

Her Story Silhouette by Shari House

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Silhouette:

Evangeline French, born in 1869, was no coward and courted death many a time while she was growing up. She was definitely not of a genteel nature and did nothing half-way. At one point she exclaimed, "If I could take upon myself the world's misery, I would - and jump into the sea with it." Her sister quietly responded, "Eva, there is no need to do that. It was done long ago, on the cross." Subdued by this thought a few weeks later she trusted Christ as her Saviour. There was an immediate change in her life, and she turned her passion and energy to the mission field. She applied to the China Inland Mission and Hudson Taylor accepted personal responsibility for her suggesting she go to North China. In 1893, at the age of 24, she arrived in Shansi 7 years before the Boxer Rebellion.

Also an adventurer by nature and full of spirit, Mildred Cable, born in 1878, was attending a special mission when she accepted Christ as her Saviour. A couple of years later she attended a meeting where a missionary to China was giving an update and she felt a calling to go. After finishing her study in nursing and chemistry, she attended the London University and studied human sciences. She had become engaged to a man who also desired to be a missionary in China, but in 1900 just as she was finishing her study, word came of the Boxer Rebellion and the slaughter of the "foreign devils" which included 58 missionaries and 20 children from the China Inland Mission. Her fiancé decided he would not go and would not marry her if she wouldn't change her mind, as well. Although it broke her heart, she decided not to marry him because she was sure of God's calling. In 1902, at the age of 24, she arrived in Shansi and began her work with Eva. Although the two were both headstrong, independent women, they developed a great bond that would prove to last a lifetime.

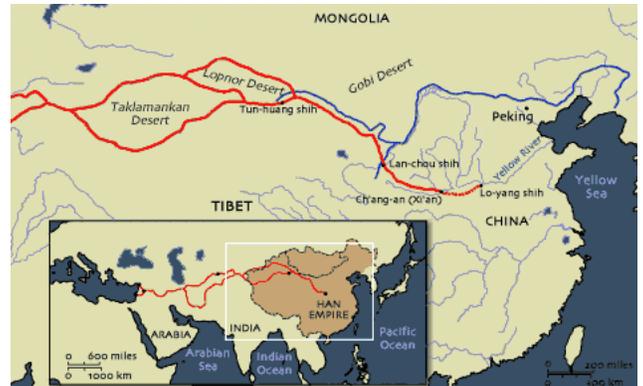
Francesca, born in 1871, was Eva's younger sister by two years, and they were as different as night and day. Francesca was amiable and loved music and the arts. She was well read and adept at the art of persuasion. After an older sister married and their father passed away, she took upon herself the care of their mother. When her mother passed away, as well, Eva and Mildred asked her to join them. "**A threefold cord which could not easily be broken,**" was their motto and they eventually became known as the Laughing Trio.

They returned to the field in 1908 to the school that Eva and Mildred had set up in Hwochow which had around 200 students. For the next decade or so they went about setting up schools, churches, a rehabilitation center for opium addicts, and a mission that helped Moslem women. They trained "pioneer bands" which were groups of

Chinese Christians who would take the Gospel into unreached territories and taught many people the Chinese phonetic script so that they could read the Bible for themselves.

By June of 1923, they felt it was time to hand the work over to the Chinese Christians. They knew God was calling them to live a nomadic life and travel the Silk Road. The slow 3-mile per hour speed of those that traversed the Gobi Desert was perfect for "Gossiping the Gospel" along the way. In their first 8 months they travelled 1,500 miles until they reached the last city inside the Great Wall named the City of the Prodigals for the many criminals that passed through it. They spent the winter at a small mission station there where they helped a Chinese evangelist establish a Bible School.

When summer came they were ready for their great adventure. They had a little two-wheel ox cart filled with Bibles in a vast array of languages provided by the Bible Societies in Shanghai and London. They also took along some bedding, a little bit of food, and a few cooking pots. Their goal was to go where no other missionary had been before and visit every oasis and village outside the Great Wall of China and "find the lost." Everywhere they went they proclaimed the name of Christ. They were undeterred as they followed trade routes, traced faint caravan tracks, and searched out countless by-paths exploring the most hidden oases. They crisscrossed the Gobi Desert five times and endured the hardships of windstorms, thefts, warlords, violent soldiers, threats of death, thirst, pain, sleeplessness, hunger, stoning, and even seeing the execution of friends. They continued in this work until, during a time of political unrest, all foreigners were kicked out.



In 1936 after 36 years of service together, the Trio returned to England and worked with the British and Foreign Bible society for the rest of their lives. The Trio was well known and admired, and between them they authored 20 books for adults and children. Huge crowds would gather to hear them speak of all the Lord had done during their time in the Gobi Desert.

Mildred died in 1952 at the age of 74. Eva died in 1960 at the age of 90, and three weeks later, Francesca died at the age of 89. They truly followed the Lord's will to the ends of the earth and back, and in the process reached thousands of souls for the cause of Christ. Mildred's statement, "**God provides the men and women needed for each generation**" is challenging and a call to search our hearts to see if we are one of the ones God wants to use to go to the ends of the earth. They are all true examples of ladies of whom it can be said, "**She hath done what she could**"!

