

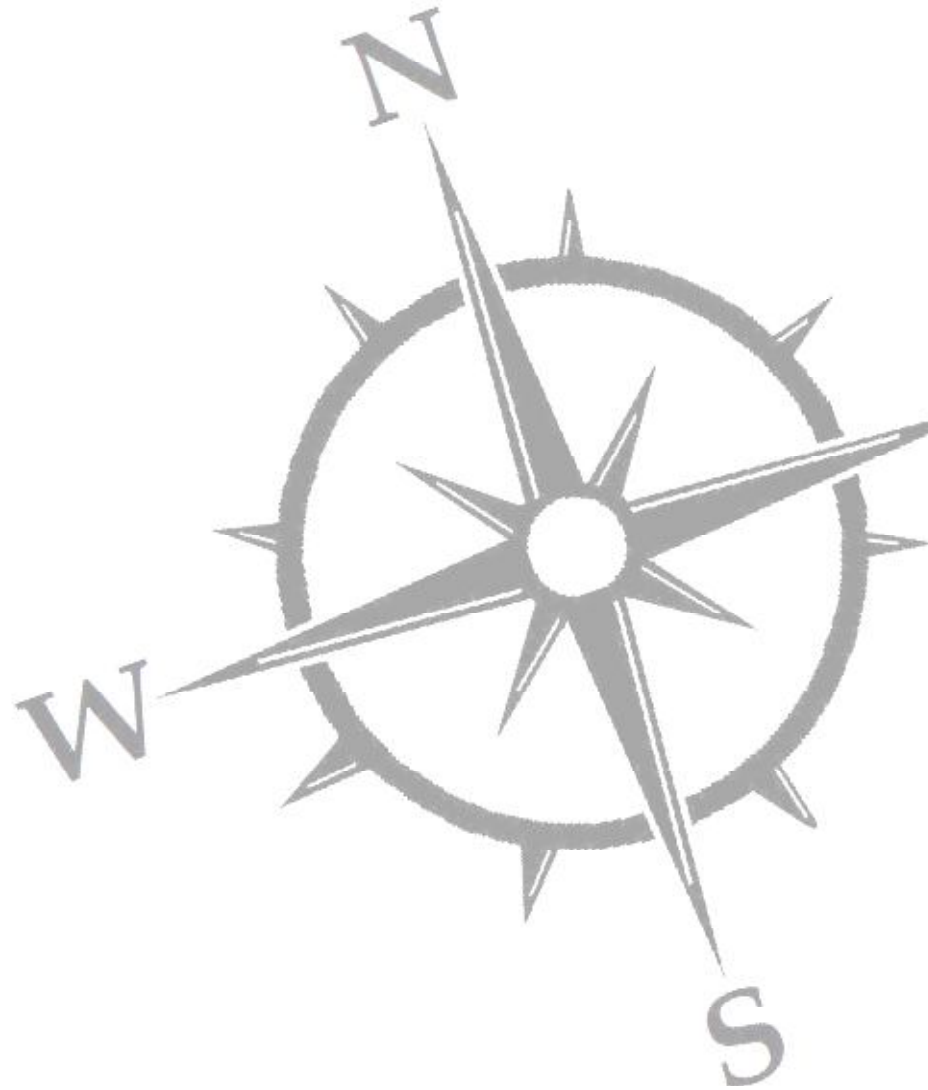
The Life of Jonathan Goforth

(1859-1936)

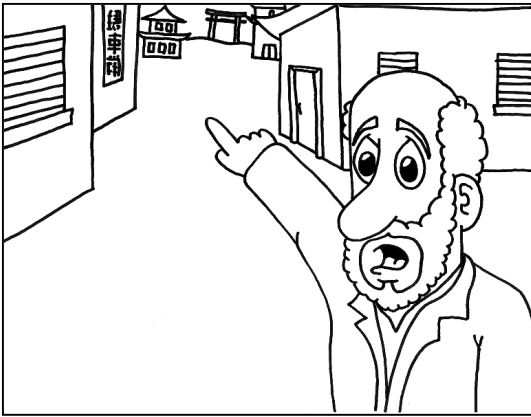
Lesson: 5.25 – Direction Missionary Snapshot Series

This story reminds us that God leads and guides those who are serving Him. He leads us to where we need to be and away from things that might harm us. It is our job to follow His leading. Many times in life, we get into situations where we are not sure what to do or where God wants us to go. God promises to guide and give wisdom to those that are serving Him by faith. Missionary Jonathan Goforth needed God to guide him if he was going to escape a very dangerous situation.

“For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” – Psalm 48:14







Introduction:

Imagine going on a tour through a jungle. It would be scary not to have a guide along with you. You might get lost or come across something that might hurt you. A guide can help you to figure out where to go and what to avoid. Our story today is about a missionary to China. A terrible war had begun and this missionary was in great danger of losing his life. He needed God to guide him and show him exactly where to go to escape. Let's listen carefully to what happened to Jonathan Goforth...

