

Episode 10

Faith in Action

THOMAS AND LINDA BRIGHTON – CHINA

[BEGIN MUSIC]

PRESIDENT MONSON (QUOTE): I extol those who with loving care and compassionate concern feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and house the homeless. He who notes the sparrow's fall will not be unmindful of such service.

NARRATOR: The Mormon Channel now presents Faith in Action.

[END MUSIC]

BOB HENDRICKS (HOST): Welcome to Faith in Action on the Mormon Channel, a show about welfare, humanitarian aid and service around the world. Today we welcome Thomas and Linda Brighton who served recently in China. Welcome, nice to have you here today.

LINDA BRIGHTON: Thank you.

THOMAS BRIGHON: It is nice to be with you.

BOB HENDRICKS: I always like to ask, and I will ask Sister Brighton this. The envelope comes in the mail. Which of you opened it? Which of you saw first? Did you read it? What happened?

LINDA BRIGHTON: We opened it together, and it was a great surprise. We had initially wanted to go to Finland, and so China was kind of at the opposite end of the world.

BOB HENDRICKS: Yes.

LINDA BRIGHTON: And I was a bit apprehensive about China because it is such a different culture, and I did not really know a lot about China, but we had committed to go wherever we were called, and we decided this would be an adventure, so we were willing to go. It has been a great experience.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: It was our second mission.

BOB HENDRICKS: Okay.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: And when the envelope came, we knew something was really wrong, because it was not thick enough. The missionary packet, you know, is a little booklet

BOB HENDRICKS: Oh, okay.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: This was, because it wasn't a mission. There is no mission there. There was only one page inside, so we knew something was amiss in this call. We had already served in Ireland and so we knew something different was coming.

BOB HENDRICKS: I noticed the tie that you are wearing with Chinese characters. Does it have a meaning?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: This is Mandarin, and it says "families can be together forever." The Chinese believe that.

BOB HENDRICKS: Right.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: They just don't know how it is going to work, and we knew the answer, but we could not tell them.

BOB HENDRICKS: You are not allowed to say?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Nope.

BOB HENDRICKS: Is that something you find in shop? I have never seen that before and I have been there.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: No, this is a church member entrepreneur in Hong Kong that made them.

BOB HENDRICKS: Okay, that is just fascinating. Okay, so the envelope is opened up and it is just one page and it just says Church humanitarian mission in China. It does not give you any idea what you are going to do or where you are going to go or anything like that?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Correct.

BOB HENDRICKS: So it is to just climb on the airplane and go to where?

LINDA BRIGHTON: Actually, we found out that we would have to teach English three days a week in one of the universities, so we got permission to go to the BYU Kennedy Center.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: The Kennedy Center English Teaching Program that they have. They have about 75 teachers around China that are on a one year teaching assignment. They have a training program in August. We were leaving in August, so the Church let us go to that training program and be English teachers.

BOB HENDRICKS: By the way they are recruiting for that right now. They are recruiting more people for that right now.

BOTH: Yes.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: I would tell you, Bob, my mother is 98. She thinks the funniest thing in her life is that her son would be an English teacher in a university.

BOB HENDRICKS: I see (Laughing). Alright, so we are going to teach English, so we go to BYU for awhile and take a couple of classes and then we go just directly to Beijing?

LINDA BRIGHTON: Beijing.

BOB HENDRICKS: Okay. Do you serve in Beijing right off that bat? What happens when you arrive?

LINDA BRIGHTON: When we arrived, the China Women's University met us at the airport along with the Church man that we would work with in the humanitarian efforts. So, they took us directly to the university where an apartment was there waiting all furnished and ready for us, so it was a very easy transition.

BOB HENDRICKS: Not too bad, except for the many, many hours on the airplane and lack of sleep and everything else. Of course, you probably stopped in Hong Kong first. Is that correct?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: No.

LINDA BRIGHTON: No.

BOB HENDRICKS: You did not have any meetings in Hong Kong? It was just straight to Beijing.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: No, we went right to Beijing.

BOB HENDRICKS: Oh, okay. So tell me a little bit about the apartment, a modern, new?

