

zhuang



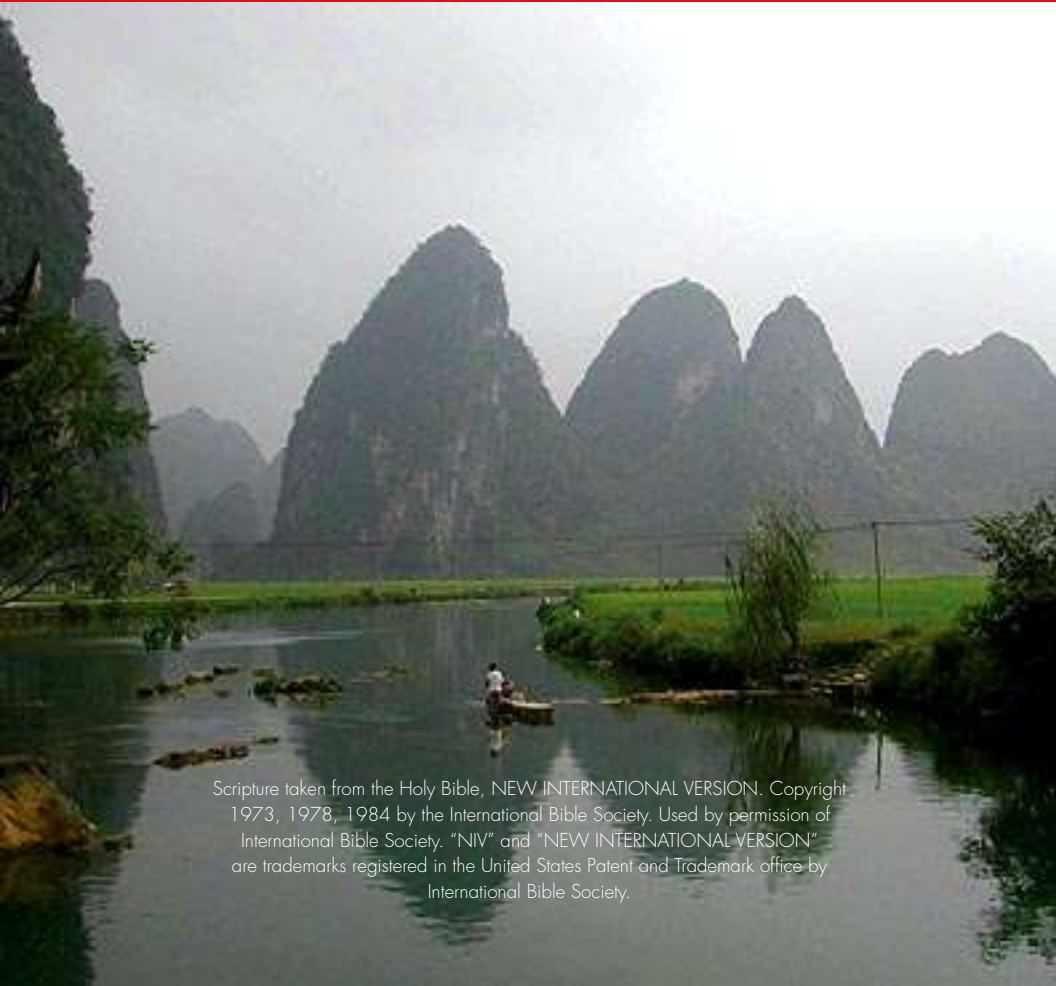
A Guide to Strategically Pray for the
Zhuang People of Southern China

zhuang

31 Days for the Zhuang

A Guide to Strategically Pray for the Zhuang People of Southern China

This prayer guide was a joint effort with entries written by individuals from many agencies working among the Zhuang. We praise God for the spirit of cooperation that He has blessed us with. We hope you will share this guide with others and encourage them to join you in praying for the Zhuang.



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Major Zhuang Dialects of Guangxi and Yunnan

云南
Yunnan

贵州
Guizhou

湖南
Hunan

广东
Guangdong

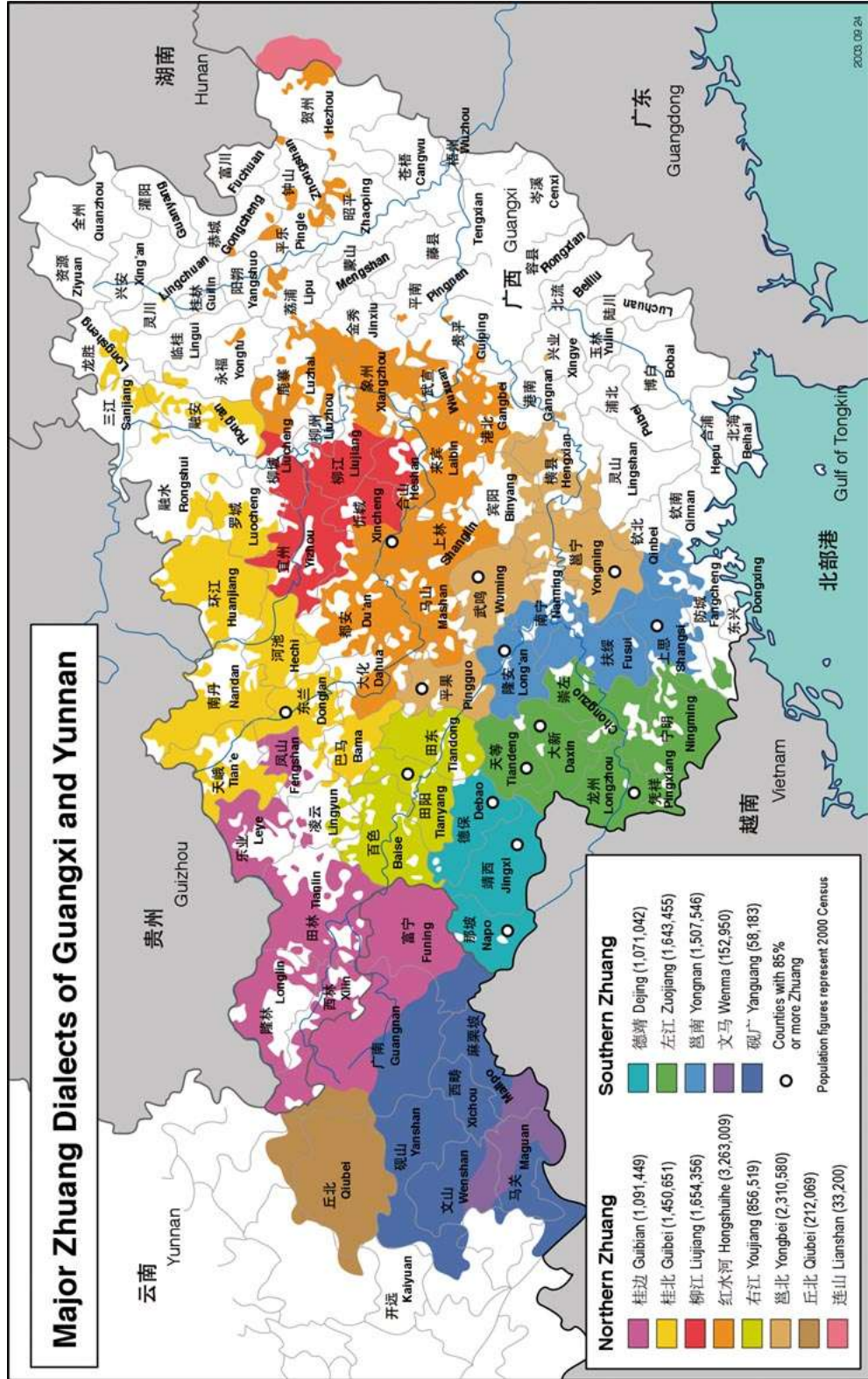
Northern Zhuang

- 桂边 Guibian (1,091,449)
- 桂北 Guibei (1,450,851)
- 柳江 Lijiang (1,654,356)
- 红水河 Hongshuihe (3,263,009)
- 右江 Youjiang (856,519)
- 邕北 Yongbei (2,310,580)
- 丘北 Qiubei (212,069)
- 连山 Lianshan (33,200)

Southern Zhuang

- 德靖 Dejing (1,071,042)
- 左江 Zuojiang (1,643,455)
- 邕南 Yongnan (1,507,546)
- 文马 Wenma (152,950)
- 砚广 Yanguang (58,183)
- Counties with 85% or more Zhuang

Population figures represent 2000 Census



Welcome to “31 Days for the Zhuang”

Hidden in the rural mountain villages throughout Guangxi Province, China, live the approximately seventeen million Zhuang. Although they are the largest minority group in China, they are little known because many Zhuang have been isolated from the outside world. The Zhuang language has over fifty dialects and no accepted written script, so printing literature in a language that they can understand is difficult. Those who are assimilated into the Chinese culture and can read Mandarin are able to read the Bible in Mandarin, but many in the countryside cannot do so. Thus, they are virtually unreached by the good news of Jesus Christ.

