

John & Alisha Walz Testimony About China

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you'll be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. All right, the guys will be taking up the offering, and while they're taking it up, John, you and Alicia, come on up.

This is John and Alicia Walls. They're our missionaries. We don't support them yet. I'm hoping we will. They are missionaries in China. They were in China. They got kicked out of China.

They're going to tell you the story that we'll have some preaching, maybe. I'm not really worried about that. I hope you'll ask questions. You don't meet very many missionaries, been through what they've been through, and the fact that they are serving God.

Let's get a microphone on each side. Would you two guys be willing to help me with mics? Grab that one and get one over here. In a minute, you'll be able to ask questions, but I'm going to get Alicia to tell us first how the Lord worked in her life and what's happened.

The girls are always sweeter and nicer, lots better looking. Amen. We'll start with that, and then after that, John will come. And then after that, I'm going to let you ask any questions you want. You run out of questions, and John's going to preach for us.

[1 : 04] Okay, Alicia, tell us, just like you did last night at the other vision. I have to imagine those questions coming in. I'm Alicia Walls. This is my husband, John.

I am seven months pregnant, and yes, a couple of weeks ago, my husband was kicked out of China along with Jake Tolby. Us wives, though, we were safe. We could stay in China if we wanted to. We had to follow our husbands.

But one of the biggest questions that I usually get asked is, you know, how did you feel? You know, what were the feelings that were going through your mind at the time? And honestly, I just want to say thank you first for all the prayers.

I mean, once the police came in, John sent out a status on Facebook, and immediately there were people praying for us. And when those prayers came in, that's what helped calm our nerves.

I mean, I can honestly say I was not afraid. I was not worried. I just knew that I had to trust the Lord. And there was no feelings at the time because I was just in the moment of, you know, I have to obey the officers.

[2 : 05] John told me, you know, listen to what they say, be honest with them. So I was like, okay. So I was just going with the flow. And then the next couple of days while we were waiting to see if they would get kicked out of China or not, I was already, I was keeping myself busy.

I had to prepare our apartment to, if we had to leave, you know, package up our stuff, you know, get rid of a lot of things. So my mind was occupied during the whole time.

But I was not afraid. I was not worried. I just want to say thank you for those prayers. That helped a lot, especially being pregnant. It's been easy thus far. So thank you.

Good? Her some questions. We'll start with questions for her. And then we'll let John come. Anybody have a question for the lady of the house? Let's take the mics to them real quickly. And y'all can listen to all the questions you want to ask.

I was just wondering what you've been meditating on scripture-wise as your life has just been overturned and upheaved and what God's taught you through that. I would just have to go back to my life first, which is Proverbs 3, 5, and 6.

[3 : 10] You know, the Lord tells us to trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not to our own understandings. And all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct our paths. So basically there are times, yes, you know, I would think about me being pregnant and have to travel 14 hours or go to Taiwan where it's really, really hot.

But if I focused on the Lord and keep telling myself, you know, the Lord knows what's going on. The Lord has a plan for all this. And that just kind of cooled me down and eased my stress.

Okay. Anybody else have a question? Can you give us a behind-the-scenes look at how the believers in China, the Chinese believers, helped you through all this?

They were actually really encouraging. I remember the morning the police came in, we were at Omega Baptist Church. And there are four churches in China.

Three of them have morning services, but the fourth church has a Sunday evening service. And so when the police came in during the morning, the people were like, hey, let's go to branches for tonight.

[4 : 13] And in my mind, I'm like, are you crazy? What if the police show up there too tonight? No, they all went to the church. They had a big dinner with each other. And they still wanted to have church services.

So that encouraged me a lot. Okay. Anybody else like to ask a question? You can have one more, Jessica. You could ask questions all night.

Go ahead. I was just wondering about the girls that you worked with in China and how maybe we as a group could be an encouragement to them as they continue on the work that you and John have started.