LINDA BRIGHTON: No, it was not modern or new, but it was very nice. It was well equipped. Of course, they don't have ovens there like we do, so there was a microwave.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: There was a Western toilet. We were very lucky.

LINDA BRIGHTON: Yes, we were very happy to have the Western toilet.

BOB HENDRICKS: Not just a hole in the floor.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: And there was a shower. There was not a shower stall, you just sort of showered in the bathroom, but there was a shower and hot water.

LINDA BRIGHTON: And the kitchen was fairly large, a nice sitting area and a nice sized bedroom.

BOB HENDRICKS: So your charge then is to teach English, so they lead you now out of this apartment and say "come let us show the classrooms", or what happens next?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Well, the apartment was in a girl's dorm. This is Women's University, so we were in a girl's dorm. It was about like being at a youth conference all the time. I mean there are lots of enthusiastic, noisy girls.

LINDA BRIGHTON: Noisy girls.

[ALL LAUGHING]

THOMAS BRIGHTON: We lived under the stairs, and they have hard shoes

LINDA BRIGHTON: Cement stairs.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: The building was five stories high, and we could hear the girls when they were five stories up start walking down the stairs, because we lived right under the stairs.

BOB HENDRICKS: Very interesting. Now you said three hours a day you taught English then. Is that correct?

LINDA BRIGHTON: Yes.

BOB HENDRICKS: Are they like an hour /55 minute period? Are they similar to our schools in structure?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: No, they have two hour block. The classes were for an hour and 40 minutes. Then they have a 20 minute break and they go on. China Women's University is a wonderful place. Many of the girls were from small rural villages. Some were the first girls that had ever gone to college. They were from a poor family, but from all over, and they were just glad to be able to have the opportunity of a university education.

BOB HENDRICKS: How are they selected? Does it happen in the villages? Is it a political situation? How are they selected?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: They take a test when they are in about the second year of the equivalent of our high school. Depending on how they score on the test, they are assigned a university, given the opportunity if they score high enough, assigned a university, assigned a subject they will major in and assigned the roommates. So they do not have to worry about making any choices, they just, for many they feel this is a great opportunity to get out of poverty.

BOB HENDRICKS: Certainly.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: And it is. We met girls from all over.

BOB HENDRICKS: Are they assigned what they are going to be, what they are going to be schooled in so there is no choice in this matter then?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: No, based on how they have scored, the others decide for them what it is they are going to do, so they do not have to worry about making a choice.

BOB HENDRICKS: That would be something. There is something to be said for that. You know, you are a young person wondering what to do with the rest of your life. I suppose if someone says here is a great opportunity, go do it.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: You know, it is kind of efficient because it is based on what their strong points are, but as I said, they are delighted with the opportunity to get an education. Many of them have parents and family that has never gone to college.

BOB HENDRICKS: And how old were they? I don't know if you told me that. I am sorry, teens mostly?

LINDA BRIGHTON: Well, late teens to early 20s.

BOB HENDRICKS: Is there like a male school that is adjacent somewhere? Do you recall?

LINDA BRIGHTON: No, no male school.

BOB HENDRICKS: These young women are just isolated in this school, and we are here to learn and that is all there is to it.

LINDA BRIGHTON: That's right.

BOB HENDRICKS: Oh, okay. So you finish the day teaching English. What happens to the rest of your day? What do you do then?

LINDA BRIGHTON: The rest of the day, well we only taught three days a week.

BOB HENDRICKS: Okay.

LINDA BRIGHTON: And luckily for us, it was just Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, because we did humanitarian the rest of the week.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: The agreement with the university was we had to be through teaching by noon on Wednesday, so we could then spend the next three days doing the humanitarian work.

LINDA BRIGHTON: So the rest of the day would be probably preparing for classes, the next day's classes or the next week's classes.

BOB HENDRICKS: Do they provide you with the lesson materials? Is it something you make up? How structured is that?

LINDA BRIGHTON: Well, for me it was not very structured. I just taught oral English. They gave me some manuals that I could use, but I was free to teach basically anything I wanted just to have the girls learn to speak English correctly. So we did all kinds of fun things.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Some of the manuals, though, were not very good.