The Zhuang are traditionally animists, and older people still continue to worship stones, trees, village gods, and their ancestors. They are in bondage to witchcraft and magic, and they try to secure protection and health with rituals and sacrifices. Younger Zhuang people, especially those that grow up in the cities, do not believe in any religion and are often atheists. A small number of Zhuang were led to the Lord before the beginning of the Japanese war in China, and over the years they have remained true to their faith. These older Christians today are helping to spread the gospel among the Zhuang. Most Zhuang are responsive to the gospel, and in some areas the church is taking root and beginning to grow. However, in most areas, very little work has been done among the Zhuang, and workers are desperately needed.

The map of Guangxi on the opposite page shows the areas where the larger Zhuang dialects are spoken. The small circles indicate areas where the population of a county is more than eighty-five percent Zhuang.

DAY 1 : Who Are the Zhuang?



*"Information is the fuel that fires missionary prayer."
James Hudson Taylor*

The Zhuang people have been in southern China for over two thousand years. Many centuries ago, the Han Chinese pushed them off the fertile plains of Guangxi to farm the rocky soils in the mountains. Today their villages still occupy these rugged mountains. Looking at the Zhuang, we see they are:

Populous: There are 17-19 million (almost the population of Australia).

Concentrated: 98% live in western Guangxi Province or eastern Yunnan Province.

Unreached: Less than 1/4 of 1% are Christian. 75% of them have never heard of Jesus.

Bible-less: The largest people group in the world without even one book of the Bible translated in their heart language.

Illiterate/Under-educated: 85% of the women in rural areas are illiterate. Only 25% of the Zhuang children finish 6th grade.

Rural: 80% live in countryside villages, 15% live in cities, and 5% live in county seat towns.

Animistic: They live in fear of evil spirits. They practice ancestor worship.

Singers: They love to sing and are famous for their song festivals and "antiphonal" singing. A woman will sing one line and then a man will have to quickly create and sing back a witty reply.

Poor: Their average annual income is \$239 USD/person.

Linguistically Complex: There are as many as 50 different mutually unintelligible dialects.

Young: Half of the population is 19.5 years old or younger.

Gateway People: They value living in harmony with others, and many people believe they will be especially effective in reaching other minority groups around them with the gospel.

Praise God:

- That they are a "gateway people" with the potential to reach many other groups with the gospel!
- That they are geographically concentrated.

Pray:

- That many more would come to know Christ!
- That the young Zhuang would have a chance to hear and respond to the gospel.

DAY 2: Who Are the Zhuang? Good News/Bad News



"I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest."
Luke 4:35b

"After I finished sharing how becoming a Christian enabled me to overcome my fears and constant worrying, I asked the Zhuang villager what he thought. He quickly replied, 'I believe what you have said is true. I want to follow this Jesus you spoke of.' I couldn't believe my ears! In the past I had worked with Chinese university students and found that on average it took two years from when they first heard the gospel until they finally decided to accept Christ. Now this Zhuang villager, twenty minutes after hearing the Good News for the first time, was ready to receive it." (testimony from an expatriate worker)

How exciting! This missionary's experience is not an isolated example. Many testimonies from other expatriate workers confirm that the Zhuang are a receptive people. Hallelujah!

The tragedy is that though they are so receptive, the Zhuang have been overlooked by mission work. One expert on mission work in China, who has tracked ministry among the Zhuang for years, has lamented, "Every time workers have been sent among the Zhuang, there has been significant fruit... but there still are so few workers." How can this be? How can seventeen million people receptive to the gospel be overlooked? Some speculate it's because the Zhuang are not as colorful as other people groups or because the Zhuang look physically similar to the majority Han people. Others speculate that it is the fifty-plus Zhuang dialects which present such a complex linguistic challenge. Others say that it's because, in the cities, the Zhuang have assimilated so quickly into the Han culture. All these excuses ring hollow. They can't mask the clear truth that the Christian church has overlooked the Zhuang. It's unfair. It's wrong. God's love for the Zhuang demands that it be corrected.

Praise God:

- That the Zhuang are so receptive to the gospel.

Pray:

- That the Christian church would urgently work to correct their neglect of the Zhuang people.
- That many more workers would be sent to the Zhuang.
- That the Holy Spirit would do a mighty, miraculous work and bring countless Zhuang to salvation.

DAY 3: The Zhuang: A People In Spiritual Darkness



"For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own..."
Romans 10:2,3a

The Zhuang are a very religious people. They worship many gods and celebrate many festivals. These festivals involve rituals to guarantee that ancestors, ghosts, and fairies, who they believe exist in other worlds, will grant them safety and prosperity in this world.

A young Zhuang girl shares with us how her family celebrates the "Ghost Festival"—the time when the Zhuang welcome the dead back to their homes. Next to Chinese New Year, this is the Zhuang people's most celebrated festival.

"During the Ghost Festival we take care of all the ghosts—people who have died in tragic ways, or have died without any family or children to provide sacrifices for them. If we fail to provide for these poor ghosts, they may hurt our family or us. We celebrate this festival every year according to the lunar calendar. It is usually from July seventh until the sixteenth.

"First thing on the seventh, I collect water from the stream near our house. That's the day fairies take a bath, so water collected on that day will be extremely good to use for dying cloth, making vinegar, and boiling with herbs for medicine. My family always keeps a pot of this in our house.

"After the seventh, my mother and I prepare a chicken, a duck, and sometimes a pig, and set them out on a table as an offering for the hungry ghosts. We also put a paper bag full of paper clothes and 'offering money' under the table. We burn these at mealtimes and the ashes are wrapped in two bags with bamboo or lotus leaves. On the sixteenth, my grandfather puts on a bamboo hat and carries these bags full of ashes with a bamboo pole and puts them in the river. When the bags float away we know the ghosts will enjoy them. They will be happy for a year, and our family will be safe."

Festivals such as these, are celebrated throughout the year, as the Zhuang search for someone or something to believe in.

Pray:

- That the news of a loving God will spread from village to village throughout the Zhuang areas.
- That the Zhuang believers would find new ways to communicate their faith at special festival times.
- That the Zhuang would become discontent with their false gods and begin to search for the true God.
- That the Lord will continue to raise up people to go to the Zhuang and share with them about the one true God.

DAY 4: Letter from a Zhuang House Church Leader



"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service."

1 Timothy 1:12

Dear Christian Friend,

I am so happy that you are spending this time to pray for the Zhuang and for those of us who work as evangelists among them. About six years ago, I heard the gospel for the first time from a traveling evangelist. I wasn't sure it was true, but after thinking about it for several months, I realized that it was the truth. For several years I attended a church in the home of a friend of mine. As I began to study the Bible, the Lord told me that I was to share his good news with other Zhuang who live in rural areas.

