

CCCNJ Summer Missions



Big Challenges... even Bigger God

Compass Program: Mexico

Patrick Ma

My name is Patrick Ma and I had the privilege to go on missions this summer along with Tiffany Tsui and Vincent Chang. Compass was a month long program that was split into three parts aimed to help Christian youth leaders identify their call to ministry in three different settings.

The first of these settings was La Vida. La Vida deals with the process of Experimental Discipleship helping youth experience substance and deeper meaning to their grasp of Christianity. In other words, it challenges Christians to do more than just recite biblical principles and concepts, but also apply them in a challenging environment. It was during this time that I was challenged the most. I have never been challenged physically to this extent before. I would say what we went through, but I don't want to ruin the surprise for future applicants. It was during those 9 days of hiking that a strong sense of community, and trust were built. The solo day, which called for us to fast and be solitary for over 24 hours allotted time for me to reflect about my spiritual state, relationship with people at home, and discover my dependence on God. The last day of La Vida required all of us to participate in a 8.6 mile run. As I ran I prayed and worshipped, asking for the strength to not stop running for our God does not deserve anything other than our best. I ran for my accountability group back home, thinking every time I wanted to stop, it was a spiritual attack wanting me to give up. When I reached the finish line, the sense of accomplishment along with the pleasure in knowing that I had pleased the Lord was one of the most gratifying experiences in my life.

Next, we move onto the second part of the Compass Real Ministry Immersion. After La Vida we returned to Gordon College near Boston for over a week. This was a opportunity for us to saturate ourselves with theological and biblical concepts. the Gordon Conwell Seminary faculty were there to lead us in morning lectures, and afternoon Bible studies. Some of the basic topics I already knew, yet I was challenged nonetheless. However, new ideas regarding how to live in a biblical reality, to have heart to heart relationship with Christ, and understanding and applying God's revelation to us opened my eyes. There is so much more I can expand and get into about what I have learned, but that would require way too much time. So basically, I learned a lot in terms of biblical knowledge that week. My understanding of God was stretched, and my foundation was solidified.

The part of the Compass program was the actual mission trip to Mexico. This was the service aspect of the month. We lived in Puebla, which as a city of about 2-3 million on the outskirts of Mexico City. We would be trained by in the morning, and have the opportunity to evangelize in the afternoon. The street evangelism format is very basic. We would go to a park, start playing sports, invite people to play, and then stop, and perform our prepared mimes. This was challenging for me in many aspects. I felt helpless because I did not know any Spanish. Last year, I went to Taiwan, and it was such a fun and easy experience in regards to cultural adaptation. In Mexico, it was hard to take charge and be a vocal leader. When our Mexican coworkers were passionately preaching, all I could do was watch and pray. Overall, it was a very humbling experience for me for it showed that God doesn't really need me in order for Him to reveal His Glory. Rather, it is a privilege that I have the opportunity to serve Him.

I am leaving a lot of things out due to time restraints, but feel free to email me or question me about Compass. And for the youth, I really encourage everyone to apply! Thank you.

Taiwan Village Gospel Missions

July 7 – July 23, 2006



Testimony: 2006 Taiwan VGM Missions

I-Fang Cheng

Praise the Lord for all that God is doing in Taiwan and for allowing me to glimpse a little of His glory in my home country.

Prior to my trip to Taiwan, I secretly prayed for three things. The first was for restored joy in working with children. My heart had been embittered over the past year and I felt as if I were already a very jaded individual at the age of 23! I had always been an optimistic person, full of laughter and joy, but somehow I felt my entire person had changed over the past year. What I really wanted to become was more childlike in my perception of the world - to be able to continue to see God at work all around me, not just see the effects of human mistakes. The second was for spiritual growth and maturity. The third was to see where God was leading my future. God has answered the first two very clearly; the third, I'm still waiting patiently for his response.



The first time our team stepped out of our bus in Da(4) Bi(1) and met our Taiwan co-workers, I remember thinking how despite the fact we live on the other side of the world, because of Jesus' love, we are all so similar. Jesus' love as cross-cultural was a consistent theme across my entire two weeks in Taiwan.