LINDA BRIGHTON: They were outdated.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: One of her classes early on was in values, and the manual was 20 or 30 years old from Britain and not really relevant, so you pretty well created your own program

BOB HENDRICKS: And you had that freedom. There was nobody looking over your shoulder and saying...?

LINDA BRIGHTON: No, no I had the freedom.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: I am sure that they were following what we were doing, but there was never an issue or problem. I taught Business English. I have a business background, and there was never a problem. And it was a great opportunity, because if you look at the way they have learned before, it is all memorization. And the focus is just focused on learning data and both with business and values we could cause them to think about things and make decisions and evaluate things. So it is a great opportunity. It is lots of fun, and I am sure that both of us affected dozens, if not hundreds, of girls real thinking about life. It was very worthwhile.

BOB HENDRICKS: That is amazing. Did you teach for the full 18 months?

LINDA BRIGHTON: Yes.

BOB HENDRICKS: So then your humanitarian is on weekends basically Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or how does this work in?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: We were done at noon on Wednesday, so we could travel Wednesday afternoon to get where we needed to go for the Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

BOB HENDRICKS: Travel long distances?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: All over China. China is a big country.

BOB HENDRICKS: So who has made the agenda for you? Are you doing this, or is this coming from uh, where is this coming from?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: We were volunteers with LDS Charities, Latter-day Saint Charities.

BOB HENDRICKS: Right

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Latter-day Charities in China was partner with a local charity. Our partner was the Women's Federation. Women's Federation is the biggest women's group in the world, and we would pick the cities where there were Church members where we wanted to get some publicity or show the actions of the charitable Church members, and so we would pick the locations, and then they would find the most needy people and it worked really well.

BOB HENDRICKS: Interesting. Public transport or did you have an automobile? How did you get to these cities?

LINDA BRIGHTON: Usually we would fly. Luckily, we had an interpreter go with us wherever we went and we would fly and there would be a driver to pick us up and take us to the hotel and to the places we were going to meet.

BOB HENDRICKS: So you are on the road all the time then, basically it sounds like.

LINDA BRIGHTON: Quite often.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: It was lots of fun. We have lots of stories to tell.

LINDA BRIGHTON: It was lots of fun for him. These drivers are used to driving like 90 to 100 miles an hour.

BOB HENDRICKS: I am aware of that, yes.

LINDA BRIGHTON: And at times for me, I said "Tom, do something. Get me out of here."

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Well, one of them we were going to a city that was maybe 100 miles away, and we wanted to go by train. They have a wonderful high-speed train. We did not make the decisions, and so they got a car and driver, and this was a government car, so it was an Audi with blackened windows, and there is a motorway, a two lane motor way, but it is filled with trucks that are going maybe 40 to 50 miles an hour. So this driver honked his horn the whole way and he would drive 100 miles per hour and he assumed that if he honked loud enough, the trucks would kind of move, so he would drive in between the lanes or on the shoulders. Linda would grab my arm and say "Do something." I never figured out what something was.

BOB HENDRICKS: [Laughing] What do you want me to do? You were being protected.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: We had a guardian angel that worked overtime.

BOB HENDRICKS: You are listening to Faith in Action on the Mormon Channel. Today we are visiting with Thomas and Linda Brighton, who have recently returned from a humanitarian mission in Beijing, China. What kind of things did you do? How did you help?

LINDA BRIGHTON: Mainly, we delivered wheelchairs. That was our main project. We also did library books for migrant schools. We did some walkers for people who did not really need the wheelchair but needed assistance walking.

BOB HENDRICKS: Tell me about the library books.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Well, in China you do not have the right to move from one place to another, but if you live in the rural areas and you are poor, there is opportunity for work in the big cities. So you can move, but then you become a migrant worker, and if you are married and have a child, when you arrive at the city, you have no rights, so you have no right for an education for your child, and so your child goes to the school of a migrant worker, and there they have no resources, no money. So, literally, they have no books. So Latter-day Saint Charities provides the books, Chinese books. We have an approved list, and we have a local vendor who provides the books, and often the fathers would come and take scrap wood and build benches and build shelves so the school had some books. And the administration, the leaders of these schools were tremendously appreciative to have some basic resources to teach.

BOB HENDRICKS: The ... Beijing during the Olympics. That must have been quite an experience. To be there during that time and be able to help out.