Her Story/My Story:

Gwa-Gwa, which means "Little Lonely," was taken from her home in the Tibetan foothills when she was less than a month old. She was sold to a Chinese couple that lived a great distance away and were not able to have children of their own. At first they were excited with their purchase until they realized she was deaf and dumb, and then

they no longer wanted her. She suffered beatings from her adoptive mother, who was an opium addict, and when a few years later a son was born, Gwa-Gwa was sent to the streets to be a beggar. She was about seven years old on that fateful day that she came knocking on the Trio's door for the first time. Dressed in filthy rags and covered in bites from the vicious street dogs, she was a poor sight indeed, but the Trio invited her in and gave her some soup. Each time they left for a trip, Gwa-Gwa would follow their ox cart for as long as she could and then wait longingly for their return. The missionaries left instructions with their caretaker that, while they were away, she was to be given soup each time she came to the courtyard.



Eventually the Trio asked Gwa-Gwa's mother if they could purchase her for ten shillings. They knew it would be challenging, to say the least, and definitely take more than soup each day to provide for this little one, but when they looked at her they saw her through Christ's eyes. They knew that, whether or not anyone else thought so, she was precious. They renamed her Ai-Lien which means "Love Bond." **They loved her and she loved her three "mamas."** Years later she commented that she experienced kindness for the

first time in her life on that day when the Trio invited her into their home for some soup. In her own words, "It was the first time someone said '**Come**' and not '**Go!**'"

Daily the Lord provides us with opportunities to learn important life truths. I learned a truth one wintry day years ago at the hand of a child. Let me preface this story with two things: Missionaries with children seem to receive packages several times a year. As a single lady, not so much. The gifts tend to be monetary. To be perfectly honest, I know it makes way more sense to send a monetary gift rather than a package where the shipping will cost more than the contents itself, but the kid in me still loves it when one is delivered to the house. The second thing is that I love opening my home to the children of the missionaries I work with and the children that I minister to. I have toy boxes, a rocking horse, coloring/painting supplies, etc. that they love to play with. I want it to be a fun, safe place where they enjoy spending time. I also love displaying special treasures and decorations in my home. Since I do not want to have to put them up each time the children come over, I decided long ago to teach them what they were allowed to play with and what was "precious" and, therefore, valuable and not to be touched. It only took a couple of times of saying, "Don't play with that. That's Miss Shari's precious thing. Play with this instead" for them to know what they could and could not play with.

One day, a fellow missionary, her children, and I arrived back at my home after an outing. To my great surprise and delight I had a package on my porch for the first time in ages! I was so excited, as were the children. We all jumped out of the van, grabbed the package, and I proceeded to open it as soon as we were in the door. With eager eyes the children waited to see what contents the box from a church in the States held. There were a few bars of soap, some plain tea bags, a couple packs of pencils, and an angel doll. The doll's halo was tangled in its black hair that looked worn from being played with, and the dress made from white yarn was now a dingy gray and stained in several places with spaghetti sauce. I took one look at the doll and then at my friend in hopes that my disappointment didn't show. I thought, "Well, at least the children can play with it." I handed it to the girls and said, "Here you go, girls." Mary, who was five or six at the time, took it from my hands and with big questioning

eyes looked at me and said, "How come you don't think it's precious?" Out of the mouth of babes. I felt smitten in my heart for discarding a gift in such a manner. Someone had taken the time and paid the postage to send me this doll, and I took one look at, decided it wasn't precious or even wanted, and promptly discarded it.

Bible Study: God's Precious Packages

How many times do we quickly discard something, some situation, some trial, or someone because we don't feel they are "precious"? How many times do I look at the "gifts" or the "packages" God sends my way and with an ungrateful heart discard them as useless or of no value? The Bible says in James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

That day Mary taught me that all gifts are precious. She also taught me that kids see facts not flaws.

What Mary saw – **Fact:** A beautiful angel doll that is so "precious" I'll never be able to touch it.

What I saw – **Flaw:** A used toy that was of little worth or value.

Which view was true? They were both true for each of us, but that isn't the point. Which view is better? Mary's, of course. Sure the doll was slightly "loved" already, but that didn't hinder Mary from having fun playing with it.

I went on to ask myself these questions:

Which view shows a more gracious spirit?

Which view leads to a happier more content life?

Which view shows the Lord you trust Him and what He has for you today?

Sometimes the Lord brings "packages" into our lives that don't meet our high expectations, and sometimes it can be downright disappointing if we are not careful to view them correctly. I have known many people who have weathered the storm of a difficult situation to come out the other side and actually thank the Lord for the trial. Beforehand they never could have imagined that anything good could come out of it, but now as they see more clearly, they can see the value in it. Like Joseph, they can say, "...but God meant it unto good..."

The lady who sees facts not flaws and loves the "package" for all the potential it holds is the lady whom God can entrust with His most "precious packages." Life is made up and defined by what view we allow our eyes to see through. Every day I have a choice to look at life's packages through eyes that see only flaws or through eyes like Mary's that see only potential. Proverbs 17:8 "A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth."

My challenge to myself that day and to you as you read this is that when you go to open the next "package" that God sends your way, look at it through Mary's eyes and know that no matter what it is, it is a precious gift and that God means it for your good.

* The names in the "My Story" section have been changed to protect the innocent and the guilty. :).

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