I still pinch myself and I’m sure the others do as well. I never thought I would go to China, or meet my student in person, or visit the people and village where many of the handcrafts are made. I never thought I would climb the Great Wall, or visit a Three-Self church, let alone an underground one. But by God’s grace I have done all this and more. The ministry has left an indelible mark on each member of our team and, we pray, on the people we met. To God be the glory for the things He has done!

Imagine being a missionary in a country where you can’t call yourself that in public; your church meeting is called a club, and when you text your friend to pray you must call it a chat rather than a prayer. Now imagine sending a short-term team to such a place. The temptation would be to think this is a drop in the bucket at best. I am here to tell you that drop in the bucket is having an amazing, eternal and far reaching ripple effect.

After taking this trip to inland China, I will never be the same. I suspected this would be the case, but what I find truly shocking is that the missionaries and people we ministered to will also never be the same. If you are truly called by God to a place, for a time, and for a purpose, you will make an eternal impact — I find that absolutely astonishing.

Do you want to grow in your Christian walk and increase in your faith at an accelerated rate? Do you want to impact lives, by God’s grace, in a way no one else can? Do you want to bring smiles and words of encouragement to long-term missionaries in the field? Then you should GO. If you are not called to go you should GIVE and SUPPORT with your words and actions.

Satan likes to divide the church wherever he can, and one of the places where I think he is doing that is in the area of short-term missions. Some feel short-term missions are a waste, and that the time and money would be better spent at home reaching the community. Scripture, however, is very clear that we are to be witnesses in our own Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

In my experience, my ministry and outreach at home enlarged my work on the field. Similarly my work in the field has enlarged my outreach to my own community. The following is just one example that occurred in the weeks since I’ve been home: I apologized to the nurse who was giving me my allergy shot for being so out of it the week before due to jet lag. She asked about my trip so I showed her a few pictures and gave her a book mark that was made in one of the villages. She in turn shared about a book (Christian in nature) that she was reading and how it was upsetting her. I told her my husband had read the book, and since I could, too, she should feel free to ask me any questions she had. She said she was thankful to have that resource.

Mark 6:35 says, *Open your eyes and look at the fields — they are ripe for harvest*.

When we were in China, we passed numerous rice paddies with farmers ankle deep in water, hand planting the small shoots that had sprouted. This is a great picture of what our ministry was in China. We stood on the shoulders of the long-term missionaries and those who had come before, planting and watering numerous seeds. Others will stand on our shoulders and reap what we have sown. I pray that day will come quickly.

**School memories**

I stood in front of a classroom of 59 Chinese minority people-group fifth-graders for another day of cultural exchange and teaching English. Something caught my eye. A quiet, well behaved girl was hiding a piece of paper that she was furtively writing on. I noticed others writing as well, but what? I followed their eyes to the front chalkboard where we had taped the Chinese words to a song we had taught them. The I Corinthians 13 reference was omitted but the actual Scripture was there word for word. Could it be? The Word of God was being copied down in a classroom high in the mountains and would be shared in who knew how many homes. God is faithful. He will not allow His Word to return void.
Knowing God is a book by the British-born Canadian Christian theologian J. I. Packer, and is his best-known work, having sold over 1,000,000 copies in North America alone. Originally written as a series of articles for the Evangelical Magazine, it was first published as a book in 1973, and has been reprinted several times. In 2006, the influential evangelical magazine Christianity Today listed it as 5th on their list of “The Top 50 Books That Have Shaped Evangelicals”.