LINDA BRIGHTON: It was. I think it was probably the most exciting thing that we did in China and rewarding too. We volunteered, and we were assigned to, because we did not speak, we were assigned to work in an office where we would write ... help me out.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Let me go back. One hundred thousand people, the Chinese really are wonderful volunteers. They wanted to have 100,000 volunteers. One point two million people signed up for those 100,000 spots. Only 200 of them are going to be foreign people. Twenty five of the 200 are going to be from the United States. We went in for the interview, and the first question is "Do you speak Chinese?" We said no, and they said "Well what are you doing here?" And we explained, and they were so intrigued that we were humanitarian volunteers so they accepted us. So now what do you do with this old couple who doesn't speak Chinese? We edited a newsletter for volunteers in English. So we wrote seven articles, we did interviews; we did all kinds of things. We had a great time. And we were in the venue that did water polo, and so we would go to work, and they would say "Well, today we would like you to teach a class to the doping center for the English words of doping." Because the volunteers there would not know the English words. And English and French are the two official languages of the Olympics, as well as Mandarin for the Beijing Olympics. So one day we went in and they said, "Tomorrow we would like you to teach all of the people that will interview the press at the water polo venue. All of the English words for water polo.

LINDA BRIGHTON: We had never seen a water polo match.

EVERYONE: [LAUGHING]

THOMAS BRIGHTON: We did not know the first thing about water polo.

BOB HENDRICKS: So you grab a book somewhere.

LINDA BRIGHTON: So we did our homework. We ran home.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Thanks to the internet.

EVERYONE: [LAUGHING]

BOB HENDRICKS: Very interesting. Did you get to go to any of the venues themselves? Did you see any of the events?

LINDA BRIGHTON: We did. We saw lots of the events, especially in our area. We saw lots of water polo, which was interesting. I had never seen a water polo match, but we were able to go to baseball and sand volleyball.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: We went to swimming events. We went to the birds nest.

LINDA BRIGHTON: Oh yes, track and field.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: I am not sure missionaries are supposed to have as much fun as we had.

BOB HENDRICKS: That sounds like it would be fascinating. We heard a lot about pollution in the city. Was it as bad as the media talked about, or was it not that bad?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Well during the Olympics it wasn't bad at all, but they were able to control things. In other words, they shut down businesses for months and they stopped most of the private cars from driving, and so they were able to control things. It is really a very interesting experiment, and frankly, the population of Beijing sort of liked the results.

BOB HENDRICKS: I bet they did.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: So now there are some issues.

LINDA BRIGHTON: They have a problem.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Yeah, because early in our mission, I mean there were some days when it was really terrible and many of the big cities of China have a serious issue, and they are starting to deal with that.

BOB HENDRICKS: I have been to a sacrament meeting or two in Hong Kong, which is now China. But in China itself, the Church is not officially recognized. Is that correct?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: That is correct.

BOB HENDRICKS: So there are no missionaries. If you have members there, they are people who have just moved back or moved into the area, or.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Well, there are two districts of foreign church members. They meet with permission, so there are various congregations in some of the bigger cities, three of which are in Beijing. Then there are a few Chinese nationals who have joined the Church in other countries and they are allowed under some guidelines to meet just among themselves.

BOB HENDRICKS: Interesting. Did you get a chance to go to any of the smaller meetings in Beijing? Were you allowed to go to those meetings?

LINDA BRIGHTON: We were not allowed to go to meet with the Chinese.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Our understanding was we would have no contact with the Chinese church members officially.

BOB HENDRICKS: Okay, interesting. Very interesting. I have had the opportunity to travel some in China and I can see the terrific need of assistance that they have when you see some of these villages, when you see the way people live. It is amazing to me how happy they seem to be. How grateful they are for what they have. So it must be for what you were doing, this must have been just to brighten anybody's day. This must have been terrific work for you to do.

LINDA BRIGHTON: It really was. We would go, and there would be a ceremony, and they would invite maybe 30 to 40 recipients who were going to receive the wheelchairs and we would have a ceremony. Then at the end we would go and meet each person individually. And the way they just shook our hand and tears flowed from their eyes. We could not understand what they were saying, but we knew it was really going to help them in their life, have a better quality of life.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: And there are just many, many specific examples, but tell them about the mother that carried her daughter to school.

