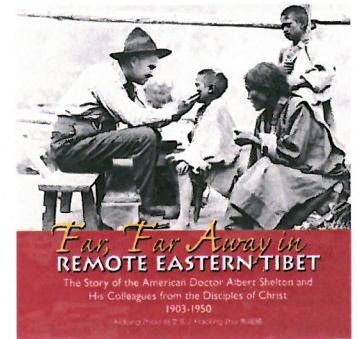


Discussion Guide for:

Far, Far Away in Remote Eastern Tibet
The Story of the American Doctor Albert Shelton and
His Colleagues from the Disciples of Christ
1903-1950



Welcome to a guide for sharing and discussing a country most of us know little about, the life of mission long ago, and how faith and action can change communities and people. Ponder these questions on your own, or even better, gather a group together to delve deeper into a fascinating time in Christian history.

The book's preface welcomes us to the world of turn-of-the-century (twentieth century) Tibet a land of "high altitude, rugged terrain, geographical isolation, devout Buddhist tradition, hospitable people and appalling vulnerability to disease." The book follows Dr. A.L. Shelton, his family and colleagues as they established a medical mission in one of the most remote and challenging parts of the world. As you read through these chapters it becomes apparent that "this journey was not for the faint of heart." Perhaps that is one of our images of missionaries who leave the comfort of home to go to faraway places.

This discussion guide contains a few questions for adult or teen group discussion. They are questions intended to provoke exploration, deepening thought and faith applications. We hope you will refer often to the book and challenge others to delve into its message time and time again.

Questions for Discussion:

Referring to Chapter One, how did other people influence Dr. Shelton's decision to become a medical missionary? Discuss with the group some of the people that have influenced your personal faith journey.

Chapter Two tells about the early years of the missionaries in Tibet, but also reflects on the significant changes the area experienced because it was on a trade route. In what ways do you imagine the tea trade helped or hindered the missionaries' work among the people?

Recalling the journeys described in Chapter Three, how do you imagine the traveling conditions shaped the outreach of the missionaries? How does your mode of travel affect your experience of new places?

Chapter Four shows some of the Buddhist customs and festivals. What similarities do you see to Christian customs and festivals in the U.S.? How might our Christian celebrations benefit from learning more about other faith traditions?

What aspects told in Chapter Five contributed to Dr. Shelton being a key player in the resolution of the warring between the Tibetans and Chinese? What role did his Christian faith have? Ask the group to share times when they have found themselves in the difficult role of peacemaker.

Chapter Six tells about a very sad time. What were the robber bandits hoping to make happen by kidnapping Dr. Shelton? The photos show Dr. Shelton in captivity. How might his faith have sustained him and influenced the bandits?

Chapter Seven enumerates ways the missionaries in Tibet developed mission approaches and priorities. In what ways do the patterns or history in your church influence your congregation's mission outreach?

Use a map of East Asia to trace one or two of the routes mentioned in Chapter Eight, which the missionaries traveled. Discuss as a group why the missionaries made that trip and what they might have encountered on their way. What items and belongings do you imagine they would have brought with them?

Chapter Nine describes everyday life in Tibet. How do you suppose daily life, work, education and medical treatments changed over the nearly 50 years the

missionaries were in Tibet? How might those changes have influenced their ministry? What parallels do you imagine there might be to that time in the U.S.?

The color photos in Chapter Ten give us a very different and contemporary impression of the city of Batang. Can you see any lasting influences that missionaries might have had in the area?

Dr. Shelton and his colleagues cooperated with the Tibetans and Chinese to establish medical clinics, schools, and churches. They worked together against great odds, cooperating with mutual respect and love. Today the love continues! Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ join with Tibetans to serve the needs especially of children and women, through schools, skills training and relief efforts in time of disaster.

Even today it is not easy for people to live in high mountains in such a harsh environment. How much more harsh and difficult it was 110 years ago! Difficulties, suffering, excitement, enjoyment, and happiness were blended with faith. It was a faith in universal love, selflessness and self-sacrificing which inspired the missionaries. Fifteen years ago, Rev. Dr. Xiaoling Zhu, the Area Executive for East Asia and the Pacific, Global Ministries, learned only by chance of Dianda, our Global Ministries mission partner's contributions in support of the Tibetan people. He asked to form a partnership with them. Dianda has done outstanding work with our Tibetan sisters and brothers. Each time they accompany Global Ministries' staff, it means a trip of at least 18 hours, crossing over several 15,000 foot high mountains, from Chengdu

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deep into the mountains in Ganzi. They travel there many times to work on their own projects as well. Why is Dianda so generously providing humanitarian support to the Tibetans? They always say, "It is love, and love has no boundaries."

Dr. Shelton risked his life to restore peace to the region. Through his example, people there continue to seek a harmonious society. We cannot help imagining how happy Dr. Shelton would be if he could see and live in Batang today. We hope his stories and life experiences encourage you, and all of us, to love nature and to love each other, so that we can make our own contributions toward a more peaceful world.



Thank you to our many donors through Global Ministries, One Great Hour of Sharing in the UCC, and Week of Compassion of the Disciples.

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