Missionary Story:

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK! The loud knocks woke me from my sleep. Though my eyes were open, I couldn't see a thing in the darkness. It had to be the middle of the night. "Who is knocking at the door at this hour?" I wondered as I stumbled to get dressed to answer the door. At the door, I found a messenger from the American consul who handed me a note before turning and running off into the night. I lit a candle and nervously opened the note..."Flee south.

Northern route cut off by the Boxers," it read. I went and woke up my wife Rosalind and showed her the note.

China was not the same place it was when we first came here. I understood why the Chinese people were upset. Many other countries had met with each other and agreed to slice up China kind of like a pie and each country agreed they would take a part of China and run all the trade. This would earn large amounts of money for these countries and leave very little for the people of China. A secret group called the League of Righteous Fists, or Boxers, as they came to be known rose to help protect China from these foreigners. The Boxers began attacking, burning, and destroying everything that any foreign person owned. Then the Boxers began to do something much worse. They started to kill foreigners, even missionaries. We needed to get out of China right away, but the coast was a long way off from where we were.

I looked back at the note and read it again. "Flee south. Northern route cut off by the Boxers," it read. I looked at the date at the top of the note. "This was written three weeks ago!" I said. No one could know if the southern route was still open or not. My wife, my children, and the other people with us lives depended on what I did next. That meant there was only one thing to do...pray. I knelt and asked God to guide us, protect us, and get us out of China safely.

I decided that we should head south to the city of Fancheng. From there, we would take a boat on a ten days journey down the river to the coast. We set off and

traveled for about six days. Many times angry mobs of people surrounded our wagons shouting "kill the foreign devils!" as we went into and left each town, but thankfully no one tried to do it. We were about a mile outside the town of Nanyangfu when a large crowd came out and surrounded our wagons. "Kill! Kill! Kill the foreign dogs!" the crowd yelled. By the time we reached the town, the crowd had become very angry and began throwing rocks and bricks at us. "We must find an inn right away!" I shouted to those traveling with us. We spotted an inn just inside the town. Over one thousand angry people crowded in right behind us, which made it impossible to shut the gates. I hurriedly helped my family and the others who were with us inside the inn and we bolted the door behind us.

"Come out here you dogs!" the crowd shouted. We stayed inside for about an hour, but I knew that unless we went out there, it would only be a matter of time before they came in after us. "If we go out the front door onto the porch, perhaps that will give one of the cart owners a chance to sneak out the back door and run to the magistrate to ask for help," I said. One by one we each stepped out onto the porch with our backs against the wall. The crowd began to yell insults at us. We all stood shoulder to shoulder. For a couple of hours, the crowd stood and yelled, but no one moved to hurt us. As night fell, the crowd left and we went back inside.

About an hour later, the cart owner came back and knocked on the back door. "Well, what did the magistrate say?" I asked. "The news is not good," he said. "I was not





allowed in to see the magistrate," he went on, "but some guards took my message to the magistrate for me. I went and sat down near a large plant. Two guards walked up on the other side of the plant and I overheard them say that when the magistrate read the message he immediately ordered a group of soldiers to march to a certain spot on the road heading west." The cart owner then began to talk very quietly and said, "Early in the morning when we pass by that spot, he ordered the guards to kill us and make it look like a band of robbers did it."

"How does he know we will go that way when we leave here?" asked Rosalind. "The magistrate is clever," the cart owner went on, "he is sending some soldiers to 'protect' us on our journey. They will steer our wagons right into this trap."

Everyone stood silently thinking. There was no way to get around this. We would never be allowed to leave the city unless the guards came with us. If we went with the guards, they would guide us to our deaths. "What are we to do?" one of the other missionaries asked. "We must pray and trust

God to protect us," I said.

Early the next morning, the soldiers arrived. "Quickly, we must go while it is still dark," the leader said. We loaded up and began bumping down the ancient road to the city gate. "Where is Mr. Griffith?" one of the other missionaries said as she ran up to my cart. "I thought he was with you and Paul," Rosalind said. "They are not here!" the other missionaries said frantically looking around. "Lord, where are they?" I prayed worried about my nine-year-old son and Mr. Griffith. After an hour of searching, I finally said "we must go on and pray that the Lord will keep them safe."