LINDA BRIGHTON: At each ceremony, one of the recipients would give a talk, a speech. And this one girl, she was in her teens now, probably in an equivalent to high school said that her mother carried her for seven years on her back to school, and now she was so grateful that her mother did not have to carry her, that she could get herself to school. But afterward, after school she would have more opportunities in life to have a better life.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: This girl said, "Now I can be a better student and when I grow up I want to help handicapped people."

BOB HENDRICKS: So you can see the generation thing starting for what you have done.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Sure.

BOB HENDRICKS: You are going to help the next generation and the next generation who is going to help. So you really feel like you have accomplished something with this. Not just today but in the future.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: But this provides more self-reliance for people. We were in a home of a man in his early forties who was an orphan. He had no family, no running water, no electricity, cement little structure. And he wept because now with the wheelchair, he could go out

and repair shoes so he could help take care of himself. Wonderful stories. And China has a rather significant issue with disabled people. There is no Chinese word for disabled. It is called defective, but for defective people they do not have any social structure to really care for them essentially, and so there are a lot of them that are sort of left to fend for themselves, but a wheelchair provides them the means, the mobility to go out and earn a living and do things. They are very grateful.

BOB HENDRICKS: I am just trying to imagine your day. I wanted to ask about relationship with the students, with these young women. Do you have the opportunity to get close to them? Do they allow you to become close to them? This must be just something really pleasant for you.

LINDA BRIGHTON: I could get very close to the students I taught and some of them became really close friends and they asked for advice. They wanted to be my friend. I helped them learn to make cookies. I would bring them over to the apartment and we did a readers theater where it was a bakery, and I baked cookies for them, and they said “Oh can you teach me how to make these cookies?” So, I

THOMAS BRIGHTON: So, they have no ovens. Baking is not a normal concept.

LINDA BRIGHTON: And they don’t have chocolate chips, so I just said you take a candy bar and break it up, and that will work.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: But I remember one day when three of them were there, and you got a little hand mixer out.

LINDA BRIGHTON: Oh yes.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: And they had never seen something like that, and they were just stunned with the little hand beater.

BOB HENDRICKS: That is amazing. What kind of occupations were they studying for? Do you recall what kind of schooling were they taking?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: All of ours were English majors. They wanted the English majors to be able to talk and interact with someone that spoke, not a Chinese English teacher that may or may not have the grammar or the sentence structure totally correct, so all of ours were English teachers.

BOB HENDRICKS: They would be working then in the universities or in schools or in

LINDA BRIGHTON: Teaching. A lot of mine went into teaching English or be an interpreter in a company, in a large company.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Many of mine were studying because they wanted to get into business, and they wanted to speak well enough to qualify to work for foreign companies or be involved with commercial activities. China highly stresses the importance of students in all of the academic fields to learn English, and so most of these girls had studied for 8 to 10 years English, but we were for some the first English teachers that English was our native language.

BOB HENDRICKS: So there was some difficulties in the English that they had learned up to this point?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Their educational structure is to memorize and so they have memorized many, many English words. Putting them together into a sentence and talking about things was a little awkward. So they were mastering the art of that.

BOB HENDRICKS: You are listening to Faith in Action on the Mormon Channel. Today we are visiting with Thomas and Linda Brighton, who have recently returned from a humanitarian mission in China.

LINDA BRIGHTON: Well, I was just going to say when you asked me about the relationship with the girls, I had two special relationships with two different students, and one was a girl who came to the United States. They have work programs for these girls to come to the United States and work for the summer, and Zilo was assigned to go to Albany, New York.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: This girl was given the opportunity to come and work for the summer, and she said. She came to us one day and she said “I have two choices, I can work for McDonalds in Albany, New York, or I can go to Yellowstone National Park”, and we said “Oh, go to Yellowstone National Park. You will meet many people.” She said, “Oh, my teacher says it has dangerous animals and it is too scary to go there.”

LINDA BRIGHTON: So she signed up for Yellowstone, but she didn’t get it. She got Park City, Utah.

BOB HENDRICKS: Oh.