In the first week, that theme was played out in so many different ways. The pastor and his family who sponsored the camp in Da(4) Bi(1) were Korean, yet because of their calling to be missionaries in Taiwan, they have built a home and loved Taiwan for many years. The relationship between the American and Taiwanese co-workers never skipped a beat; we meshed from the beginning - all because of our shared love for Jesus and our willingness to serve each other. I saw that children were children no matter where they grew up - that although Taiwan had a stricter education system, the children in Taiwan were just as playful, just as caring, just as imaginative. And I was able to listen to one mother's testimony of how she became Christian and through my interaction with her, she gave me my greatest encouragement on the field - she said that she had always thought Americans were selfish and materialistic, but that I had changed her entire perception of Americans. I know this could only happen because Jesus' love is flowing through us.

In the second week, the theme continued in Chi(1) Gu(3). The second week, my small group of children performed the song Jesus Loves Me - first in Mandarin, then in English, and finally in Taiwanese. While practicing the song in the classroom, I remembered thinking and then sharing with my children, how I grew up in the church in America singing Jesus Loves Me, and how my Taiwan co-workers grew up in the church in Taiwan singing the same song - how amazing it is that despite living so far apart in dissimilar cultures, Jesus is able to cross that barrier and give us similar experiences of His love.

While God was still scraping away the bitterness the first week, by the second week, my heart was ready to love my children the way Jesus loved me. This love came at a key moment, because my small group of children the second week were out of control! But I loved them SO much more. Even still, because I was emotionless for the past year, I was unprepared for the tears that flowed out of my eyes the last day I was with my children. I know this was all God, because I remember thinking inside - what am I crying about? But I could feel God's outpour of His love for his children and the families in Taiwan - so although my human nature was fighting the tears, God's love for his children was flowing through me. God had answered my first prayer - despite so many circumstances that could have continue to cause me to be bitter, God broke my heart and gave me His love to love my children.

One of my biggest lessons throughout the two weeks was trusting in God - that He would be in control. It seems so simple, but for a perfectionist like me, not being in control is very painful. Going into the mission trip, I knew that I had a lot of responsibilities, but despite all that I had to do, throughout the entire trip, I was very much at peace. In fact, I might have enjoyed this missions trip too much J; there were just simply too many blessings! All the prayer time at the two camps helped to put my thoughts into perspective. I learned the lesson that God did not need me to accomplish His work, but He allows me to come along and join in on His work to grow me and develop a relationship with me. So if God was going to get His work done with or without me then my sole responsibility was to simply be prepared, and leave the result to God. God did not expect me to perform miracles; He simply asks me to obey whole-heartedly. God's timing is so perfect - this lesson is one I direly needed as I prepare to return for another year in Louisiana.

As for my third prayer request, I am still patiently waiting for the response. Though God has placed people on my trip who were able to advise me to keep a close walk with God to see where He is leading.

I just want to thank you for all your prayers and financial support. Without you, my missions experience would not have been possible. God had answered all our prayers and exceeded all our expectations. I pray you have been encouraged through the email updates and this letter to know the amazing works He is doing in Taiwan. Hopefully, if you get a chance in the future, you will visit Taiwan yourself and see firsthand how beautiful the country is, how beautiful the people are, and how such a beautiful country and people could use a beautiful God like Jesus. The need for missionaries in Taiwan is still great, but the hearts are ready and the harvest is plentiful!

Testimony: 2006 Taiwan VGM Missions

James Yao

(I am writing this as if I was speaking. So please don't take grammar and mechanics into account)

Before I decided to go on missions again this year, I was wondering where God wanted me to go. At the time, I saw Kyrgyzstan as the more difficult field. I saw Taiwan as the easier one, the one that I myself would selfishly want to go on, just because I've had experience with VGM, and you know, it's Taiwan! Eventually I decided to put Taiwan as my 1st preference on my application, because I just felt like my heart leaned more towards that country. So, I got my preference, and I was put on Taiwan VGM Team 2006.

So, obviously I was happy. I was satisfied with who my team was composed of, and I was really confident, actually over confident. Because of my previous years of experience in VBS, VGM, and Kyrgyzstan, I wasn't too worried. I just thought, "Oh, I've been to Taiwan VGM before, and I've had so much experience with kids over the years. Piece of cake!" There was one thing that did worry me though. On my last mission trips, I was one of the youngest. This year was different: I was one of the oldest. This put more pressure on me, just because generally, the older you are, the more expected from you. But overall, I went into training and the missions field with a somewhat lenient attitude. Compared to VGM 2004, and Kyrgyzstan 2005, I prayed the least this year for VGM 2006. That definitely hurt me personally when I got onto the missions field.

