



*Striving to rescue the
neediest orphans
of God's flock...from
any place on earth.*



**family
spotlight - p2**



**what was
lost - p3**



**out from the
nations - p5**



**special
article - p8**



Reflections

Thoughts from the Editor...

My column this time has to do with a topic of relevance to all of us who try to follow God's will in our lives. It is a question we wrestle with on a regular basis, and many people have asked me personally—often as sort of a challenge or veiled criticism—how we can know God is leading us to do a particular thing or to move in a particular direction. The facet on which I would like to focus in this column has to do with the question of God's will in general, and the extent to which we, His people, have a part in the outworking of that will. In a recent situation we faced as a family, in which we proposed a certain course of action to help in one of our adoptions, a concerned person challenged our thinking on following God's will by stating that if the adoption were in fact part of God's will, He could make it happen without our interference, and if God were shutting a door on the adoption, we should certainly not try to force that door open and try to make something happen that God did not plan. My response to this person was essentially as follows:

The challenge can be reduced to the following questions: 1) can we thwart God's will? and 2) are we supposed to help God bring about His plans? These two questions are related, and they have to do with larger theological issues, but the answers to these questions will play a pivotal role in shaping how one goes about living one's life as a Believer.

1. As to the first question, can we thwart God's will, I am inclined to say that the answer is very simple: no, we cannot thwart God's will. However, I recognize that the Bible uses the word "will" in a number of contexts and that it carries different meanings, depending on context and intent.

a. The larger context for God's will is that of His eternal will, that which He decreed

before He laid the foundations of the world and which will come to be just as He has ordained. This is usually referred to as God's decretive will, or His eternal will. We know intuitively that God's decretive will cannot and will not be thwarted. This includes Christ's death on the cross and man's redemption and the ultimate defeat of Satan and Christ's return one day to take all of us home, etc. This aspect of God's will is the overarching plan for His glory and man's redemption that began before He created the angels and will end—or rather, will continue forever—in our eternal dwelling with Him in glory. When we speak of God's sovereignty, this is what we're talking about: God is in absolute control over His creation, and there is nothing that can thwart His decretive will.

b. Another usage of the term "will" in Scripture is commonly expressed as His preceptive will, or His permissive will. This encompasses areas in which God sets forth by precept what man is to do, but man is free to reject such an expression of God's will in favor of following the inclinations of his own heart. The classic example of this was in the garden of Eden, in which God expressed His will that man should refrain from eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, yet man rejected that expression of God's will and chose to disobey. God permitted this rebellion, but the reason of course lay in His eternal, decretive will, so that the rebellion was both anticipated and permitted. And we know from other passages that God weaves these events, together with all others, into the perfect tapestry of His eternal plan—cf. Rom. 8:28.

Thus, the question seems really to be about whether a proposed action is part of God's decretive will or His preceptive, non-binding will.

Continued on Page 4



Family Spotlight The Postells



Back: Colin, Karla, Emily
Front: Mike, Samuel, Krista

“One of the most important things that someone can learn from our adoption is that God has a plan.” Says Karla Postell. God did have a plan for Samuel Ling Wan Postell. That plan involved Ling Wan’s birth parents, missionaries Edie Cummings and Sarah Gordon, and the Postell family. Mike and Karla Postell have three birth children: Emily, Colin, and Krista. Their son, Colin, was born 17 years ago with a condition called Cornelia De Lange Syndrome (CDLS). A genetic syndrome, CDLS manifests itself in many ways. Many of the symptoms can be very severe and include: delayed growth and development, gastroesophageal reflux and other feeding issues, seizures, heart defects, proclivity to infections, hearing and vision impairments, limb differences, and bowel abnormalities. Not all people with CDLS present the exact same symptoms or severity. Colin has very mild symptoms of the syndrome.

In many ways, this adoption story can be traced back to the time of Colin’s birth. In the course of working with Colin’s issues, they have learned much about CDLS, and, in doing so, opened their family up to an opportunity that, 17 years later, God made available to them.

Karla is a member of an online support group for families that are affected by CDLS. In May of 2003 a member of that support group forwarded an email to the group members. The email told the story of a little baby in Japan that was named Ling Wan.

