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Dear Prayer Partners,

The past two months, Henry had been traveling almost nonstop in three continents. There was a trip from October 5-8 to Paris for the All Europe Pastors Consultation, followed by a weekend in Bradford to preach at a mid-Autumn Festival evangelistic event. 3 days later, he traveled to Southeast Asia to spend over a week attending COCM International Consultation and other meetings, as well as visiting churches and supporters in Singapore and Malaysia. The Mandarin Consultation at the COCM mission centre took place on the weekend right after he came back to the UK.

On 1st of November Henry went to preach at Hull Chinese Christian Church. The following weekend he was up in Scotland to speak at the annual retreat for Dundee Chinese Christian Fellowship. After two days at home, he left for Vancouver to visit the COCM Canada board and the local churches. Upon coming back to the UK he went to preach in Read-



ing the next day. The last two weekends he was seen at the OMF China Conference, and then in Romania.

Since there wasn't even one free weekend in November for Henry to be around to celebrate Jonathan's 11th birthday, I tried to plan something on a weekday instead. I asked my son, "Can you take a day off from school so Dad could join us to do something special for your birthday?" But being in the last year of his primary school, Jonathan was determined to achieve perfect attendance for this school year and so he did not want to miss even one day for the sake of celebrating his birthday.

What's left to do? After checking the dates over and over again, I finally worked out a plan. The kids and I would drive to the airport to pick up Henry on his way back from Canada, and then stay in a nearby hotel for a night to have some special time together. So we drove under the heavy rain on the day after Jonathan's birthday, got to the Heathrow airport, met Henry outside Terminal 5, and headed to the hotel. In the evening, after Dad put in the finishing touch to complete the birthday card we prepared ahead of time, we sang the happy birthday song to Jonathan, shared his birthday cake, and secured the important family snapshot for his future memory book.

The next morning, Henry left earlier so he could make it to Reading in time for his preaching in the afternoon. As I was getting the kids ready to leave the hotel, Jonathan said to me in his usual matter of fact manner, "Mom, you didn't plan this weekend very well. You should have planned enough time so we can play in the pool, in the gym, and in the game room." Without thinking I responded, "Yeah, the problem is Dad's crazy schedule. I wanted time to do more things, too." Then I remembered the need

to stay positive. "Do you like this place? We can come here again next time and stay longer if you want," I asked. "Sure, but can I just play in the game room for a little longer before we go?" I nodded and Jonathan went off happily.

Days later, I still feel a tug in my heart whenever I think about Jonathan's comment that revealed his seldom spoken emotion. So often he seems content with very little and never demands much attention from us.

Once in a while, when I mention Dad's travel in his bedtime prayers, he will tell me that he misses Dad. But being slow to warm up like me, when Dad comes home and offers to do something with him, Jonathan doesn't respond with enthusiasm right away. By the time he gets comfortable with the idea, Dad is out of town again. Thus it becomes increasingly difficult for father and son to find time to do things together like they used to.



It is true that Henry is doing too much traveling and he should slow down a bit. But it is equally true that as a missionary's family we should not expect to live a normal life like everyone else. Whenever I feel like complaining about Henry's lack of time for our son, I am reminded of what Chambers said, "When we are on Jesus Christ's errands, there is no time to stand up for ourselves." (My Utmost, June 27th)

Both Henry and I know full well that our son is growing up faster than we want him to, and the next few years will go by all too quickly. But we are also aware that the next few years will be critical for the mission of COCM as we labor to venture into new territories, to execute new strategies, to recruit and train new workers. No matter how we try to balance ministry work

and family, we are not going to have the ideal family life. There will be loss to take and sacrifice to make out in the mission field.

In this special season, I take comfort in pondering upon the greatest sacrifice our Heavenly Father and His Son made for our sake. There is no greater loss than what the Father took when He gave us His Son, born in a manger, died on the cross. There is no greater gain for us than Emmanuel, God with us. Whatever loss we have to take, may we gain Christ and be found in Him, so that our loss will not be in vain.

Prayer requests:

Henry is presently in Romania to visit the church there, to preach, as well as to get to know more about the mission field in Eastern Europe. He will be back on December 8th, and the rest of December we will concentrate on preparing and running two back to back year-end Mandarin camps. Please pray for his travel safety, health condition, and personal time with the Lord to renew strength. Pray for our family to find creative ways to have time together and to strengthen our bonds this holiday season.

Jonathon had submitted application for admission to the boy's grammar school next to the girl's school Anabel attends. He took a required 11 plus test in October and passed it. From those who applied and passed the test, the school will give priority first to those with a sibling in the same school, and then to those with shortest distance between school and home. Having no advantage in the admission process, we can only trust the outcome in the hands of our Lord. Pray that God will look upon our son with His favor and open door for him to enter the right school.