

Gladys Aylward

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Part 3



With Jeannie Lawson gone, Gladys Aylward wasn't sure she could keep the inn running and tell others about Jesus. She wanted to travel to other villages to tell them about God's love, but at that time in that part of China, women weren't supposed to go places by themselves. She prayed for God to show her what to do next.

Then one morning, she got an unexpected visit from the Mandarin—the government leader of Yangcheng! Gladys bowed many times. She wasn't sure what to do or why this man was visiting her.

Finally, the Mandarin spoke: “I need a foot inspector. We have orders from the new government of China to stop the foot binding of baby girls. I need someone who will travel to all the villages and tell of this new law.”

Foot binding was an ancient custom in China. Women would wrap the feet of their daughters in tight cloths before they were old enough to walk. As they grew, this kept their feet from growing. They thought tiny feet were a sign of beauty and would help them marry rich husbands. But wrapping up feet like this actually hurt the girls and made it hard for them to walk when they were grown up. All the women in the area had their feet bound when they were children, and they did it to all their daughters too. Because of their small feet, the women who lived in this part of China couldn't walk very far. This is why the Mandarin needed Gladys's help—her feet were normal sized, and she could walk to all the villages nearby. And because she was a woman, she could talk freely to the Chinese women she met.

“You will receive food, a mule to ride to the villages farther away, and two soldiers to guard you,” the Mandarin explained. “Will you do it?”

At first, Gladys didn't know what to say. She was here to tell people about Jesus, not work for the Mandarin. But she knew that foot binding was a harmful practice and that this job, with the guards to escort her, would allow her to go places she couldn't go on her own. It would also pay her enough to keep the inn running.

This is the answer to my prayer!
Gladys realized. *I can preach the Gospel wherever I go and be paid by the government to do it!*

“Yes, Mandarin,” she said. “I will be the foot inspector as long as I may also teach the people I visit about the Lord Jesus.” What would the Mandarin say to that?

He shrugged and said, “That is all right with me.”

Gladys must have been so happy! She began to travel to the different villages, and all the people would gather to hear what she had to say.

“God created all babies, boys and girls, with feet the same—and He wants their feet to remain the same,” she would tell them. She would then teach them about God. Gladys would go to different houses and tell the women “Take off the bandages, and let the girls learn to walk. God made little girls' feet to run and play, not to sit in pain. God loves you and He sent His Son, Jesus, for you.”

Gladys unbound many feet, telling the children, mothers, and fathers of the love of Jesus. As she travelled to the villages around Yangcheng, the people's respect for her grew and many turned to Jesus, trusting in Him as their Savior.

You might think that with all these amazing ways God was using Gladys, she was probably happy all the time. But this time was also hard for Gladys, and some days she felt very lonely. She wondered if God remembered her.

Would God help Gladys? Come back next time to find out!