Ling Wan, though born in Japan, was not Japanese. His birth parents were Chinese citizens who were temporarily working in Japan at the time of his birth. His father, an atheist, had expressed no interest in learning about God. His birthmother, though, had been attending a Bible study led by Edie Cummings, a missionary in their town. Ling Wan’s birthmother had frequented the Bible study for months, until about the time of his birth. From his birth, the symptoms of CDLS were apparent and Ling Wan’s health was fragile enough to require him to stay at the hospital for continued care. His birthmother went, daily, to the hospital to help care for him. However, both she and his birthfather knew that Ling Wan had no future in China. They also knew that he would die if they just left him in Japan. When he was about 3 months old, his birthmother asked Edie Cummings if she could help in any way. Edie and her husband, Cal, contacted Loving Decisions, a nonprofit adoption branch of Youth With a Mission (YWAM). Sarah Gordon, a missionary for YWAM, took over from there. She talked with Ling Wan’s birthparents, and they all came to two conclusions. The first was that Ling Wan needed to be moved from the local hospital to a children’s hospital in Sarah Gordon’s city. His health was deteriorating, and the staff at that hospital did not have the training needed to deal with his problems. The second conclusion, although very painful for his birthparents, was that Ling Wan needed to be adopted into a family that could provide for his medical needs and help

him to live a healthy life. His birthparents had Ling Wan transferred to the Children’s hospital and placed in the legal custody of Sarah Gordon.

When she first learned of Ling Wan’s situation, Edie Cummings sent an email to a pastor in the United States telling of Ling Wan’s situation and need for a family --a family that could not only handle parenting a child with so many special needs, but would be willing to fight the battle necessary to make a Chinese baby, living in Japan, an American citizen. The pastor forwarded the email to the Shepherd’s Crook. They, in turn, forwarded the email to all the families on their list. Somehow, that email made it all the way to Australia before being sent to the on-line support group for CDLS. It was then that Karla Postell learned of Ling Wan.

Ling Wan touched her heart. She printed off the email as a reminder to pray for little Ling Wan. So she prayed for him, with the thought of adopting not even entering her mind. She and Mike were pleased with the size and age of their family. The calling to adopt had never been heard by either of them. However, she did feel led to pray for Ling Wan. She shared that need to pray with her family. It was not long before they knew that God wanted more than their prayers. They knew that what this baby needed was a loving Christian family. As they prayed for him, God brought to their attention that they were a loving Christian family.

Continued on Page 10



"I will seek **what was lost** and bring back what was driven away."

Ezekiel 34:16

The following Shepherd's Crook children have come home to their families since our last newsletter was published.

Caelyn



Before: In a Chinese orphanage.



After: In her Cincinnati, OH home.

Sam



Before: In a Bulgarian orphanage.



After: In his Skandia, MI home.

Anna



Before: In a Russian orphanage.



After: In her Locust Grove, GA home.

Gavin



Before: In a Korean foster home.



After: In his Colorado Springs, CO home.

Nathan



Before: In a Chinese orphanage.



After: In his Fredericksburg, VA

Melanie



Before: In a Chinese orphanage.



After: In her Milford, OH home.

Sasha

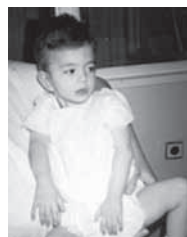


Before: In a Russian orphanage.



After: In his South Charleston, WV home.

Maggie



Before: In a Bulgarian orphanage.



After: In her Harrold, SD home.

Elijah



Before: In a Chinese orphanage.



After: In his Granville, OH home.

Faith



Before: In a Chinese orphanage.



After: In her Lakeland, FL home.

Amanda, Bailey, and Casey



Before: In a Russian orphanage.



After: In their Newport Richey, FL home.

Isaiah



Before: In a Chinese orphanage.



After: In his Skandia, MI home.



did you know

The adoption of Isaiah Smyth (above) took nearly three years to complete, and was filled with incredible obstacles which God miraculously overcame to bring Isaiah home.

Reflections - Continued from Page 1

If it is part of His decretive will, then neither we nor anyone else can prevent its coming to be. If it's part of His preceptive will, then it may be that we can choose to obey or disobey, and presumably bear thereafter the consequences of our choice. We cannot know whether any thing we believe to be from God is really from Him—except, of course, in matters of direct obedience to specific declarations or commandments of Scripture. The question that this raises, however, is, does it matter whether a thing is of God's preceptive or decretive will? As a believer, our overriding concern should be to do the will of our Master, regardless of its forensically binding nature. If a thing is an expression of His will, our job is to do what we can to see it done. If it is God's will to bring a child into our home, for example, then our pressing concern is to do what we can to make that happen. But what if it is His will that the child not be a part of our family? That could be the very crux of the question; I'll come back to it later. ((By the way, I should say it would be hard to conceive of God being displeased with our trying to make a needy orphan a part of our family, since doing so would directly comply with several commands and precepts of His Word. It could be that He might choose for us not to try to bring him or her home in order to spare us from hardship and difficulties, but I can't imagine—in the light of Scripture—that He would be displeased with our desire to make the child a part of our family.))