For the past three years I have been working as an evangelist. I work in the city for a few weeks, and then I use the money I have earned to travel out to the villages and stay for several weeks. I usually try to make friends with local people, and when I help the farmers work in their fields, they're happy to have me stay with them. At night, after the work is over, I tell them about Jesus and read the Bible to them.

The people I stay with in the villages are usually receptive to the gospel, but since I don't belong to that village, the PSB (Public Security Bureau) often comes to see who I am and what I am doing. Because of this, I can't stay too long in any one place. I try to help people who believe, read the Bible, and grow even while I am not with them. Those who can read the Chinese Bible usually grow and remain true to Christ. Those who can't read are easily taken in by cults and false teachings.

Several times the PSB has taken me in to question me, and once they kept me in jail for three months. I wasn't afraid, though, because I felt the comfort of the Lord. I was even able to witness to some of the other prisoners.

Many of my brothers in the house church work as evangelists for a year or two, and then find it too difficult on their families and their health. Let me ask you to pray for these brothers and sisters. Pray that the Lord will provide the money we need for bus fare to the remote areas, and that he will provide for our food and daily necessities. Pray that He will guard our health. This work is hard on our bodies as we travel around on rickety buses and sleep on floors in the villages. Pray also for our families; I am still the only Christian in my family and my parents don't understand why I don't get a good job, settle down, and help them at home. Many of my bothers and sisters in Christ face the same thing.

Please also pray for those who are married with children. Pray that their families will understand their ministry and be supportive. Pray that they will learn how to take care of their families and still evangelize others.

I have heard from western teachers and Christians that many people around the world are praying for the Zhuang and those of us who are trying to share Christ with them. I can only say, thank you so much. Please continue to pray! We count on the Holy Spirit to give us power to witness and to show the Zhuang the truth.

In Christ,
Your Brother

Pray:

- For this house church leader and the house churches of Guangxi Province.

DAY 5: God Glorified Through a Multitude of Zhuang Churches



"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Matthew 28:19-20a

"I will make you very fruitful..."

Genesis 17:6a

"Today, we took a ride on a five-hour bumpy country bus up the winding mountains of Guangxi. When we reached our destination in the dark, a house church leader met us for a thirty minute hike up the slippery mountain into her village. As soon as we arrived, fifteen brothers and sisters from the surrounding villages greeted us. We sat around under dim lights and listened to them tell of the struggles, persecution, and miracles among them. Then they shared their bigger burden: to reach their unbelieving family members and plant many more churches in their villages. The question is how? As we looked at the map of Guangxi, and the many unreached villages, they looked like ants on a hill. How can we effectively plant churches in so many areas?"

Looking at the present situation of the house churches of Guangxi Province, we are definitely in need of a CPM (church planting movement) where the locals can catch the vision of rapidly reproducing indigenous churches among the Zhuang. CPM has been effective in other parts of the world because of its focus on planting obedience-based, reproducible, indigenous churches. Like the first century churches, those planted under the CPM principles are biblically-based, usually meet in homes, are led by lay leaders, and worship in the heart language of the believers. Each member of a new church in a CPM is capable and committed to intentionally plant new churches.

Pray:

- For house leaders to catch the vision of CPM and implement it faithfully in their areas.
- For God to raise up faithful trainers who will be able to train others to become reproducing leaders.
- For the Holy Spirit to move among the Zhuang and plant churches in all the unreached areas.
- For the mobilization of more workers to help start planting churches and shepherding other trainers.
- For opportunities and creative ideas to do broad seed-sowing among the Zhuang.

DAY 6: Urgent Needs: A "PRO-PUSH" Church



"One of the most damaging things that missionaries can do is insist that national churches look and behave like the churches in their home countries."
Statement by a cross-cultural church planter in Asia

Have you ever seen a picture of a prisoner with a ball and chain around his ankle that drastically limited his movement? Often missionaries shackle local churches with three of these balls and chains when they require them to have seminary-trained pastors, require them to build a church building, and require them to have paid staff. These requirements almost always drastically hinder the local churches' ability to spread the gospel quickly and reach others in their society. In China, these requirements are virtually impossible for Christians in rural areas to meet and essentially guarantee that the gospel will not spread. Instead, the kind of churches that are most effective in quickly reaching an area are represented by the acronym *PRO-PUSH*.

Participative: Christians learn to uncover truth from the word as a group and aren't dependent on a seminary trained teacher.

Rapidly Reproducing: Believers are kept from stagnating by constantly sharing what they learn with others and constantly starting new groups.

Obedience Oriented: Obedience to the scriptures is essential and is constantly emphasized.

Plurality of Leaders: Every church is constantly apprenticing and developing new leaders.

Unpaid Leaders: Each church is lead by unpaid staff.

Sending: Churches send people to new villages and even other ethnic groups to start new churches.

House Groups: Each church meets in a house and multiplies before it gets big enough to start drawing attention from the authorities.

Praise God:

- That a few Zhuang leaders have been trained and are effectively starting these types of churches.
- That this method is constantly producing leaders; one of the biggest needs of the church.

Pray:

- That the number of these kinds of churches will rapidly increase.
- That more Zhuang Christians will catch the vision to start these churches.
- That those who say that these churches are impossible to start would get out of the way of those who are already starting them!
- That more workers will become trained in these methods.

DAY 7: Urgent Needs: Effective Ways of Reaching Illiterates



"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..."

2 Timothy 3:16

Mrs. Wei sat in her house, looking at the piece of paper in her hand. She turned it one way and then another, hoping that if she looked at it long enough she would be able to understand some of the Chinese characters written on it. She could pick out her family name "Wei"; her son had taught her that Chinese character when he went to primary school years ago. He had tried to teach her more, but it was so hard to learn: the words were totally different from the Zhuang dialect she spoke. Her son had dropped out of school after the third grade so that he could help in the fields, and recently he had moved to Guangdong to work in a factory. Almost all the men in their village were gone, and the village now mainly consisted of children and older ladies like her, none of whom could read. Maybe she would take the paper to the store down the road, and someone there could explain it to her. Mrs. Wei has never heard of Jesus and couldn't read a Bible if one were given to her.

Mr. Shi, who lives in a village nearby, knows about Jesus. A traveling evangelist came to his village last year and told them all about the one true God and Jesus, his son. At that time, Mr. Shi invited Christ into his heart and was told that he now had the Holy Spirit in his heart. Mr. Shi feels that what he did was right, but now another evangelist has come to the village and says that he has further revelation from God. This new evangelist says that God has come back to earth as a woman, and that Mr. Shi should leave his farm and join him in spreading this message. Something in Mr. Shi's heart tells him this isn't true, but he doesn't know why and the evangelist is so convincing when he talks.

Both Mrs. Wei and Mr. Shi are members of the Zhuang minority group, living in rural villages in Guangxi. In most villages at least one third of all people over twelve years old are illiterate and in many villages the illiteracy rate is eighty-five percent. Although Bibles translated into the Chinese language are available in many places in Guangxi, people like Mrs. Wei and Mr. Shi will never be able to learn the truth through the written word of God, because they cannot read. These illiterate Zhuang, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, are "oral learners." They desperately need evangelism, discipleship, and leadership materials in an oral story-telling format so that they can learn the truths of Christ and become his confident, growing followers.

Pray:

- That the Lord will provide wisdom to people who are trying to develop an oral system of Christian teaching for the Zhuang.
- That the Lord will guide them to know how to present scriptural truths in a way that relates to the everyday life of the Zhuang.
- That the Lord would bring cultural falsehoods and superstitions into the light by his truth so that Zhuang believers can grow in Christ.

DAY 8: Urgent Needs: Indigenous Christian Music



*"Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.
Sing to the LORD, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day.
Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among all peoples."*
Psalm 96:1-3

Music is a universal language, but to the Zhuang it is also a way of life.

The Zhuang have a song for almost any occasion and will sing almost anywhere and anytime. They have many traditional songs with subjects ranging from grievances and politics to love songs. One of the great highlights of each year is the Zhuang Singing Festival. Single young men and women come from all over the countryside to sing antiphonal love songs in hopes of finding a future mate. During the singing, a young woman will indicate her strong interest in a young man by throwing him a hand-sewn ball that she has been carefully embroidering since childhood. If he catches the ball, she will know that he has an interest in her.