I've been working with three girls, Rainbow Cherry and a girl named Celine. And, you know, it does hurt for me to leave them behind. I mean, they were just, we just started our Bible studies, and they had this interest to wanting to know more about the Lord.

But I was able to leave them with Demi, who is my Chinese teacher. So she's been in contact with them. I could get you Demi's email address, and you could, I could get you the girl's address, and you could kind of correspond with them.

[5 : 18] Their English was pretty good, so they could reply to you. Okay, any more questions from the ladies' side? 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. All right, John, why don't you tell us what it was like for you that morning and what you went through, and we'll see if there's any questions for you.

Why don't you just wait until you get pregnant? You can sit down, though. You're pregnant. Well, we went to China knowing the possibilities. From the time that I knew that we were going to be missionaries, from the time we actually ended up in China was about 10 years.

So we had 10 years of going to China on mission trips and doing surveys, and each time going with a different missionary and seeing the different platforms. A lot of them had to do with English. And we came across Brother Talwin, and we saw a platform that we just really thought honored the Lord.

And so going into China with this kind of platform and the boldness that they have been showing, we just kind of understood that, you know, this might happen one day. Unlikely in our minds, but it could happen.

But we still went anyways, knowing even that. It was on Sunday morning of Easter. The church had just spent some time passing about 7,000 flyers that the churches had made.

[6 : 30] And what went on with this flyer, I don't know if you saw the video or not on that flyer, the churches put all four churches on one flyer. So it's very easy for a police officer to get in contact with all four churches at one time.

They did it to save some money. But at Easter, every church had police officers come. A religious bureau come to every church.

And the church I was in was Omega. It's the oldest church that's there. It's about six years now. And Pastor Levi, he was preaching from Revelations 2. He was preaching on how the resurrection of Christ can give a church hope that's suffering, affliction, and going through persecution.

And it was right at the very end of that message where we were praying at the very end. And as we were praying, these men started coming down the aisle, about 20 of them. And every one of them had video cameras and camera phones.

And you can imagine just a bunch of guys walking around in the middle of service here and taking a picture of your face and recording your face. And so after that, the leader of the entourage, he came to the pulpit and he had Pastor Levi sit down.

[7 : 42] And he basically explained that this is an illegal church. And he didn't say much else. And so after that, he separated the Chinese from the foreigners. There was probably about four or five foreigners there.

The rest were about Chinese. So about 50 people all together there that morning. And one by one, the Chinese wrote down their information, their contact information, their address before they could leave.

And they began to leave one by one. The foreigners, we were there the whole time. And eventually, we were escorted to the police station.

And once we were there, my wife and I were separated. They took me and Pastor Levi, who was already at the police station. They took us to separate rooms.

They took me into an interrogation room. Inside the room, there was a wooden chair and some places for shackles. They didn't put me in them, but they put me in a chair there just, I guess, to intimidate. And they began asking questions for about three hours.

[8 : 41] And they asked us everything they could possibly want to know about us. And so we, just like I told Alicia, we were honest with our answers. We didn't want to hide anything. When they asked us questions, I have something written down here.

Do you know that house church is illegal? Where does your money come from? What do you do with your money? They asked a lot of money questions. Do you financially support any illegal churches elsewhere in China or just in Harbin?

Who are your partners? Do you know the names of the missionaries, other missionaries in Harbin? What do you do in church? Who teaches you Chinese? What does your wife do?

Who supports you in America? Don't you know that we can fine you heavily for breaking the law? What's your past history in China? And what are your future plans?

So all of these questions, and there's many more like them. One of them is, do we support Mormon churches in China? And, you know, Christians like that, it just gives you the opportunity to give the gospel.

[9 : 44] You know, why don't we support Mormon churches in China? Let me tell you. So I gave him the gospel. He asked us, what do Baptists believe? Well, I gave him the gospel again. If he's never heard the gospel before, he's heard it twice in this three-hour session.

