



Too Far From Home

By David Harris

I wonder—is the Far East scaring people away from ministry opportunities? I only ask because of the word—*far*.

Maybe somewhere a young person desiring to be used of God in a needy part of the world may turn away because the Far East or some other place is just—too far away! Just maybe you are thinking if you follow God, it might be a little too far from home!

Seriously, I do not think anyone would be distracted by the word *far*, but I am curious as to why so few are surrendering to *go into all the world*?

Could it be some parts of the world are more glamorous or filled with adventure? Certainly, that cannot be true! No one would claim to choose the will of God for his life because a place might be a little too far away, would he? Well, maybe no one but me!

I recall growing up in church, being inspired by missionaries from around the world and desiring to go with them to their countries. At every missions conference I surrendered to go—that is, until the day the Lord called me!

In my early days, even before I knew of a place called the Far East, that part of the world was very appealing. I grew up in Hawaii, the son of a career Marine. Dad was sent to Hawaii for two tours and *forced* his family to accompany him. I was only one year old when my family moved there and almost nine when we left—with a year in between in Norfolk, Virginia.

One lesson I learned was that even though Uncle Sam told my dad when and where to go, it was God who controlled the timing and the location. Growing



up with friends from the South Pacific and Far Eastern countries placed within my heart a very soft spot for that part of the world.

God blessed my three sisters and me to be reared in a home that loved the Lord. My parents were great examples of what every believer should be—a servant. I cannot remember a time when my mom and dad were not faithful to church. This was not only in their attendance but also in their participation. Dad was a printer and Mom worked as a secretary for churches and Christian schools. There was no job that needed done that they were unwilling to do.

Most of their service was volunteer. Much of what they did, we kids did too. That produced in me a very strong desire to serve the Lord. Mom and Dad were committed to God and anything we kids wanted to do for the Lord was never questioned, but supported. They made us feel that if we decided to serve the Lord with our lives, they would be the happiest people in the world!

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Stories from mission fields were a part of my formative years and I dreamed about serving the Lord somewhere—anywhere—as long as God directed. China was a place of interest to me. Possibly it was because of missionary stories I heard in Sunday school. Missionary aviation was also a strong possibility after watching the pastor who led me to Christ take off for a meeting in a small plane provided by the church.

Missions conference time was always a time of mixed emotions. It was not should I go, but where? The stories of fields and ministries in far off places gripped my heart and made me dream.



Beginning Bible college was a dream come true. Finally, I was going to learn how to do ministry so the Lord might use me somewhere. One of my first classes was called Introduction to Missions, taught by a 20-year veteran missionary to Japan, Larry Burgett. At first, the words and stories from Japan seemed interesting and fascinating, but my interest faded after hearing the difficulty of a Far Eastern language. As I watched him write those—*things*—on the board, I was convinced there was no way I could learn a language like that!

I did not share the same excitement as a classmate who already felt the call to Japan, but I possessed a strong desire to do something for the Lord. I was content to learn about missions, win souls, serve in my local church and continue to prepare for the ministry—but Japan? Not a chance!

Then came missions conference time in my first semester of Bible college. I remember the excitement I felt after learning there would be a video about China. If the Lord had spoken to me about China, I was ready to go. Yet, something unexpected happened. Half way through that video a thought overtook me. It was only one word—*Japan!* The placement of that thought at that moment took me by surprise. I remember thinking, “Where did that come from?” For the next few moments the video continued but I do not remember anything else said. My mind was distracted. Hindsight and an unbelievable series of events have confirmed in my mind that at that moment I was hearing the still small voice of God.

I am sure what transpired took only a few minutes but it seemed like a very long and drawn out struggle. I simply could not understand it. Again, I know now what I should have done was to say, “Lord, here am I.” Instead, I turned inward. My thinking process said, “Japanese is too difficult for me!” “Japan is too far away from home!” I did not say no. Instead, I made a simple decision that Japan was impossible for me!

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I failed to do the one thing that makes or breaks a believer in a moment like that—surrender! From that moment, I took control. Though I continued to serve faithfully, I tried to find God’s will on my own. I tried to surrender to everything imaginable. I was looking for direction. I was trying to find what God wanted me to do. Can you see my problem?

Granted, my service for the Lord continued. I was a bus captain, sang in the choir, witnessed almost daily, served faithfully, won souls weekly. Yet, from that moment, I remember the struggle that overwhelmed me. Where there had been joy, excitement and zeal in serving the Lord, it was replaced with—something! I could not put my finger on it. Something was not right! Gradually, I began to notice drudgery in doing those things that had at one time been so meaningful. There was not one area where my service for the Lord decreased, yet there was a gradual decent that drained me of strength.

I had been challenged by pastors to listen carefully to the voice of the Lord as He spoke through His Word, especially through the preaching of the man of God. It was a regular practice to ask the Lord what He wanted and to respond. I was not always so eager, but at this time in my life serving the Lord consumed my thoughts.

Three years went by as I continued preparing for the ministry. The only problem was there was no direction and no peace.

Later, I transferred to another Bible college and again found myself busily preparing for the ministry, but God seemed distant. My prayers went unanswered. Ministry became more duty than fun. Joy was gone.

During the first two months of my senior year, the Lord began a slow process of bringing me back to where I needed to be. My heart was cold. My eyes were dry. Thankfully, God did not leave me alone.

God used several chapel services to touch my heart. Many of my teachers would pray with me as I went forward but I had no idea what was wrong. One day a preacher preached on the need to surrender all to the Lord. The light went on. God showed me my problem. I went forward and repented. I surrendered and committed to do whatever the Lord wanted. The moment I finished praying, peace flooded my heart.

An instant later, one word came to mind—*Japan!* It shocked me, but this time, I surrendered! What happened soon afterward and continued are stories that will have to wait for another time. One thing was clear, God wanted me in Japan.

Is God leading you? Will you surrender? Rest assured that whatever He desires, He is able to perform! Will you listen to His call?

God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work (2 Corinthians 9:8). [W](#)

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