Though the Zhuang have many beautiful love songs, few Christian songs have been written in their unique style.

Pray:

- That God will raise up Zhuang Christian songwriters and singers to impact the hearts of their people.
- That Zhuang song festivals would be open forums for singing about love of Jesus.
- That Zhuang Christian songs would become a part of everyday life for the Zhuang people.

DAY 9: Urgent Needs: Dialect Strategy Coordinators



"A strategy coordinator is a person who takes responsibility and accountability for designing and implementing strategies to initiate and nurture church planting movements among a specific people group or population segment."
David Garrison

What's the most effective way to accomplish the task of reaching all seventeen million of the Zhuang people for Christ? It may be to have strategy coordinators for each of the thirteen major dialect groups of the Zhuang people to help coordinate workers, strategy, and resources.

Imagine yourself trying to build a house with no plans, no blueprints, and no contractor. You might end up with too much wood and not enough nails. You might find that you have two kitchens and no bathroom. Most likely your efforts would result in a poorly-built home that you wouldn't want to live in. A strategy coordinator is like a contractor who makes sure that everything is moving ahead according to a plan, and that resources are available to those who need them.

Right now, dialect strategy coordinators are urgently needed for most of the thirteen major dialect groups of the Zhuang people. Each strategy coordinator needs to be an advocate for their target group, communicating with prayer groups abroad to pray informatively, coordinating lines of communication between the organizations working in the same area, and stimulating and implementing the vision of completing the task of evangelizing the Zhuang in a specific dialect area and beginning a church planting movement among them. Without dialect strategy coordinators, resources may be wasted, and valuable prayer and personnel may be misdirected.

Though there has been a small increase of workers among the Zhuang, there still has not been anyone to fill most of the positions as dialect strategy coordinators.

Pray:

- For a spirit of unity and for God to raise up strategy coordinators among those already working here.
- That God would call more people to evangelize the Zhuang and initiate church planting movements among all the dialect groups.
- That the flow of communication would increase between the workers living in China and those abroad who pray for them.

DAY 10: Urgent Needs: Media – JESUS Film, Gospel Recordings, Radio



"... we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"
Acts 2:11b

Imagine there were no more than a few books, a limited number of music recordings, and only a handful of movies in your own language. Even if you had any books or other printed materials in your language, you wouldn't be able to read them, as you never learned to read and write in your own language. This is in fact what the seventeen million Zhuang people face today. Nearly all education is done through Mandarin, and most people never learn to read or write in their own local dialect. That's why audio and video materials are one of the best ways to share the gospel with the Zhuang. The *JESUS* film is only available in one dialect of the Zhuang language. Most of the Zhuang, however, do not understand this version. Other localized versions of this video need to be produced in the remaining twelve major dialects.

At the moment there is a daily thirty-minute radio program aimed at proclaiming the gospel to the Zhuang, but this only covers one of the thirteen major dialects. Broadcasts are needed in many different dialects to enable every Zhuang person to hear the gospel in their own heart language. Very simple gospel recordings are also available in a variety of local dialects, but this is only a first step. Gospel messages and scriptures in the various dialects are still urgently needed, along with regular follow-up, discipleship materials, and indigenous worship music.

Pray:

- For efforts underway to produce additional Zhuang dialect versions of the *JESUS* film, so that Zhuang people from all the dialect groups may be able to watch this video in their own heart language.
- For Zhuang radio programs in the various dialects, so there will be regular broadcasts aimed at all of the Zhuang areas.
- For the production and distribution of basic Christian materials on audio tape or other media in the various major Zhuang dialects.

DAY 11: Urgent Needs: Translation



"When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight..."

Jeremiah 15:16a

Once this past year, two good friends from a local Zhuang village both came to know the Lord on the same afternoon. That night they went back to their own homes to sleep, and each had a dream. The next day, they were talking to each other, and were amazed to discover that God had given them both the exact same dream. Each dreamed that someone gave them a Bible, which they then read every day. Not only that, they actually

chewed on the words. But how can you really chew over the message of the Bible if there is no Bible in your own language?

Praise God that he is calling forth people who are taking up the task of translating portions of the Bible into some of the Zhuang dialects. It is not a simple task. These translators need to come to an understanding of the original meaning of words using resources in their second language. Then they must mull over and grapple with how to express that meaning in their own language. How can they find words for strange customs like *baptism* and *circumcision*? It is especially difficult to decide on the best words to use for *God*, *messiah*, and *savior*. Mulling over these ideas and grappling with these concepts, they chew on these ideas so that the word will become a joy and delight in the hearts of more and more Zhuang people.

Praise God:

- For the translation teams that he is already raising up.

Pray:

- That all the needs of translation teams would be supplied, including God's protection, wisdom, and translation skills—even for the right reference books to be available at the right time.
- That God would raise up and prepare more people to participate in Bible translation work in each of the thirteen dialects, which differ greatly from one another.
- For vision among the leaders of the Zhuang churches for Bible translation work.
- For wisdom in decisions regarding dialects and Zhuang writing systems. Policies concerning these issues present challenges in bringing God's word to all of the Zhuang people.
- For God to pave the way and to reveal his plan for how scripture is to be tested and distributed once it has been translated.

DAY 12: Urgent Needs: Partnership



"There's no limit to what God can do when no one cares about who gets the credit."

"All of us are smarter than one of us."

"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!"

Psalm 133:1

In the year 2002, an extremely significant event in the history of the Zhuang people occurred. No newspapers wrote about it, and perhaps less than fifty people were even aware that it happened. But the angels in heaven took notice of it; the demons of hell shuddered, and a decisive breakthrough was made in the spiritual realm. At that time, forty people from eighteen different agencies and eight different countries gathered together for several days to pray, build relationships, network together, and see how they could more effectively work together to see the Zhuang evangelized. During this time there was an implicit admission by all the agencies that they couldn't complete this task alone—that it would take all of them working together in concert with God's Holy Spirit to see it happen. God takes notice of this kind of humility and dependence on him and we anticipate that great blessings will flow upon the Zhuang and these agencies as a result of this kind of partnership.

Though you probably weren't present, by praying through this guide you too are now becoming part of this international partnership to reach the Zhuang! The church all over the world is working together to bring glory to God... now that's exciting!

Praise God:

- For this mighty work of his Spirit in bringing different agencies together in unity!

Pray:

- That this spirit of unity and cooperation would continue to grow and flourish.
- For effective partnership and cooperation between agencies doing radio, translation, and audio recordings.
- That the task force developing evangelism and discipleship materials for oral learners will have wisdom.
- That this partnership would lead to true synergy and that what is accomplished by working together will far exceed what would be accomplished by the effort of individual agencies.
- That more agencies would wholeheartedly commit themselves to this partnership.

DAY 13: Urgent Needs: Help for Marriages and Families



"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"

2 Corinthians 6:14

Xiao Wei is twenty-five years old this year, and longs to be married. In her village she is considered to be an old maid, as most girls her age are married and have a child by now. She recently became a Christian in a nearby big city and has been studying the Bible. Xiao Wei knows that the Bible teaches that Christians should only marry Christians, but she does not know any other Christians in her village. Even in the city the number of Christian men is limited.

Great pressure is being put on her by her family. When she went home for the holidays, every day there was a different relative introducing a new "boyfriend" to her.

Xiao Wei knows there are many problems in her friends' marriages. They confide in her about their husbands. One said that her husband does not care about their home, or their child. He is constantly drinking with his friends, while she does all the work. Another told Xiao Wei that her husband has a gambling problem. Still another confided to Xiao Wei that her husband has beaten her. These are all negative facts that make her afraid of marriage. She wants to honor God and her parents at the same time. She does not know whether she can withstand the pressure from her family to quickly find a husband.