LINDA BRIGHTON: And she came to us and said “What is this? How is Park City? I am nervous about going there. I don’t know anybody.” We said, “You will love Park City.” We had our daughter meet her at the airport; take her up to Park City. We helped her find a place to live.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: The young single adult organization befriended her.

LINDA BRIGHTON: She fell in love with the people there, the young people that she met. She came down to BYU and finally she came back and had had a wonderful experience and said “I want to go to BYU”, and we said that would be very difficult to get in to, but would you think of going, consider BYU Hawaii? She did. She is there now. She is loving it.

BOB HENDRICKS: What happens now when she goes home? Is she ostracized by the rest of the family, by the community? What happens to her now in China?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Well, the rest of the family, in other words, she is the only child. Her parents were very reluctant. First of all, they contributed their entire life savings for her to spend a year and a half at BYU Hawaii. The rest of the time she would have to earn the money to finish her education. They were very reluctant to have her come to America. And if she did, they wanted her to go to one of the very best universities. Interestingly, BYU has a tremendous reputation because of the Young Ambassadors. They are one of the first traveling groups that was allowed in the 60’s and they are well-known. So when the parents heard about that, they talked to some of their friends and they said, “Well maybe

it is okay to go to BYU Hawaii.” She is studying Business Finance there. She is at the top of her class. She is doing very well.

BOB HENDRICKS: Very, very interesting. What a fascinating, what stories she has to tell when she gets back.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Now we know another young man who came to do a similar thing in the Northwest, and he is finishing a Master’s Degree and his desire would be to go back to his home village and start a school using maybe different educational techniques. He will need some funding for that, but he is highly excited about going back and bringing the rest of the world into his village, in terms of creating a school.

BOB HENDRICKS: Besides the wheelchairs, what other things were you involved in? What other projects?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: There was another really interesting one in Beijing. There is a problem with the migrant workers’ wives. In other words, the husband does construction work. The wife has nothing to do and can’t easily get a job because she has no education, no skills. So a few years ago, a trial program was begun to teach these women how to make local handicrafts and then create an organization to sell those materials. That has worked reasonably well and looks quite promising and we were working to expand that and then help local Chinese church leaders do a similar thing in rural villages all over the country. Now that presents some challenges in terms of marketing and selling and distribution and things, but there is some very encouraging ways of helping some of these humble, simple people be able to do things. Because they write in characters, their ability to do fine work is much better than Western people, and so they can create some handicrafts that are really quite spectacular.

BOB HENDRICKS: In my experience, things in China are changing so rapidly, especially in the big cities. Some of the times I have been there have been separated by months, and yet you see the automobiles that are there that were not there last time, and the comforts that the middle, I would imagine the middle class has. Things are just happening so quickly in China now.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: They clearly are for the people in the cities. You know half or two-thirds of the people live in the villages and they are left behind. And their standard of living is improving slightly, but they are still living in poverty. They managed to eke out a living on less than two acres of land and growing what they can to support their family and that is a challenge.

BOB HENDRICKS: And they depend on mother nature to make sure that is going to happen and the temperature, the rains. There are so many factors that present a problem. Anything else in the humanitarian that you were involved with?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Uh, no.

BOB HENDRICKS: Basically those two areas.

LINDA BRIGHTON: The three. The wheelchairs, the library books, and the

BOB HENDRICKS: Okay, I forgot about the library books.

LINDA BRIGHTON: That was fun because we would have a ceremony there and all the students would be there, and they would receive their books. They had their books, you know, all tied up in a little package, and they were very excited about it. And then they would take us to a classroom and have us talk to the students in the classroom and kind of like just teach them English and let them respond. It was a fun, fun thing to do.

BOB HENDRICKS: Do you have an interpreter with you everywhere you go to help?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Some of the times we didn't, but most of the time we did.

BOB HENDRICKS: I found when I was there that they spoke enough English that you could get by for the most part.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: And the young people, you know, if we were lost we would just stand with a lost look on our face and someone would come up and say, "May I help you?" They were very helpful people. They are wonderful people. When they had this tremendous earthquake several years ago in Sichuan Province, the Church has a warehouse for humanitarian materials in Hong Kong. That had been depleted because Myanmar had a cyclone two weeks earlier and so 600 members of the Church in Hong Kong traveled over to Shenzhen and made 10,000 humanitarian kits of water, food, raincoats, blankets in a manner of two days so there would be supplies to be sent to the people. They really are wonderful people trying to look after themselves.