2. The second question has to do with the part we as Believers are supposed to play in the outworking of God's plans. The concerned person said that he wonders if maybe we shouldn't do this thing we propose doing, in order to demonstrate to the watching world that God made the desired outcome happen without help from us. The implication is that if we exert our own effort and the desired goal comes to

Continued on Page 6



Out From the Nations

"I will bring them **out from the nations** and into their own land."

Ezekiel 34:16

Adoptions have been started on the following children since our last newsletter was published.



Joshua

Waiting in a Chinese orphanage
Soon will be with his Lakeland, FL family



Joo Eun

Prematurity;
Waiting in a Korean foster home
Soon will be with his O'Fallon, MO family



Isabela and Lidia

Waiting in a Guatemalan foster home
Soon will be with their Mechanicsburg, PA family



Isabel and Isaiah

Cleft lip/palate;
Waiting in a Russian orphanage
Soon will be with their Alliance, NE family



Stefania and Loredana

Waiting in Romanian foster homes
Soon will be with their Alexis, IL family



Stephen

Cataracts;
Waiting in a Chinese orphanage
Soon will be with his Muskegon, MI family



Manuela and Juan Antonio

Waiting in a Guatemalan orphanage
Soon will be with their Waterloo, IL family



Daniel

Congenital brain anomalies;
Waiting in a Korean foster home
Soon will be with his San Antonio, TX family



Kathryn

Congenital brain anomalies;
Waiting in a Guatemalan orphanage
Soon will be with her Cincinnati, OH family



Si Jie

Cleft lip/palate;
Waiting in a Chinese orphanage
Soon will be with his Louisville, KY family



Isaac

Hearing impairment;
Waiting in a Kazakhstani orphanage
Soon will be with his Eben Junction, MI family



Levi

Possible prenatal exposure to alcohol;
Waiting in a Korean foster home
Soon will be with his DeMotte, IN family



Eli

Hypoplasia of eyelashes and eyebrows;
Waiting in a Korean foster home
Soon will be with his Brighton, MI family



Chao Yue

Spina Bifida;
Waiting in a Chinese orphanage
Soon will be with his Malvern, AR family



Frances

Cleft lip/palate;
Waiting in a Chinese orphanage
Soon will be with her Murfreesboro, TN family



more happy endings

You can find all TSC children, placed or in process, online.
www.theshepherdscook.org/happy_endings.html

Reflections - Continued from Page 4

pass, then we will have made it happen and God will not receive the glory. This person, by way of contrast, referred to George Müller and his fervent desire to see that God receive the glory for every good thing accomplished in the work of the orphanages and the ministry in Bristol. This, too, is a desire of ours, and it is a constantly recurring theme at our Board meetings and in our family discussions. We sincerely want God to receive the glory for the work He does in and through our ministry and our family. The question, then, is, does our participation in the outworking of God's plan rob Him of the glory when good works come to fruition? Of course, the answer is both, "no," and "sometimes." It is sadly true that some people try to direct to themselves glory that is due to God alone. But these examples of "wearing his coat" poorly do not answer the larger question. I submit that it is scripturally supportable that we can do the work and still give God the glory. It is, or it should be, quite clear to all that God miraculously brought down the formidable wall of Jericho, and yet the Israelites had a part to play in that miracle. Few people would believe that walking around a city for seven days and then yelling and blowing horns would actually cause the wall to fall down. But that's exactly what God commanded them to do. Why? Of course I don't know the full answer to that question—who knows the mind of God but God Himself—but I believe that part of the reason was to build the faith of the Israelites and to build our own faith, and part of the reason was so that the Israelites would play an active role in the accomplishing of God's plan. We read in Philippians that we are to "work out [our] salvation with fear and trembling," indicating that we are to be actively involved in the outworking of our sanctification and the work God has for us to do here on earth. ((Paul repeats this theme a number of times, each time emphasizing that we have a responsibility to cooperate with the inside-of-us workings of the Holy Spirit in becoming holy as Christ is holy, and in accomplishing God's work in this world. "For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to do according to His good pleasure." [Phil. 2:13]))