And so that was three hours of that. They didn't treat us roughly. They didn't use any violence. A couple of times he tried to seem stern about, you know, breaking the law. Don't you know you're breaking the law?

You know, kind of browbeaten me there for a little bit. But we didn't feel like we were any sort of danger. It was a bit unnerving to be separated from Alicia, you know, for three hours. But the officer and there kept her company and talked to her some.

So I appreciate him doing that. After that, we were allowed to go home, but they had our passports and they had our driver's license. And they took everything we had as far as the license goes.

And so we didn't have any kind of ID on us. And they told us to go home and wait for a phone call. So we didn't know. We suspected deportation at that time, but we just didn't know.

[10 : 47] So it was a couple of days, and we just went on our couple of days just like nothing had happened. We met with the guys every morning, four hours in the morning, and stuff with them in the afternoon.

I continued on with my language school in the afternoon. Then we started getting some phone calls from the National Security Bureau, which is kind of like, I guess, the FBI of China. It's as high as you get in that department.

And they didn't tell us anything. They just had us go there and go here and do some paperwork here and do something there. And just kind of run around a little bit without really explaining what it is. And so we're just kind of guessing.

We're sending blogs back and forth and updates until Jake Tolby gets a call. And they want both of us to go to the visa office. And when we get to the visa office, they canceled our passports and they gave us a deportation visa, which gave us 10 days to get our stuff and get out of the country.

So we have homes in Harbin. That's where we consider a home would be. And we'd spent some time setting up the home. And so we had 10 days to get rid of everything and give away most of our stuff, all of our stuff.

[11 : 55] We just have a few boxes that we boxed up, just really just some theology books I would want later on. But everything else we gave away. Pastor Levi, Pastor Stephen, Pastor Thomas.

Stephen's married, so he got some of our furniture. Pastor Levi's looking to get married, so we give him the rest. Just odds and ends. People came into our house those 10 days. I had all my clothes strung out on the bed.

They took what they wanted. You just kind of give everything around your stuff, all your stuff. So it came time for us to go. And it was kind of a boo-hoo day there, the last day.

And then me and Jake and Alicia, we went to Taiwan for a survey. And Taiwan, they speak Chinese.

So we spent all this time learning Chinese. So we wanted to go somewhere possible if we can't get back in mainland China where we can still use Chinese and be effective in the language. So we took a week to go to Taiwan, and we met missionaries there.

[12 : 53] And they helped us out answering questions and just things that we need to know about maybe a plan B. So we're back now. Our primary purpose to be back is to renew some passports, get new passports.

With a new passport, they put a new number in the passport. I might grow me out of beard. Give me a little scruffy look here as I put a new picture on a passport. I don't know if it's going to work, but I'll try it.

We'll see what happens. According to them, all foreigners look the same. So that's kind of like what we say about them. So maybe a beard will just give me a little edge.

So a new passport, we're going to try to get a new visa to go back into China. And if we can, great. I want to see if the Lord will open us a legal door to get back into China or not. Nothing real deceptive.

But if not, I'm perfectly able to accept the Lord's will if we should go to Taiwan and start there. And we're not going to change our...

[13 : 55] If we go back to mainland China, Jake's been talking about this some. I've talked about it a little bit. We're not going to change anything as far as strategy goes. We might advise the guys on how to send out a better flyer, but church planning, training guys, being obedient to the gospel.

We'll change nothing about that. So appreciate your players right now. We're in a borrowed car going to borrowed profit chambers. But, you know, I was thinking of a couple of verses that just to help my mind get through the process here.

And we talked about it some our first day here in Matthew 6.25. It says, take no thought for your life. We don't need to worry about that type of stuff. We seek ye first come in God and God takes care of the rest.

Just some promises to put our faith there and not worry about some things. So we're very appreciative of the prayers. We know that you've been praying, you know, with the Internet and Facebook.