BOB HENDRICKS: Is there a need for humanitarian missionaries every day in China? Could we send more, or are we only allowed to send so many? Do you know how that works?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: We are allowed to send two couples. Two couples. So the Colemans were there while we were there, and they had 850 million people, and we had 850 million people to look after. (Laughing)

LINDA BRIGHTON: And they did water projects, water, fresh water to villages.

BOB HENDRICKS: We are hearing about that so much in the interviews that I have done, and water seems to be just so important around the world. Interesting.

LINDA BRIGHTON: Another experience that I had with a student was I was asked to teach at the freshman... The freshmen met in another location, and I was asked to teach one semester at that location. and it was 45 minutes from the main campus, so for me to take a taxi there every day was just too big a challenge, so they....

THOMAS BRIGHTON: And see I am off teaching. This is not stay with your companion mission

LINDA BRIGHTON: I know.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: I am off teaching another class, and Sister Brighton is off

LINDA BRIGHTON: Going 45 minutes north, and so they had a senior student come with me, and she and I became great friends, and I would have her help me teach. I would give her assignments,

and she loved it. So we became really close, and she would tell me a lot about her family, and so in the summer time she invited us to go down and meet her family, which was in a village several hours east of Beijing. So we went, and we went by train, but when we got to the main city, and I cannot remember the name right on the coast, we had to take a bus for about an hour and a half or two hours, and it was the scariest experience I have ever had in my life.

BOB HENDRICKS: Because of the road conditions, or?

LINDA BRIGHTON: The road conditions

THOMAS BRIGHTON: This bus was made before you were born.

BOB HENDRICKS: That's old, okay.

LINDA BRIGHTON: It was packed with people. They stopped at every stop, and it was literally standing room only crowded and, anyway, we survived that.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: And it has a toilet.

BOTH: On the floor.

LINDA BRIGHTON: But being with her family was just a choice experience. We stayed in a hotel, but they had just moved from the place they had lived in a factory housing, they had lived all her life, and they had just moved to an apartment in the village. And so we had dinner with them. They were so kind to us. They took us to see all the sights. We went to a winery that is famous in China. They took us to the grandfather's farm, which was...

THOMAS BRIGHTON: We dug sweet potatoes on the two-acre farm with grandpa. They tell us, I mean, Lydia would say we were the first Western people ever to come to that town. We were stared at. You know we were the odd people, but for her family that was just an unspeakable honor to have the foreign Western teachers come to visit their home, and they were incredibly kind to us.

BOB HENDRICKS: That would be amazing. So you were the hit of the whole village at that point.

LINDA BRIGHTON: It was a great experience.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Now, the farm was about 75 miles away from where they lived at the fertilizer factory. And because they were rural people, they were labeled to have two children. The family would ride to visit grandpa on one bicycle, four people, 75 miles.

BOB HENDRICKS: And they would do that often?

LINDA: I don't know about often, but as Lydia grew up that is what she remembered.

BOB HENDRICKS: Wow

THOMAS BRIGHTON: We felt sorry for the students at our university because they lived with very little, until we went to her home when we saw that she had even less growing up.

BOB HENDRICKS: So they were really blessed to be in the university setting?

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Absolutely.

LINDA BRIGHTON: Oh yes.

BOB HENDRICKS: And blessed to learn the language from people who actually speak the language. It is a great blessing for them.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: Well, and they highly esteem teachers in their culture, but the relationship with teachers is not one of warmth and caring, and they just responded to the personal interest and willingness to help. So, there were real relationships made.

BOB HENDRICKS: That is great. You have been listening to Faith in Action on the Mormon Channel. We are talking today with Thomas and Linda Brighton, who recently returned from a humanitarian mission in China. Thank you for coming by. We appreciate you.

THOMAS BRIGHTON: You are welcome.

[BEGIN MUSIC]

NARRATOR: You have been listening to Faith in Action on the Mormon Channel.

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