Pray:

- That more young men and women in the villages would come to know Jesus as their lord and savior.
- For more Christian marriages to be shining examples to others.
- For Christian girls to wait for the right partners before getting married.
- For healthy Christian families that would glorify God.
- For more missionaries who specialize in marriage and family counseling with a sensitivity to Asian cultural family issues.

DAY 14: Urgent Needs: Training of House Church Leaders



"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."

2 Timothy 2:2

Da Jin was getting a little discouraged. He had been in this southern province of China working among the Zhuang for several years now. He had visited rural villages where the gospel was gladly received. He had formed churches, but a lack of pastors made things difficult. If these new churches were to continue to grow, it was he that would have to return to each village to preach, teach, and train these new family members, but he could only do so much. Though discipleship training is very important, it was preventing him from doing what he felt God had called him to do—spread the gospel to those who have never heard. There were still so many who had yet to hear about Jesus. Out of the seventeen million Zhuang, only a very small percentage had even heard of Jesus, much less received a clear presentation of the gospel. He had prayed for more workers to come or to be raised up in Guangxi Province. God had answered his prayers, but there was still so much to do and still too few workers.

When he heard about a new method of starting churches, he was very excited, but a little skeptical. How simple it was—form churches from the new believers. He was doing this, but how could he train workers in the newly formed churches to lead other believers, and train them to form new churches? Could they in turn train others who would form new churches and train new trainers? How could a new believer be a trainer? It sounded too simple. But then there were the testimonies of those who had tried this new method and had huge success. It seemed to solve the problem of never having enough leaders.

So Da Jin attended one of the church planting movement training sessions. He went as a skeptic, but left firmly believing that this simple, yet very effective method of beginning a church planting movement would work among the Zhuang. Now he could train trainers, which would allow him to continue the work of spreading the gospel, and at the same time provide the new churches with someone to carry on the discipleship training.

Pray:

- For a church planting movement to begin among the Zhuang.
- For those who are leading the CPM training sessions to be effective in communicating with and following up with leaders.
- For the local evangelists to spread the gospel in the rural areas using the CPM principles.

DAY 15: Urgent Needs: Effective Platforms for Expatriates



"I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some."

1 Corinthians 9:22b

Andrew sat down tired, but satisfied after a full day of teaching English at the teachers' college. Ever since he had arrived in China and started teaching, it had been such a fulfilling experience to help these young, enthusiastic students to learn English. In a way, there were few things he would rather do.

At the same time, though, he realized that improving the English proficiency of his students was not his ultimate goal in coming to China. His deepest desire was for them to meet Jesus, their creator and savior. Andrew had a few opportunities to share his faith with some of the students individually, but he realized they weren't able to communicate at a deeper level about spiritual matters. How he longed to be able to speak Chinese fluently with them, but there hadn't been much time for him to study Mandarin, let alone to learn the Zhuang language, which was the heart language of many of his students. Oh, for more time to do all the things he wanted to do, and have a deeper impact on the lives of these students!

Expatriates coming to live in China need a visa in order to stay long-term. The most common avenues are to come as language students or English teachers. There are other platforms as well, such as community health, agricultural development, and other social assistance programs. Others establish businesses, ranging from import/export to handicraft marketing to commercial and consulting services.

Pray:

- For creativity and wisdom in setting up platforms for expatriate workers in China.
- For platforms that will provide continued access, especially to the rural Zhuang. Sometimes there is a real struggle to maintain a healthy balance between the platform requirements and time for ministry.

DAY 16: Urgent Needs: More Overseas Chinese Christian Workers



"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life."

Matthew 19:29

Jerry wove unobtrusively through the crowds thronging the marketplace, his jet black hair intermingling with the black hair of the Zhuang. With some practice over the past year, he had learned to inject the Zhuang accent into his speech whenever he spoke Mandarin. He slipped from the marketplace into a small room off of a side alley, totally undetected. A cry of delight broke forth as he entered the room. "Brother, we're so glad you are here!" The eager faces of the Zhuang believers beamed at him as they welcomed him in their Zhuang-accented Mandarin. At that instant, Jerry knew that this was his home. He knew that the Lord had caused him to love these people like his own. With a big smile on his face, Jerry took out his weather-worn Bible, and he began to teach, his heart ever so warmed by the Lord's love for these beloved Zhuang people.

Overseas Chinese often have the advantage of fluency in Mandarin Chinese and have the black hair, black eyes, and Asian appearance which makes them less obvious among the Zhuang. Overseas Chinese who were raised in Chinese homes are culturally closer to the Zhuang than other expatriates. They also tend to have more understanding regarding issues like ancestral worship and family pressures.

Pray:

- That more overseas Chinese believers who can speak Mandarin will rise up to the challenge of reaching the Mandarin-speaking Zhuang in the cities.
- That mature overseas Chinese believers will be willing to give up the comforts of home to disciple indigenous Zhuang churches in the word.
- That overseas Chinese churches will develop a missionary burden to adopt the Zhuang—working with them until the Zhuang churches are able to effectively do the work on their own.

DAY 17: History of Christian Work Among the Zhuang



"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."
Hebrews 12:1

About eighty years ago, the Christian workers at *Liuchow's* (Liuzhou) chapel had given up hope that Mr. Pan would return. Like many early witnesses who were willing to take tracts and go witness in the remote regions of *Kwangsi* (Guangxi), it was assumed that he had been robbed and murdered. He left a wife and two daughters. Later, a *Chwang* (Zhuang) tribesman appeared at the chapel. He asked about the Way of Life and showed a small bamboo cross he was wearing under his clothes on his back. On the cross was written a few sentences expressing his faith in the Savior. He shared how a man matching Mr. Pan's description had stayed with them one night telling them the gospel message, teaching them to sing some choruses, and giving them some scriptures before going on. Now the people of the village wanted to take up the cross of Jesus and follow Christ but they needed to know more. The pastor was delighted in their interest and went to visit their village. There he was impressed to see in one home that the door gods had been taken down and that the idols had been removed even though they had only a few scriptures. He stayed and shared with them more fully.¹

Today local evangelists are still willing to risk hunger, stomach ulcers from a poor diet, and injury from robbers, to go to the remote Zhuang areas to share Christ.

In the early 1900s, several missionary organizations had work in Guangxi among the Zhuang—Christian and Missionary Alliance, Church Missionary Society, Emmanuel Medical Mission, Seventh Day Adventists, Southern Baptist, Wesleyan Methodist Mission, and Catholics. The Christian and Missionary Alliance had the largest work among the Zhuang. Several members of these organizations died in Guangxi Province and other families left children buried there. Wilfred Stott and his wife were one of the families who lost a child. In the 1940s, Wilfred Stott was the first person known to create a written script for the Zhuang language so he could translate the scriptures. He translated Mark into this script. Today this script is not used, but we do pray that one day there will be an accepted Zhuang script and that the scriptures will be translated into the thirteen major dialects of Zhuang.

Praise God:

- For those who have blazed the trail of Zhuang ministry in Guangxi, and for those faithful Zhuang who have believed.

Pray:

- That more missionaries will be called to share in Guangxi among the Zhuang
- That more Chinese and Zhuang believers will be willing to go to the most remote areas to share the good news of Christ.

1. Excerpt from *Pioneering in Kwangsi - The Story of Alliance Missions in South China*, W.H. Olden, Christian Publications, Inc.

DAY 18: Intercede for Expatriate Christian Workers



"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."

Matthew 13:44

Deep into the night the couple lay awake as they struggled for peace. They knew the scriptures well. They taught many times on the subject of unity. They also knew about the strength of forgiveness and yet their team was falling apart. There were always differences between them and the other couple they were working alongside, but over time it seemed communication grew tense. They had gone to the couple and tried to solve the problem, but it came down to different styles of ministry. It allowed a critical spirit to grow in their midst. Working closely with each other on a daily basis, it was not difficult to find imperfection. One flaw after another slowly surfaced and the ill feelings grew like a cancer that destroyed the harmony and sapped their strength.