We just know that you guys have been praying with us. And it's been an encouragement to me and my wife. I have a question you'd like to ask. Or you all are very informed, Daruk.

[15 : 04] What is your most important need right now? Oh, boy. Well, in our eyes, it's a visa to get back in mainland China. We're trying to get some meetings.

If we end up in Taiwan or if we end up in some other city, that Harbin cost of living wasn't too high there. So we don't know where we're going to end up. If we go to Taiwan, the cost of living will be higher.

So we're trying to just schedule some new meetings. I haven't done a real good job of calling people, but our friends here have been helping me get some meetings. So I've got civil meetings. So we're trying to schedule some meetings.

That's why we're here. The Lord's taking good care of us. We have a good car and we have a place to stay. And we have lack of nothing as far as needs goes.

But we have a prayer need. I want to see if the Lord opens the door for us to get back to mainland China. Okay. Anybody else have a question? All right.

[16 : 02] Well, you all are very informed. I tell you what. Tell them a little bit about the three pastors. Explain who they are and a little bit about them real quickly. I'm sure Jake will do a better job at that when he gets here.

But I've known them the last year and a half. And the time that I came was just about when the time where Jake had come off the field and these guys were kind of on their own for a long time, for the first time.

And so the three guys, Stephen, Thomas, and Levi. And Stephen is kind of the guy that the other guys look up to in the sense that he's more mature.

He's married. He's got kids. And there is no full-time pastor job in China that people know about. You know, we kind of take it for granted. It's just something you can do. People don't think about it.

You take a lot of flack from your family for wanting to be in the ministry. And so Stephen has kids and Stephen has a wife and he has a church and he's doing fine as far as finances go.

[17 : 01] And so he's kind of just a solid guy. He's solid in his faith. I look up to him. He teaches me more about missions than a lot of books can and a lot of other schools can.

But that's Stephen. Thomas. Now, Stephen is 28 years old, just in case you were wondering. Thomas is 26. And he's looking to get married, wants to get married.

He has two churches that he's taken care of. And we are hoping that's the model for church planning in China, that a pastor can be full-time with about two churches.

Churches that have about 50 people coming to them. A pastor can be full-time and not have to worry about getting an outside job. So he's doing that. Levi, he's the newest pastor, newest full-time pastor.

He's pastoring Omega and he's the pastor that was there in Omega when I was arrested. We were arrested together. All three of these guys, I believe, have given us an encouragement just to see that Harbin was a waste.

[18 : 11] Jake Tolby can't say that his time was wasted there. You see their guy's faith. You see the reaction of Levi in the video. You see how these guys, it didn't bother them one bit.

There was more baptisms after the raid than we had before. And just to see the growth and people stepping up to be baptized, knowing that there was 50 police officers in your church last week, that says something about their faith.

And that says something about the work. And that says something about the missionary. It says something about our God. So we're just very thankful to see that. Could you tell them, just give everybody's contact, blog information?

I hope they'll look at it. Would you all write this down and look at it? Well, mine, fairly easy to remember. It's www.ChinaChurchPlant.com.

ChinachurchPlant.com. And Mark Tolson is ChinaRamblings.com. ChinaRamblings.com. The Tolbies is GospelInChina.com.

[19 : 19] Gospel in China. And we all keep that updated regularly. So somebody last night asked a question about, well, how can we help you the best? Well, I can't really give you what our needs are going to be next week from now.

I just have no idea. I mean, we're just living one day at a time. But on the blog, we keep that updated. And so that's really the best way to know. All right. Thank you all very much. Why don't you all do a little wrap-up here.

How about that? No preaching tonight. Going to a liberal church tonight. You probably thought that all along. John is a very good writer.

I would challenge you to go to his website. He's a very good writer. It's always interesting when he writes. And you would learn a lot about what's happening there. Jake Talby is an excellent writer. Mark Tolson does a great job.