So, based on the foregoing, would it then be appropriate for us to do this thing when doing so might bring about a result God did not intend, or might bring about God's intended result but rob Him of the glory of doing it? I say the answer is yes, it would be appropriate. On the other hand, should we shrink from complying with a clear precept of Scripture simply because the result might not be what God planned? No! To do so is to risk disobeying God, for where a Scriptural precept is applicable, and where there is no contradicting command or precept addressing our intended action, we can move forward boldly, expecting God either to bless our work or to correct us if we've incorrectly interpreted His will. Oh how liberating it is to trust the Father enough to risk His loving rod of correction for the sake of following Him into areas of relative darkness!! I wonder what arguments were used against the actions of the ten Booms and other resistance fighters during Hitler's reign of darkness and oppression. Were they told—and we know they were—that it was their duty as Christians to obey the civil authorities, even if it meant that human beings, made in the image of God, were being sent off to mass executions and torture? Were they told that God could rescue those abused and afflicted souls if He chose to do so, without any help from His people? What were God's words of comfort to those Christians who sat by and did nothing while God's own Jews were gathered up like cattle and put to death by the millions?

God has called us, both as a family and as a ministry, to fight to save special-needs orphans throughout the world, and we will do so until He tells us to stop. We will not use every means available to us—"everything is permissible but not everything is beneficial"—but we will use whatever means are compatible with Scriptural commands and precepts and are honoring to God. And God will receive the glory whenever the work is successful, both in a temporal sense, in that we will sing His praises on whatever platform we have, and in a cosmic sense, in that the angels will praise Him throughout the universe for each work He performs. We know whenever we purpose to do some work for God's kingdom that it will only come to fruition because of God's supernatural intervention, not because of the work we've done. Our work and efforts represent collectively a piece of the puzzle, and we don't understand how all of the different puzzle pieces work together, but we know Who it is that moves those pieces, and Who it is that crafted the puzzle in eternity past and will see that it is finally and permanently assembled in its proper time.

Thank you, Father,
Amen

The Third Annual *Celebration Banquet*

OF THE SHEPHERD'S CROOK MINISTRIES

The third annual Celebration Banquet for The Shepherd's Crook Ministries is now over, but if you weren't able to attend, or if you are interested in seeing more about the banquet, then you

may want to visit a new website that we have set up. The Celebration Banquet website contains pictures of the event, lyrics to the banquet special music, as well as recordings of the songs. You can log on to the site at www.theshepherdsCrook.org/banquet.html, or just follow the link from our homepage.

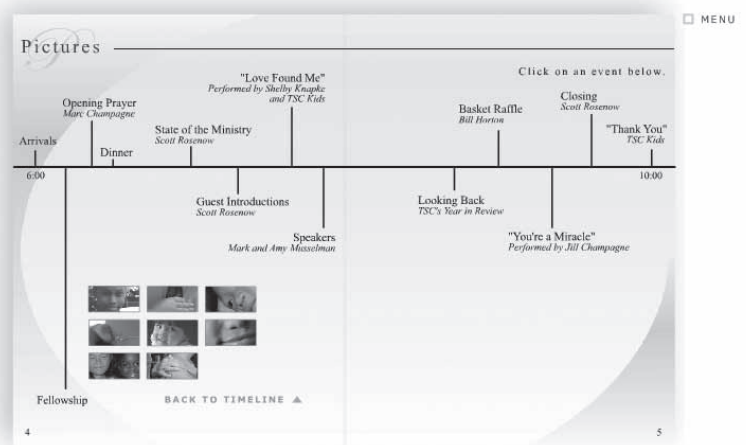


This year, we have established a separate site for banquet content.

Macromedia Flash Player

The new Banquet site requires that you have the Macromedia Flash Player 7.0. The Flash Player can be downloaded for free at www.macromedia.com.

We hope to soon launch an HTML version of this site, so keep checking.



The layout of the site is reminiscent of the programs used at the banquet.

We hope you'll take the time to visit the new site, and if you have any questions about the banquet, feel free to e-mail them to us at info@theshepherdsCrook.org.