On July 7, we departed for Taiwan, and eventually to our first field - Da Pi. Like I said before, I went into VGM with the lenient mindset that it'd be easier than previous missions trips. It's funny when God strikes down your expectations. I remember the first day very clearly. One by one, the kids of my group would come together. At first I was so happy, because my group was so active and so into everything that we did. The day however, resulted into a horrible day for me. I realized during the times we don't split off into our own classrooms, my group was always so into the activities, and they would behave so well. However, it was during the times we did split into our own groups in our individual classrooms where the kids didn't behave and things got soooooo hectic! The boys were always so bad, rambunctious, and noisy. The girls never wanted to pay attention or be involved. I found out that during last years camp, my boys were the worst kids in the camp, and somehow this year, they were all put into my group. Coincidence? I knew it was all God, and He got me where it hurt the most.

Afterward, I was SOOOO physically exhausted, so depressed. I was humiliated and just frustrated. I've had four years experience with kids, and I still couldn't control this group. Just thinking that I had another three days left to take care of these kids freaked me out. The rest of the day I fell apart. I had an emotional breakdown. I didn't want to talk to anybody, nor did I want to do anything. I wanted to give up all of a sudden and just go home. I remember all of us American and Taiwanese workers specifically praying for my group and kids. My own co workers and I prayed a lot for the next day and our own hearts that we would be able to show more discipline. That night for an hour, I talked to Charles and asked him to pray for me because I didn't feel any better. I spent the rest of the night personally praying. I guess what I was most troubled about was changing the way I acted towards the kids. I'm very easygoing, very lenient. I had to show more discipline. It was funny talking about this, but my co workers specifically asked me to look meaner and not smile as much. All these things I was really reluctant to do, but I prayed to God for courage, initiative, and motivation to make the right choice for how I was going to act.

I woke up the next morning still miserable and reluctant to go to the camp. But of course, I went. I remember walking in, and I was scared of seeing my kids, scared to experience a repeat of the day before. I was dreading that time when we would be dismissed to our individual classrooms. But those 2-3 hours in the classroom turned out to be a miracle. I witnessed such a drastic turn in character from my kids. The day before they were worst kids I had ever met. That day, they were the most behaving little rascals ever. They listened, they participated, they behaved! I couldn't believe it. Even my co workers were so surprised. I don't know if it was God's supernatural power working or if it was his hand working through us co workers. Either way, God was amazing that day. He answered all our prayers straight up, and I witnessed a miracle. I was soooooo happy when the day ended. My team noticed it and everybody else noticed how different I was compared to the day before. Me and my co workers were literally jumping up and down and laughing and smiling every so often. The rest of the week was splendid. I loved my kids, and I loved my co workers.



So as you can see, great difficulties on a missions trip also come with great blessings. What blessed me most during our week at Da Pi was our team's relationship with our Taiwanese co workers. It's funny how God works, because the co workers He put me with were just like me. Out of all the Taiwanese co workers, they were the ones who laughed, and joked the most. So, during our sharing, meetings, and everything, we'd always be loud and laughing. What made me even happier was that they were Christian and we would all worship and praise the Lord together. I also had another co worker who I worked with two years ago, and it was such a blessing to work with her again. I've never gotten so close with my co workers on any trip before. The rest of my team was the same, we all became so close with our co workers that it was extremely hard and teary to leave them.

Our second camp, Chi Gu, was very, very different. I'll start with our living conditions first. At our first camp, Da Pi, we lived in a "Bushi Ban" (Mandarin), basically a small building where we slept on the upper floors (which were small classrooms), so it was comfortable enough (We had air conditioning). In Chi Gu, we actually lived at the elementary school. If you've never seen a Taiwanese elementary school, it's a lot dirtier and more run-down than most American schools. We slept in classrooms and we were much more vulnerable to bugs and insects. The most interesting part of our living conditions was our shower. We basically hooked up two hoses to the sink faucets in the bathroom and threw the hoses over the doors of the "Squatty-potty" (The squat toilets) stalls and that was our shower. Basically stood over the squatty-potties and used the hose to rinse us down. Yeah, it was kind of weird.