ProjectChina.com is a good place for you to go. I would like to discuss with you briefly about three minutes here why they got kicked out. Because there's some people that are questioning that. And Vision Baptist Church, of all churches, ought to understand what our methodology is.

[20 : 24] The ministry there in Harbin is basically our churches. And so I want you to know what goes on. Mark Tolson is in Dalian.

Jake Talby has been working with me since he was like 18. And then John has recently added part to the team. I've had the privilege of preaching for those guys.

So why did they get kicked out? Let me explain some basic things. Most missionaries in China do one of two things that I don't agree with and I teach against. They smuggle Bibles into China.

And so they have a ministry of coming to America or somewhere else in the world, getting a hold of a bunch of Bibles and smuggling them across the border. But you can buy them in the country with no smuggling.

You don't have to be secretive. You just walk in the store and say, can I buy a Bible? And there they are. Same Bible they use. I've been in the store with them and bought the Bibles. If you're at the church, the state church, they'll do it.

[21 : 26] Let you have them. And all the missionaries are afraid they're taking your picture and your fingerprint and sneaking up on you. But that's really not been happening. You can go to the Christian bookstore. Christian bookstore. Walk in.

Bibles aren't on the shelf when I was there. They weren't on the shelf. We walked in and Jake just said to them in Chinese, do you have any Bibles? They lifted a curtain up on a table and it was full of Bibles under there. So we don't need to take any Bibles in.

That's the one. The other is people go to China to teach English and they never talk about Jesus. They don't talk about Jesus. They teach English. And they hope by their lifestyle that they will get people saved.

What I'm about to say to you comes from Jake. But this is Jake's opinion. The best missionaries in the country are independent Baptists. Almost every independent Baptist he knows is starting churches.

They are starting churches. They're leading people to Christ. They may do it differently and not as bold as Jake and John and Mark. But they are starting churches. And they have churches and they're preaching to people.

[22 : 27] And people are getting saved. That's what the independent Baptist guys are doing. Many others are over there and they're very secretive. These guys go out on the street. These guys sing. These guys pass out tracts.

These guys preach. When you hear underground church, I don't know what you think. But all an underground church, it doesn't mean it's underground. It just means it's not legal. It just means they don't have paperwork from the government.

It's a country where it's not right, not legal to have a church. There's nothing we're going to do to change that. And so our philosophy is carry the gospel. Preach Jesus.

Get kicked out if you need to. But don't be quiet. If you could imagine the Apostle Paul or Peter and John going to China, how would they do it?

Can you imagine Paul coming into the country secretly or talking in code? Can you imagine Paul going over and saying, I'm just wondering if you all know where any B's are, believers.

[23 : 26] Do you all know where any B's are? Because I'm looking for a C, church. And we're going to have a water party baptized. Can you imagine the Apostle Paul talking like that? Can you imagine the guys that turned the world upside down?

Before there was Twitter, before there was Internet, before there was Facebook, the guys who turned the world upside down showed up in town and people said, here they come. Nobody tweeted and said, hey, they're here.

The guys that turned the world upside down. But people already knew. They walked into town and people knew it. So if you're wondering, you might say, well, what about being a businessman in China? What about being a businessman in China and starting a ministry?

Well, that's all. That'd be fine and good. But if you don't talk about Jesus, you're not doing much ministry. You've got to talk about Jesus. You've got to invite people out. You've got to witness people. You've got to see people get saved. That's our goal.

And so you might be wondering why they got kicked out. They got kicked out because they preached Jesus. They got kicked out because they witnessed the people. They got kicked out because they baptized people. They got kicked out because they do what the Bible says do.

[24 : 28] And that's why they got kicked out. They didn't get kicked out because of the Internet. They got kicked out because they do Christian work. You need to go read Jake's. You need to go read Jake Talby's latest blog post when he talks about the black box like in an airplane and he explains why they got kicked out.

I hope you'll read that. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia. For more information, log on to www.visionbaptist.com where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.

Thanks.