BIND UP THE BROKEN

MA JIA LE PROJECT: *China*

2 0 0 4



Written by Deb Amend

In 2001, as Carlin Rosenow awaited the finalization of her adoption into the Rosenow family, Dr. Jorge Lazareff, director of pediatric neurosurgery at UCLA Medical Center, traveled to Romania in order to operate on her. Carlin, and the other Romanian children whom Dr. Lazareff treated, suffered from spina bifida or other related disorders. While these disorders are treatable in a country where there are vast medical and financial resources, in an impoverished nation a diagnosis of this manner leads to a bleak future, and often fatality. Through this surgery, Scott and Kathy Rosenow (the founders of The Shepherd's Crook Ministries) became acquainted with Dr. Lazareff. When they saw the benefits that their daughter had reaped from his generous help, they asked him if he would be willing to operate on children in China. His desire to help children in need of neurosurgery worldwide led him to answer them with a resounding yes. In fall of 2002, with the help of International Assistance and Adoption Project (IAAP), Dr. Lazareff traveled to China. Once there, he conducted five surgeries in two days. In addition to his surgical work he also led training seminars for Chinese doctors. The fruit of that trip will continue to grow as those newly trained doctors can now continue to perform surgeries on other children who are in need.

The fall 2002 trip was so successful that a second trip was planned for the summer of 2003. It was during this second trip that Dr. Lazareff operated on Ma Jia Le in order to correct issues that originated from spina bifida. Ma Jia Le was born in February 2001 in a small village near Changchun, China. In a culture where even a mild birth defect can cause parents to abandon their children, Ma Jia Le's parents demonstrated an amazing love when they chose to keep their newborn son. This bold, selfless, and loving choice was made despite his uncertain medical future and the shame that often falls on a family who has a child with special needs. As his parents looked for ways to treat his medical condition, Ma Jia Le was forced to stay at home, virtually isolated from a culture that did not know how to deal with his differences. Jia Le's parents lobbied diligently and were able to get him on the list of children for Dr. Lazareff's second trip.

Jia Le's surgery was a success and his parents marveled at the joy of knowing that he would be able to walk like other children, although probably with assistance. Post-surgery life held great promise, and Jia Le's parents were

overjoyed to take him out to play. He loved to go outside and see the trees, the sky, and all that he had missed when he was so isolated in his home.

Sadly, though, it was one of those outings that brought sorrow once again upon his family. After taking a bicycle ride, Ma Jia Le's mother had parked her bicycle on a concrete walk. Jia Le was sitting in a safety seat on the back of the bicycle. His mother let go of the bike in order to close a gate. When she let go, the bike fell over and Jia Le's head struck the concrete. Despite immediate medical attention, Ma Jia Le passed away several days later.

Although the story is filled with much sorrow, it is also a story of hope. Without the care of Dr. Lazareff, Ma Jia Le would probably still have died at a young age and would never have had the opportunity to enjoy life as other children do. His parents would never have had the opportunity to be proud of their son, nor to show him the joy of living. Jia Le's story is one of hope for the thousands of other children in China who need the opportunity that he and his parents were given. It is in memory of Ma Jia Le, and in honor of both him and his parents, that The Shepherd's Crook Ministries dedicates these efforts and have named the surgery project the Ma Jia Le Memorial Project.

In honor of Ma Jia Le and all the other children that he represents, Dr. Jorge Lazareff and a team of eight doctors and three nurses will travel to Changchun China on October 9, 2004, for a week of surgery and training seminars. Twenty children with spina bifida and related disorders will be operated on. Numerous Chinese medical professionals will be trained. We have set up a special site for this trip where you can find more information, including bios on each of the children scheduled for surgery, as well as pictures and updates of the trip. Follow the link from our homepage, or go to **www.theshepherdsbrook.org/majiale**.

Our team of medical professionals are donating their time and paying for their own transportation. However, there are still numerous expenses associated with the surgeries. Among those expenses are the following:

1. Transportation of the children to Changchun, in some cases from remote provinces in China.
2. The transportation and lodging expenses for nurses to care for the children throughout the trip.
3. Hospital operating room expenses.
4. The stay at the hospital and all medication required for the children
5. Food, diapers, milk and other necessities for the children during the trip
6. Video team to videotape the surgeries and lectures for the doctors in China to use later for training.