They would lie in bed wondering why, searching their hearts and knowing they had areas that needed to change, so they asked Jesus to help them. They felt many times like Paul pleading for the thorn in his flesh to be removed. Once again they, like Paul, were at the place of gathering all the faith they could muster to boldly claim, "His grace is sufficient for me, for his power is made perfect in weakness." They prayed for God to work on their behalf and restore the harmony. They asked God to help them to be obedient to his prompting and asked him to restore that joy that made sacrifice easy.

Pray :

- That expatriate Christian workers will get along with each other. This is a common area of struggle.
- For expatriate wives living in a land so far from family and friends and a new home life that is often full of challenges.
- That workers will have adequate time with their families, as daily life is easily consumed by ministry and it is common to feel let down, and disheartened.
- That expatriate children will grow to have an appreciation for the rich experience and the breadth of skills they gain from living in a foreign land. Pray that this appreciation will far outweigh their sense of rootlessness, restlessness, and the grief of often having to say good-bye to friends.

DAY 19: Intercede for National Christian Workers



"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be... And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."

1 Peter 5:2a,4

Xiao Nong slumped heavily onto his creaking wooden bed, as he felt the heaviness of his legs match the heaviness of his heart. He was exhausted. He had been running around ministering to the many house churches in his city and in the surrounding Zhuang villages, as these churches had no one else capable and willing to shepherd the new Zhuang believers. His city was brimming with his fellow young Zhuang men and women from the surrounding villages and towns, looking for employment opportunities. Every day, the endless cries of the desperate Zhuang for their material needs rang in his ears. Their yet unknown spiritual needs also rang in his ears, and he could not ignore the cries of his people. He knew his Maker's heart yearned for many more mature Zhuang Christians to hear these cries and to respond with compassion on these sheep without a shepherd. Many older people in the Zhuang villages do not understand any other language than their own Zhuang dialect, and many of the educated youths who have known the Lord in the city simply would not give up their lives of comfort to bring the blessing back to their families in the villages.

Xiao Nong raised his heavy heart to the Lord, and cried out for more, many, many more Zhuang believers to join his ranks to shepherd their own people.

Pray:

- That the young Zhuang men and women coming out of their villages to work in the cities will be effectively reached by the local churches in the cities.
- That the city churches will have an "Antioch vision" (see Acts 13) of sending mature Zhuang believers back to their hometowns to plant churches there.
- That Zhuang believers working in the cities would be willing to give up their comfortable city life to bring the gospel back in their own language to the Zhuang villages.

DAY 20: Trends: Internet Explosion and the Influence of TV and VCDs



"Please do not access any sexual passions or counter-revolutionary websites."
Sign in English at an Internet cafe

Currently in Guangxi province, Internet cafes are popping up all over the place, with ADSL and networked computers becoming the norm. The tension is growing between the government's desire to open up to the modern world, and their mandate to keep strict control over the ideology of the people. Although most of the population still does not have easy access to computers, television is found everywhere, even in the smallest and poorest of towns and villages.

Unfortunately, along with this trend toward opening up has come an increase in the availability of sexually explicit material. It's not uncommon to find banned films sold in DVD shops and pornographic books and magazines in news stands on open display. Television standards are becoming increasingly relaxed with more sexual content and violence. In addition to this, many Zhuang and Chinese people who were previously sheltered from this free flow of information, are falling for Internet scams and false advertising. Some schools have even had to ban their students from Internet cafes because so many were spending hours trying to find a girlfriend or boyfriend online.

With the greater openness to all kinds of information, we are reminded of what Jesus said, "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come." (Luke 17:1)

Although bad influences are on the rise, distribution of the *JESUS* film on VCD and DVD and other discipleship materials are also now getting easier to distribute and view.

Praise God:

- That the technology explosion in China has resulted in easier distribution of Christian media.

Pray:

- That materials would be distributed and produced that clearly communicate the gospel.
- That the government would be wise enough to discern the difference between information that is truly harmful and Christian information that is beneficial.
- That people would quickly discover that their deepest needs aren't met through the Internet and other media, and that their dissatisfaction would lead them to Christ.

DAY 21: Trends: People Flocking to the Cities



"What does the worker gain from his toil?... I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil —this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever..."
Ecclesiastes 3:9, 12-14a

"Dear Huang Qiang,

"Since coming back to Guangzhou after the Spring Festival, I have found new work in a printing factory. And I have to tell you that I find this factory to be so different from the one I worked in before. Supposedly, there is an American holiday coming soon. The owner calls it the Risen Day. Apparently, the others here already know who has come back to life. They say his name is Jesus. And some nights of the week these men all meet together to read the Bible and talk about Jesus. They say that it is not just an American holiday because Jesus is God and he also loves the Chinese. I still doubt that this is true and am trying to understand it. But these men are just like me. They are from the countryside of our province. They told me they have told their families at home about Jesus and these family members' lives are changing. They say that this Jesus is healing sicknesses and answering prayers. I am not sure, but could this Jesus also have something to say to me?"

"Love, Wei Aiguo"

This letter is typical of many from the rural Zhuang who must leave their families in search of work in large cities. In some factories, groups of believers meet regularly and have their own small churches. Rural Zhuang can come to faith through these believers and carry the message of salvation back home to their villages.

Pray:

- For open doors for Christians to reach Zhuang factory workers in Guangzhou and other cities.
- For Christian owners and factory leaders to boldly attempt a strategy to reach workers with the gospel.
- That these workers will go home and share the gospel with family and people of influence in their villages.
- That these men and women will grow strong and become active leaders in planting churches in their hometowns.

DAY 22: Key Opportunities: Ministry to Children



"I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also."

2 Timothy 1:5

"... Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

Luke 18:16b

Mai Ling joined a group of students on her campus to secretly study the Bible together. She had just heard about Jesus last semester and after months of thinking about him she had finally accepted him as Lord. Now she and this small group of believers were trying to understand the scriptures and learn how they should live their new life in Christ. As the discussion progressed, the whole group was surprised and impressed with how easily one new student from another province understood the word. They were amazed at how he was able to help them apply the scriptures to their lives. After all, he was just in his second year like the rest of the students and didn't seem to be the top of his class.

After the Bible study, Mai Ling asked the young man in front of the others, how he had learned so much about being a Christian. He explained to her, that his parents were both Christians and in his province the house churches were so strong that they always had Sunday School for the children.

Mai Ling and most Zhuang who are Christians have never heard of Sunday School. Since it is against the law to discuss religion with anyone less than eighteen years of age, children are not included in religious services, and there are no programs to teach them the Bible. But recently the house church leaders have realized that churches should have programs for the children and teach them from an early age to love the Lord. Some groups in Guangxi now are eager to begin Sunday Schools.

Pray:

- That Chinese believers would come to China to teach the Zhuang house churches how to begin children's ministries.
- That Sunday School materials will be developed that are suitable to use with rural Zhuang children.
- That millions of Zhuang children will turn to the Lord at an early age and live godly lives.
- That parents would be trained to raise godly children.

DAY 23: Key Opportunities: Students



"Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds."
Psalm 71:17

When Wei Minheng left his small, poor village to attend university in a big city, everything seemed different and new. He loved the days in his mountain village with its small terraced farms, the hours he swam in the clear river with his friends, even the times when he had to carry heavy loads up the hill. However, he also felt the responsibility to help support his family and the obligation not to show disrespect or offend the ancestors traditionally

worshiped. Since very few Zhuang have the opportunity to attend university, Wei Minheng felt the necessity to work hard and not let his family down. Lonely at first in the big city university, his mind became open to new ideas.

God provided an opportunity for him to learn the only good news which could provide everlasting life for him and his family. He accepted it gladly and shared his new beliefs with his close friends at college. Then, the first holiday when he could return home, he eagerly shared this good news with his village family. They began studying the Bible with their neighbors, who in turn told their relatives in the next village and started a church there. One spark had lit a fire that spread to many Zhuang in spiritual darkness.

