

REALLY

SEEING

THE

GOSPEL

By Jess Verzello







## A YOUNG MAN FROM CHINA WHO IS BLIND SEES

A LOT BETTER THAN MANY PEOPLE.

Imagine that at 13 years old you move 6,700 miles (10,782 kilometers) across the world to a new home and a new family. You have to learn a new language and culture and eat unfamiliar foods. And you can't physically see any of it.

You might be thinking, "How could anyone do something so hard?" Well, meet Conner—a cool, carefree, and cheerful teen from Wuhan, China.

### AN INCREDIBLE TALENT

Conner was raised in a foster home in China. When he was six years old, his foster family discovered that he had an incredible ear for music. And being blind didn't stop him from pursuing his musical talent. He took piano lessons and began attending a special school for the blind.

But just a month before he turned 14, his foster father showed up at Conner's school and pulled him out of class. "He said that I was going to be adopted and that I needed to go home right away," Conner says. His friends, family, and teachers got together the next day and said their goodbyes as a new chapter began in Conner's life.

*Wuhan, China, cityscape*





Herriman, Utah, cityscape



Conner's family

## A NEW FAMILY

Conner found himself half a world away in Herriman, Utah. His new family included Dad (Jeremy), Mom (Christianne), six new sisters, and three new brothers. And Conner wasn't the only child from China—six of his new siblings had been adopted from there as well.

Christianne explains, "People say that our kids are so lucky to have a family, but Conner had to leave everything that was familiar to him—a foster family who loved him, food, culture, friends—to come to this family that he didn't

know. It was a huge change, and we feel very blessed to have Conner and all the kids in our home. They're a gift."

## A DESIRE TO KNOW

Conner's new family got up every Sunday morning, put on their nice clothes, and went to church. "At first, church was really hard," Conner says. Sitting for three hours with no idea what was going on wasn't easy. "I wanted to know what they were talking about."

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Conner with Sister Jin

But he began to understand and feel a desire to learn more about the gospel. His parents called the mission president and asked if Conner could have Mandarin speaking missionaries teach him the discussions. And it just so happened that a sister missionary, Sister Jin, was available to teach him.

On their first visit, Sister Jin and Conner were talking to each other in Mandarin when they suddenly started jumping up and down with huge smiles on their faces. They were from the same town in China! "Finding out that they're from the same city, love the same foods, and knew the same places was so special," said Christianne.

"I'm so lucky," said Conner, "I had a great missionary who taught me everything about Jesus. And when I started to learn about Him, I was so happy. I didn't know anything about Him. My mom taught me how to pray, then Sister Jin taught me simple things. It just started with wanting to learn the gospel."





HEAVENLY FATHER KNOWS YOU AND HE

LOVES YOU, AND HE EVEN KNOWS

WHAT YOUR FAVORITE FOOD IS.



*The day Conner was sealed to his parents*



*At Conner's baptism*

## AN ANSWER TO PRAYER

Conner was learning so many new, wonderful things, but he had a hard time understanding a key principle. “There’s just so many people,” he says. “How could God know everything about *me*?” So he asked the missionaries.

Sister Jin and her companion prayed to know how they could show Conner that Heavenly Father cares about him personally. Inspiration hit. Conner had recently shared with them how he felt homesick for China and missed his favorite Wuhan noodles.

The missionaries prayed, asking Heavenly Father to help them find these noodles. A couple hours before their next lesson with Conner, Sister Jin and her companion felt impressed to walk to an area they didn’t regularly visit. Not long after they got there they were approached by a Chinese family. It turned out they were from Wuhan, too!

Sister Jin told them about Conner and how he missed his homeland. The family went to their car, pulled out a bag full of Wuhan noodles, and asked Sister Jin to give them to Conner.

Later, during their lesson with Conner, Sister Jin told him, “Conner, Heavenly Father knows you and He loves you, and He even knows what your favorite food is.” Then she handed him the bag.

“When she gave me the bag of noodles, it was very special,” Conner says. “I really felt the Spirit and knew in that moment that God really knows me.”

### A BRIGHT FUTURE

Conner was soon baptized and sealed to his family in the Salt Lake Temple. “I have a great family. I don’t say that a lot in front of people, but it’s true—it’s always a party! I feel like I chose this family. I waited a long time for them. Everything is so good now.”

Now that he’s 17 and a priest, Conner blesses the sacrament alongside his quorum members. “It’s cool to bless the sacrament. My brother Taylor helps me. I love to bless the sacrament and see everybody have the bread and water and become clean. Because that’s what it’s for—to help us to become clean.”

Conner’s testimony of the gospel is strong and pure. He loves to pray, ask for blessings when he needs help with something, and study his scriptures. “I can read even when all the lights are out!” he jokes.

After high school, Conner wants to serve a mission and then go to BYU or Julliard. “I would love to be a piano teacher or just perform.”

Getting there won’t be easy, but Conner believes in exercising his faith—and doing something about it. “Life is difficult sometimes,” he says. “You just have to have fun with it even when it’s hard. If you have a hard time, talk to Heavenly Father, and He can give you advice or let other people help you. Try to be happy every day, even when it’s hard.” **NE**

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*



*Conner blessing the sacrament*



*Conner and his bishop*