We all climbed back into the carts and lay down next to the soldiers who had all fallen asleep during our search. The soldiers stayed asleep as we headed out of town. By the time the sun was about to come up, the cart owners had also fallen asleep. The carts came to a fork in the road. Without the soldiers or cart owners to tell them where to go, the oxen pulling the first cart decided to go to the right and the oxen pulling the second cart followed. Another hour went by. Suddenly one of the soldiers sat up. "Where are we?" he asked rubbing his eyes. "We don't know," said one of the cart owners, "but we have been traveling for a while now." The soldier looked around the wagons for several minutes and then kicked the side of the cart. "We went the wrong way!" he said. Within a couple of minutes, he was kicking the other soldiers awake and they began yelling at each other about whose fault it was that they had fallen asleep. After a few more minutes of arguing, punching, and kicking each other,

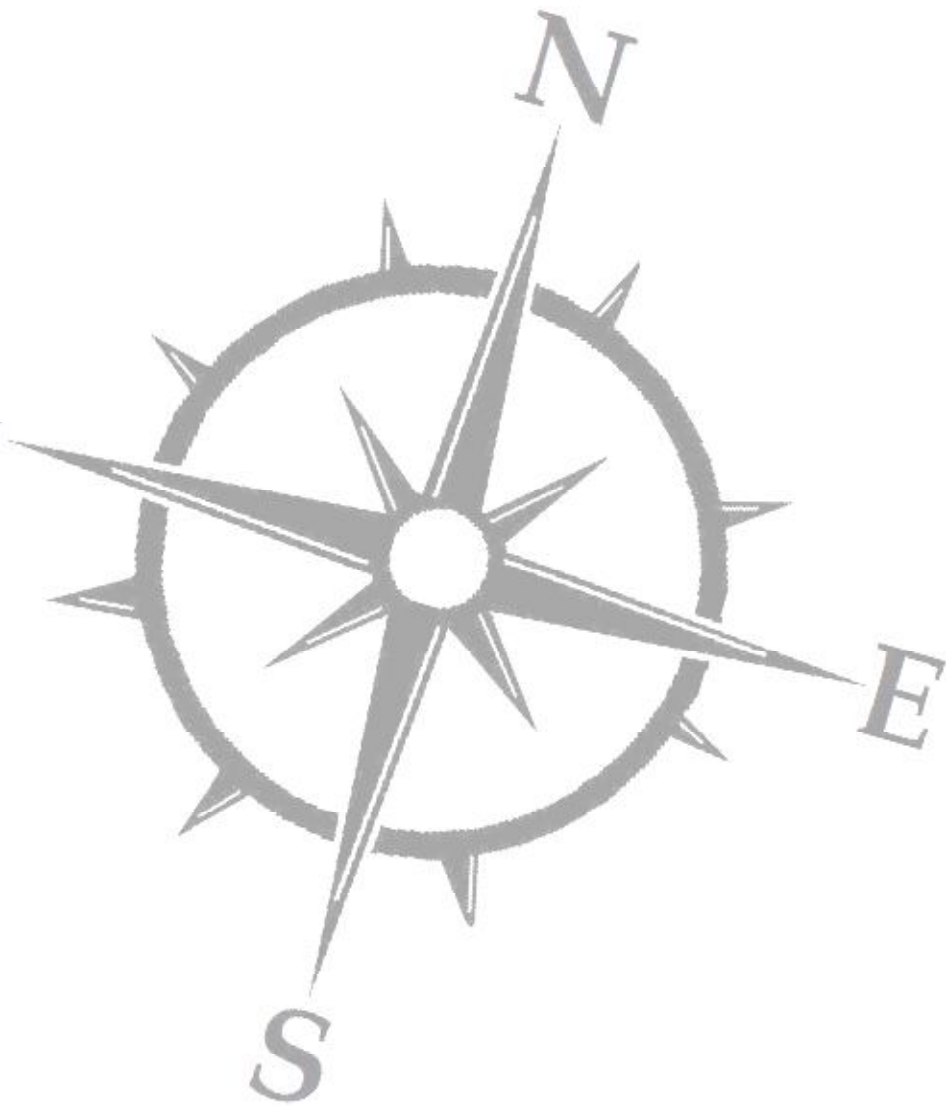
the guards climbed down out of the carts and began walking back to town. The guards had blamed each other, but I knew who had done this. "Thank you, Lord," I said, "for putting the guards to sleep and for guiding these oxen and all of us safely away from danger!"

Application:

You know, boys and girls, Psalm 48:14 tells us that God will guide those who are serving Him. God guided Jonathan Goforth and the other missionaries through many other very dangerous situations and got them all safely out of China. Even Jonathan's son, Paul, and Mr. Griffith would later catch up with the group as escape with them.

A few years after the Boxer Rebellion ended, Jonathan and Rosalind went back to China to work with the people again. The people were amazed that they would return and many began to listen to their message about Jesus. Jonathan led revival meetings all over China. Thousands of Chinese people were saved, and many Christians were awakened to a more vital relationship with God. God had begun a revival. In a city that only had about 100 Christians, there are today more than 200,000 believers. The Goforth's worked in China for over 45 years total and continued to allow God to guide their every step.

(For additional information, discussion questions, and materials on this lesson please refer to lesson 5.25 on page 136 in your Africa Expedition - Leader's Guide.)



References

For further reading or to obtain more information on this portion of the life of this missionary, please consult the following sources from which we obtained information from:

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