Pray:

- That China's college students can become strong Christian leaders for the country of China and spread God's word to cities and villages everywhere.
- That Zhuang students would be saved and take the gospel back to their villages to fuel a church planting movement among the Zhuang.
- That many college students would be free to joyfully raise their voices in praise and worship to God!

DAY 24: Key Opportunities: the Arts



"... and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts—to make artistic designs for work... in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic craftsmanship."
Exodus 35:31a, 32a, 33b

The first person in the Bible mentioned to be "filled with the Spirit of God" was an artist named Bezalel. He was assigned to create the decor for the tabernacle—using all his God-given skills to make it as beautiful as possible. Why? Because beauty is important to God, and because beauty and excellence reflect who God is.

God has a special plan for artists in any nation; to express His glory and to touch peoples' hearts with the beauty of their art. Art is a way of communication that transcends words and language. The message of art goes straight to the heart. Therefore, art can be an effective way of explaining the truth of the gospel. It can also be a way of worshipping God. Worship in Spirit and in truth is not only to be expressed in song, but also in dance, painting, poetry, and sculpture.

The Zhuang are known in China as an artistic people. Their singing and handicrafts are beautiful and famous. Art is something that many of them value, but few have time to express. The chores of the day usually take precedence. But many, when faced with a beautiful song, a delicate sculpture or an exquisite painting, receive it with joy and excitement. Many Zhuang who have assimilated into the Han culture still show both interest and talent in art—whether in singing or the visual arts.

Pray:

- That God would raise up Christian artists worldwide to communicate the message of the cross to the Zhuang.
- That the Zhuang Christian artists would effectively use songs, dances, poetry, painting, photography, and sculpture to powerfully communicate the gospel to their own people.
- That God would raise up Christian artists within the Zhuang to express their love for God in their own unique way.

DAY 25: Key Opportunities: Rural Areas



"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."
Matthew 9:36

The cities of China are among the largest in the world. Most medium- to large-sized cities contain at least a million people. This can be overwhelming to those who have not grown up in the world's most populous nation. However, in spite of these cities with huge populations, three quarters of China's people still live in rural areas. Many of these areas are not even accessible to expatriates; as the government considers them too poor, too

undeveloped, and too dirty for outsiders to visit. Yet this is where most of the Zhuang live. Although there is a huge number of Zhuang people living in the cities of Guangxi Province, and hundreds more moving there every week, the vast majority still live and work as farmers in the countryside. They live in remote areas and speak many different mutually unintelligible dialects. Though often hard for missionaries to reach, they are constantly on the heart of God. He cares for them and longs to be in relationship with them... right now.

If we are serious about reaching the Zhuang, we must focus a large part of our thought, strategy, prayer and love on the rural areas, since this is where eighty-nine percent of the Zhuang live. We must be creative and persistent in our pursuit to live among them and reach out to them.

Pray:

- For creative strategies for expatriates to move to smaller towns and have greater access to villages.
- That Chinese believers would have the courage and humility to move to small, insignificant towns and villages to reach the Zhuang.

DAY 26: Key Opportunities: Short-term Teams



"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"

Romans 10:14

Report from a recent short-term team in Guangxi:

"Everywhere we went, we realized that many people we met had never heard of the gospel before. It was quite unbelievable. Some had heard the name of Jesus, but they didn't know who he was and what he had done for them. To me, it is very sad... Romans 10:14 became very real to me. There were no churches in all the places we visited. The nearest one could be found only in another city far away from where we were. This shocked us. Another major discovery was that the people we came in contact with were generally open in their hearts and receptive to God. They were searching for God. Many worshiped their ancestors, and had placed red banners over their homes, both to ward off evil spirits and to attract blessings. In spite of this, they didn't really profess any personal religious belief.

"We thank God that during our six-day trip we saw a total of forty-one conversions. We give all the glory to Him. I am sure that the angels in heaven are rejoicing with us for each precious soul saved. I left China this time with a big burden in my heart. We have only managed to reach out to a few villages and touched a handful of households in this trip. There are still so many households left untouched, and many have yet to hear the gospel."

Short-term teams have a wide variety of ministry areas. Westerners often teach English and lead Zhuang students to know the Lord while studying at large schools. Prayer-walking teams help to break the spiritual bonds of evil that blind the eyes of the Zhuang. Distribution teams carry packets of evangelistic materials in Zhuang dialects to remote villages. Ethnic Chinese teams are able to do direct evangelism in villages and rural townships. All of these short-term teams help to extend the knowledge of Christ far beyond what local workers are able to do.

Pray:

- That more people would respond to the need for teams in Guangxi Province.
- That the hearts of students would be open to the gospel as English teachers witness to them.
- That more ethnic Chinese teams would be called out to do direct evangelism in rural areas.
- That the Lord would protect the teams as they proclaim the gospel.
- For more backpacking and mountain-biking teams to distribute Zhuang gospel materials in remote areas.

DAY 27: Cultural Bridges



"And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity."
Colossians 4:3-5

It was her wedding day! Xiao Qin glanced around her family's courtyard. Relatives and neighbors were boiling geese, cutting pork, and washing bowls, preparing for the special meal. A growing pile of gifts stood by the front door: blankets, buckets, and rain boots. Xiao Qin wondered when her groom would arrive.

Firecrackers suddenly rang out. He was coming! The matchmaker entered first with the groom right behind her. The groom's male companions crowded in after him.

After greeting her family and guests, the young men entered Xiao Qin's family gathering room. A table set with three small wine cups, incense sticks, and a pig's head sat in the middle of the room. Behind it a ladder leaned up to the "god-shelf" above. While Xiao Qin watched, her husband waved incense sticks and climbed the ladder to offer them as tribute to Xiao Qin's ancestors.

Later that evening, standing in front of her husband's family home, Xiao Qin waited impatiently. Another ceremony! She listened as an elder man read for half an hour from a sacred book. Unfortunately she couldn't understand it. Perhaps it was written in an old style.

Finally, the shaman (a practitioner of local animist religion) put the book away and cut the comb of a rooster handed to him. He carefully sprinkled blood in a circle around Xiao Qin. She wasn't sure what this all meant, but she knew she couldn't leave the circle until the ceremony was complete. Finally, tired by the long day, she stepped out of the blood-circle and through the doorway as a new member of the groom's family.

The topic of Zhuang blood rituals may be used as a natural door opener for discussions about the blood of Jesus. His blood purifies us from all sin, and through his blood we enter into his family. Christians effectively use these powerful cultural bridges to communicate the gospel in ways that are easily understood by the Zhuang.

Pray:

- That Xiao Qin and many other Zhuang will come to know the God who wants to be known, who has made a clear way to himself through his son Jesus and who has given us his understandable word.
- For scripture translation work as it goes on for the Zhuang people, that it would be clear and easily understood by them.
- That many Zhuang will accept the gift of Jesus' shed blood for them and enter Heaven's door as new members of God's family.

DAY 28: Barriers to the Gospel: Materialism



"To get rich is glorious."

Deng Xiaoping

"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

Luke 16:13

As China joins the WTO and becomes more open to influences from the outside, millions of rural Zhuang also feel the effects. On one hand, they see the new products, flashy cars, and beautiful homes the elite class in China is now enjoying. However, in their rural villages, their lives become harder and harder as the value of their crops decrease on the open market. They must also now pay cash for health care, children's schooling, and many of the social services that the "work unit" or commune paid for in the past.

Mr. Huang is typical of thousands of men in southern Guangxi. After a disappointing crop last spring, he decided to go to Guangdong Province to seek work in the huge factories there. He knows that he will only see his wife and children twice a year for the next two or three years, but he feels like he must find a way to pay for things that his family needs and buy them some of the luxuries they would like. He'll work ten to twelve hours a day, twenty-nine days a month, and send as much money home to his wife as he can. Mr. Huang is too tired to think about what his life means and too busy to have any close relationships.

