the villages, many people had no church to hear the gospel. Most people in the villages spoke "Hakka" and dad knew this dialect. This made it easier for the people to accept him and was an advantage in talking to them about the gospel. He prayed and finally decided to choose the villages around "Shun Wan", "Tai Po". Because these villages were scattered in a rather remote area, it was not easy to contact the people and so no church had been built there.

Our family lived in "Shun Wan" for more than three years. It was a critical period for us in church planting. When we first came to this place, we could not find even a single Christian. But dad was not discouraged.

In order to create more chances to meet the people, we moved once again to live amongst the villagers to serve them.

Dad was an extrovert. He liked to joke around and was sincere and true to people. Very soon, he was residing well with the villagers. To make home visits and his ministry more convenient, he learned to drive. Sometimes when a villager suddenly fell ill, no matter how late it was at night, he drove them to the hospital in town. He also took part in the youth activities. At that time the water around Tolo Harbour was very good, with no human damage done to it and the fresh water reservoir had not yet been built. So there were a lot of sea creatures. In the evening when the water receded a group of strong men would get ready to catch crabs. While they were catching crabs, the other villagers would come to our house to boil water and get ready for crab congee. Then we would sit down to chat. These activities made us come to know each other better. Dad would talk to the young people and the adult males while mom contacted the ladies. Dad encouraged us to make friends with the teens and the children and use “Hakka” to communicate with them. In no more than three months, we were getting along peacefully and happily.

In the beginning when we moved there, the villagers were rather cold and seldom took the initiative to greet us. Later when we became well-acquainted, we learned that they suspected we had ulterior motives in moving to their village. But children were the best ice-breakers. We six brothers and sisters lived happily, laughing all the time. Our lovely laughter drew the attention of the neighbors and became their topic of conversation. Gradually the villagers became friendlier towards us.

Dad and mom continued to build up relationships with the villagers and at the same time tried to tell them about the gospel. The first people

who decided to believe in Jesus were the head of the village and his family who rented their house to us. There was a story behind their conversion. The house we rented was considered a haunted house and no one lived there for several years. When the house was first built, only the head of village and his family lived there for a few years. During this period, the males born to them did not survive; only two daughters escaped the tragedy of death. When his wife was pregnant again, he decided to move out.

At first when we moved into the house the villagers often asked dad and mom about their children and we did not understand why they were so concerned about our health. It was not until after some time that we got the answer. When dad and mom learned about the haunted house, they were neither angry nor unhappy. They continued to be friendly to them and told them God would protect His children. When the villagers found that we were not only safe and sound but also became more healthy, they realized that Jesus was more powerful than the god they worshipped. They began to become interested in knowing more about Christianity to see why this God was so powerful. After a while some of them were willing to accept Jesus and were baptized. They became the church's first batch of believers.

The news of the "village head" and his family accepting Jesus and being baptized shocked the surrounding villagers. It aroused the curiosity of some and they wanted to see what a church was like. Dad got hold of this chance and invited them to participate in our meetings. Through organizing different kinds of activities, we came to know various classes of people. The number of people attending church extensively increased. The most difficult and strategic stage of planting a church was overcome under God's guidance and protection.

Besides preaching the gospel, we also started to build up the new believers and help them grow spiritually. The problem they often faced was what they could or could not do. Dad understood their worrying and fearing that other people would condemn them of forgetting their ancestors and their traditions. Some traditions, such as putting on new dresses in the Chinese New Year, making Chinese dim sum or giving red packets to children, dad encouraged them to keep. For other traditions that could be changed a little to allow them to follow the teachings of the bible, dad would help them do it. For example, the tradition of putting up a pair of posters in front of the doors, dad used phrases based on the bible. Because dad knew calligraphy, he would help them write the posters. For example, “God’s grace be with you always”, “To be filled with God’s love” and “God be with you always”. So some people in these villages posted a different kind of poster and when people saw them they at once knew it was a Christian family.

When we met some problems that were against our faith or teaching and no changes or compromise could be made dad would explain why they could not give in, even an inch. For example, we had to destroy the idols after we became a Christian because God said clearly in the first and second commandment that He was the only true God and no one should carve and worship idols. Therefore whenever someone decided to believe in Jesus the church would ask them to destroy the idols.

After two years of hard work, the church had been established. In the village where we lived all had become Christians with the exception of one family. Church planting became a success, of course, because it was God working. But dad and mom’s obedience and hard work could not be ignored. When dad first decided to serve the people in the villages in the New Territories, he was worried it would be more inconvenient and

difficult than living in the city. He was afraid that his five children would not receive a good education because schools in the New Territories were of a lower standard and it would affect our future education. After a hard struggle they were willing to obey and to walk with faith.

I learned a lot of principles and the proper attitudes from my parent's decision to serve God. When God's call came to them they responded at once. Mom knew when they obeyed that she would have to spend four years looking after the children by herself. Because dad had to study fulltime, it would affect our family economically. Without support from mom, dad could not enter the seminary. In his future ministry, mom had to participate actively. The two of them had to walk with the same mindset to make the ministry a success.