The hospital has discounted the cost of the surgical facilities, but the expenses for each child are still significant, amounting to an average of \$2,000 per child. Should you decide to help these children financially, please make your contribution payable to:

The Shepherd's Crook Ministries
P.O. Box 773
West Chester, OH 45071
(Please designate for the Ma Jia Le Memorial Fund)



ma jia le project online

You can find more info about this trip online.
www.theshepherdsbrook.org/majiale

Family Spotlight - Continued from Page 4

They also realized that their experience with CDLS qualified them, even more, to parent Ling Wan. As they contemplated living a life of faith, they realized that they were being called to step out of their comfort zone. God wanted them to be Ling Wan's family. As Karla said, "I guess that this was our way of 'stepping out of the boat' as the Apostle Peter did. We needed to have lots of faith that this is what God wanted us to do and He would have to open the doors (or close them) and provide us with the means of getting Samuel here." God presented them with the opportunity, and the Postell's were ready to serve.

It was not long before the Postell's found themselves in a whirlwind of activity. With the help of Lutheran Social Services, they worked towards completing all the paperwork by September 2003 (a mere 4 months after the decision to adopt!). Ling Wan's birth parents were due to leave Japan for home that September, and no one knew how complicated the adoption would get if his birth parents left the country. With support from LSS and a local adoptive family they pushed the paperwork through. However, Ling Wan was not able to come home as planned.

During this time, Ling Wan lived, primarily, at the hospital in Sarah Gordon's city. When he was well enough to be released, she would take him home to live with her family. However, he still struggled to stay healthy, and the doctors there discovered a health problem that the doctor's at the previous hospital had missed. Ling Wan had a mal-rotated bowel, a medical condition that required surgery as soon as he was healthy enough to withstand it.

Although all the paperwork was ready in time, the Postell family waited for Ling Wan to undergo the surgery and recover enough to travel home. By mid-fall of 2003 the surgery was complete, the problem corrected, and Ling Wan was ready to travel. Samuel Ling Wan Postell was escorted home to Mauston, Wisconsin by Sarah Gordon on November 25, 2003 -- two days before Thanksgiving.

The blessings of Samuel's adoption continue to flow, as does the fruit of the Postell's faithfulness to God's calling. Samuel's birth father, once an atheist, now believes that Samuel's adoption was a miracle. Drawing on his experience in Japan, he prayed to God about some other issues and saw answers to those requests when he arrived home in China. He and Samuel's birthmother continue to have a relationship with both the Cummings family and the Postell family. They hope, someday, to travel to the United States and see Samuel. The Postell family prays for their salvation, and marvels at how God is using so many people around the world to lead Samuel's birthfamily to Him.

Samuel has grown and matured daily since arriving home. He is still small, but his general health has been very good. Upon his arrival, Karla and Mike discovered two other unknown health issues. Due to unusually small ear canals, Samuel is severely hearing impaired. Although doctors say that he will be hearing impaired for life, the Postells are praying that as he grows, and subsequently his ear canals grow, he will gain more hearing. Other children with CDLS who have had hearing loss due to small canals have gained hearing as they grew. Also found was a heart defect that will soon require surgery. He also has vision issues, limb differences in his hands, and some developmental delays. The road ahead has many obstacles, but Samuel now has a family to travel that road with him. As with all adoptions, Samuel is not the only one reaping the benefits. The Postell family is experiencing the joy of his smiles and laughter, and the joy of dwelling in the goodness of God's faithfulness to them. And everyone who hears their story can be encouraged by their willingness to follow God wherever He leads, confident that He always has a plan.

Written by Deb Amend



The Shepherd's Crook JOURNAL

If you have any suggestions about articles or content for upcoming newsletters, e-mail them to us at

newsletter@theshepherdsCrook.org



upcoming events



past events online

Read about previous TSC events online.
www.theshepherdscriock.org/events.html

- ✓ On **September 9th**, a team of medical professionals led by Dr. Jorge Lazereff will be leaving for Changchun, China to begin the third Bind up the Broken Ma Jia La Memorial Project. Alison Gutterud, our MJL Project Coordinator, will be traveling with the team as a representative of The Shepherd's Crook. More details about the trip are available on our site.
- ✓ The ministry's third anniversary is coming up in the next few months. On **January 2nd**, The Shepherd's Crook will have been an officially incorporated 501(c)(3) not-for-profit ministry for three years.
- ✓ Our next newsletter will be published in the **Winter of 2005**.

BIND UP THE BROKEN MA JIA LE PROJECT: *China* 2004

10.09.04

Find out more at www.theshepherdscriock.org/majiale

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Artwork and Design:	Allan Rosenow
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