A local evangelist recently went to the Huang's village to share the good news of the gospel with the people there. Mrs. Huang was too busy to listen. Now that her husband is gone, she must work the fields from sun up to sun down. She doesn't have time to spend on something that won't help the family get ahead financially.

In the past few years, the Huangs have adopted the same life pattern practiced by the Chinese in Hong Kong and Taiwan: they are just too busy working and making money to think about God.

Pray:

- That the Holy Spirit will work in the hearts of men from Guangxi as they work alongside believers in Guangdong who are spreading the gospel in the factories there.
- That families like the Huangs may recognize the truth of the gospel when it is presented to them and will commit their families' welfare to the Lord who will provide for their needs.
- That the Lord will roll back the intense hunger for more material things that is sweeping across China so that people will be willing to take the time to listen to him.

DAY 29: Barriers to the Gospel: Animism and Traditions



"For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes."
Deuteronomy 10:17

For most Zhuang there is little distinction between their present family, the gods, and the spirits of their ancestors. As they go about their daily lives they believe all of these personalities watch them and are capable of intervening in different ways. They worship their ancestors, believe in ghosts, have totems, practice divination, rely on Taoist priests, believe in witches, employ shamans, and have a large number of rituals and festivals. Daily

or weekly offerings of incense sticks and fruit are made to the ancestors, and they are sought to help with family problems.

Is it any wonder that they are often afraid that they haven't worshiped the right god, or made the right offering?

In rural villages when someone falls sick, or there is a tragedy of some kind, the family affected will take an offering to the shaman. He or she will then tell them what the problem is and what they need to do to appease the god or spirit. Religious belief is a family or clan tradition. Not to engage in these activities shows that you no longer respect the ancestors and do not wish to continue to be a part of the family. Individualism is not valued by the Zhuang, and to no longer be an important part of your family is to lose your identity.

The family pressure on new believers is almost unbearable, but what a wonderful joy the new believers experience when they realize they have a relationship with the God who is above all gods and spirits. They are a part of his family.

Pray:

- That effective ways will be found to communicate the gospel of the one true God to people who have such a totally different world view.
- For lone believers who want to show Christ's love to their families.
- That the Holy Spirit would move in power to show himself strong against false gods.
- For the health and serenity of believers who live in villages surrounded by those who worship false gods.
- That entire villages would come to know the Lord.

DAY 30: Barriers to the Gospel: The Real Threat of Cults



"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."

Matthew 7:15

In the Guangxi countryside, it is estimated that only 20% of the people can read Chinese. Even if the Bible were prevalent, the majority could not read it. Because of this, even older Christians are attracted to cults, as they often do not have a firm foundation in God's word. Unfortunately, illiteracy is not the only reason. *Eastern Lightning* is a satanic cult that believes Jesus has already returned as a thirty year-old woman living in China's Henan Province. They specifically target house church Christians with twisted doctrine. If

believers refuse to accept their teaching, the cult members often resort to kidnapping, beating, torture, drugging, sexual entrapment, and intense brainwashing. There is credible evidence that dozens of Christians have been murdered by followers of Eastern Lightning over the years. Most are poisoned, making it difficult for the authorities to prove they were murdered. Many more house church Christians have simply vanished. It is not known if they converted to the cult or were killed.

Eastern Lightning does not mind targeting nominal believers, but it's clear their chief goal is to attack church leaders and those with the most influence. By Eastern Lightning's own admission, their main motive is to defame God and try to destroy His children. Their stated goals include "disrupt God's work," and "spy out... those who thirst for God's revelation; those who truly love God." They even admit they are liars when they state, "We, for the sake of our work, speak not the truth." Jesus said, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44)

Pray:

- For the release of hostages held by this evil cult.
- That God would protect His children and that Eastern Lightning and other satanic cults would be destroyed.
- That God's power would be shown in ways that cannot be mistaken!
- That God's kingdom would be advanced in the midst of all these difficulties.

Portions of this article taken directly from:

When China's Christians Wish They Were in Prison: An Examination of the Eastern Lightning Cult in China.

By Paul Hattaway, Director of Asia Harvest

www.asiaharvest.org

DAY 31: What Do We Do Now?



"The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. All will share alike."

1 Samuel 30:24b

In any war, there are two fronts: the frontline and the home front. Without the men and women in the military who provide logistical support, the soldiers on the frontline could never do their jobs. Where would our soldiers be if they were not given training, physical provisions, and other logistical support? The same is true for our "soldiers" on the mission field. You can become an effective "home front" for them.

One of the most effective ways you can participate in reaching the Zhuang is to make connections with missionaries on the frontline. There are several Zhuang prayer bulletins you can sign up for. Many of these bulletins have very specific and current news from those serving among the Zhuang. You will be able to pray informed prayers, and help give toward specific needs.

The second thing you can do is to get a few people together and form an "adopt the Zhuang" group. Getting together on a regular basis to pray, you can share information and get involved in larger projects. These projects can include putting up a booth at your church one Sunday, organizing a bake sale that will raise money for the work, inviting special speakers to come and share about the Zhuang, or mobilize a short-term trip to visit the Zhuang.

There are many organizations that exist specifically to help network and assist local churches to be "strategic" support groups for the workers on the field. More information can be obtained by contacting the organizers of this guide.

Remember, you can make a huge difference. In order for the seventeen million Zhuang to be reached, a more coordinated effort needs to be made to bridge the gap between those on the frontline and you who are the home front.

Pray:

- That there would be a growing, coordinated strategy to bridge the gap between the home front and the frontline.
- That local churches will grow in their awareness of the Zhuang and would participate more in the home front which is so necessary for the work on the frontline.

Would Your Church Like to Adopt the Zhuang?

We hope that as you prayed through this prayer guide, you developed a greater appreciation for the Zhuang and a deeper burden to see them come to know the Lord. Maybe you would like to encourage your church to adopt the Zhuang and begin to play a vital part in the ministry among them.

When a church adopts the Zhuang they usually consider doing significant activities in a variety of areas. These activities begin with the church involving a number of people to pray for the Zhuang and to receive monthly prayer updates from the workers in Guangxi and Yunnan. We also encourage churches to try to get their entire congregation, or several groups within the church, to pray through this prayer guide.

We hope your church will join us each year for a special day of prayer and fasting for the Zhuang on October 1st. We can provide a program that your church might like to use.

We also ask churches to consider sending short-term teams to Guangxi Province to go on prayer-walks, teach English, or distribute materials in rural areas. A church with medical personnel in the congregation might want send a team to help with the health needs of the rural Zhuang. Short-term trips can also be planned to utilize other special talents and interests of church members.

We would also like to see churches that are praying for some of their members to go to China and join the group of people who live in Guangxi and Yunnan for the purpose of serving the Zhuang for a long-term commitment. We have a list of positions that we are praying will be filled in the next few years.

If you would like to explore these possibilities, please contact us by using the names and addresses given on the next page.

Thank you for praying together with us.

For the Zhuang

The Zhuang Challenge

The Zhuang Challenge is dedicated to spreading the gospel of Christ among the seventeen million Zhuang in Southern China. We are happy to provide any individual, church, or organization with more information about the Zhuang, and assist them in exploring a variety of ways to become partners in ministry among the Zhuang.

Contact us at:
The Zhuang Challenge
404 S. E. 5th Street
Pryor OK 74361
USA
Email: zhuang@pobox.com

The Zhuang Strategic Alliance

Our Purpose:

"To see the Zhuang people transformed, by the Gospel of the Kingdom, into what God has created them to be."

Our Strategy:

"To build a global network that serves the Zhuang people, through an emphasis on prayer, evangelism, discipleship, and community development."

Contact us at:
Zhuang Strategic Alliance
PO Box 60579
Colorado Springs CO 80960
USA
Email: zhuang@sfcos.org

The Mekong Springboard

Contact us at:
Mekong Springboard
PO Box 27
Chiang Mai 50.000
THAILAND
Email: zhuang@gmx.net
Internet: www.infomekong.com