Unlike the first camp, I think generally most of us became more attached with the kids than we did with the co workers. We all agreed that the kids in Chi Gu were a lot more behaving and calmer than the ones in Da Pi. Therefore, it was easier to get really attached to such cute, behaving kids. My interaction with my kids was a lot better than the previous week. However, I believe God wanted me to focus on something specific that week. I had a co worker in my group named Emma. She is 30 years old and she's been teaching in elementary school for about eight years now. So of course, she's had a lot of experience with children, and I was so impressed watching her work with the kids during the week. Not only was she so proficient with children, she had the ability to solidly share the Gospel. Not only was she able to share with the kids, but we had an opportunity to share with our kid's mother. In my group was a boy named Kevin. He was very, very good, active, participant, and behaving, and he was easily my favorite. One day he invited Emma, me, and my other co worker to his house. We spent about two hours at his house talking to his mother. I kind of felt bad, because 99% of the time it was Emma talking to her. For about an hour, Emma shared with her about the Gospel, and I was just so amazed by Emma's determination and ability. By the end of the day, Kevin's mother decided to accept Christ into her heart and start going to church. That was the first time I have ever eye-witnessed somebody accept Christ. What made me even more attached to the situation was realizing that Kevin was a lot like me (His mother said so). We prayed for Kevin's mother and their family, and I prayed earnestly for Kevin's heart. I was so confident that He would grow up to become a strong Christian. I kept relating myself to him and I was just so glad thinking about what he would grow up to be. Just watching and witnessing my co worker Emma work with kids and share Christ made me even more motivated and willing to become like her.

So what did I learn from this trip? One definite lesson was the power of prayer. I learned I can't depend on my own self and experience in life. He showed me what it can do (The transformation of my Da Pi kids, Kevin and his mother, relationship with co workers, etc.). Again and again, God continues to stress the importance of prayer in my life. He also taught me about the power of taking initiative. So many times I had to choose whether to get out of my comfort zone and go out of my way to do something (like being meaner to the kids and showing more discipline, or just talking to as many kids/co workers as possible) The difficulty was having the courage to take initiative. It sure is motivating to realize that there's nothing to lose. God would always repeat in my head, "What's more important to you, a chance to glorify God, or to continue life in your own selfish comfort?" I continue to experience and witness God's grace. He was gracious in providing me with such a fun, mature, compatible team. He was gracious in providing us with such close, fun co workers. He was gracious in providing me with co workers who I could relate to, get close to, and work so well with. He was gracious in providing me with a co worker that taught me how to work with kids and share the Gospel. Overall when it comes to me personally growing through my missions experience, I definitely learned and experienced the most during this trip. My first VGM trip was where God was teaching me about His grace and His presence. My Kyrgyzstan trip was where God was teaching me about what is really happening in the world and how He's still present. This year, God was teaching me personally how to become a better missionary, a better Christian. I guess in a way, He was growing me on a more personal level this year, and I definitely got so much out of it.



As of now, this might be my last mission trip for awhile. However, I really hope He will continue to grow me and mature me as a servant of Christ. I hope when He sends me out again, I'll be much more mature in decision making and I really hope I'll be able to solidly share the Gospel. Even if I'm not able to go on missions in the near future, I really hope He uses me to help in missions work here at home, whether through evangelism or even preparing others to go on missions. So yeah, all in all, I hope I continue to honor and worship in everything I do.

Testimony: 2006 Taiwan VGM Missions

Stephen Xia

Hey everybody, this is Stephen Xia, and this is my missions report. First off, I'd like to thank everyone who was a part of this missions trip, including those who prayed and gave us encouragement, those who inspired us to go on missions, those who gave financially, those who were in charge of training, and those who were in charge of planning, both the Taiwan and Krygystan teams, and last but not least, God (we save the best for last). Without all of this support, none of this would be possible.

When I first thought about going on missions, my spiritual life was really at a low point, and it really was a desert experience. My spiritual life was dry, and I wasn't sure what to do about it. In fact, I wasn't even sure if I wanted to continue walking the Christian walk, and I was thinking about just abandoning the faith altogether. When I shared this with my friend Todd, he told me that I really oughta try missions, because he told me that every time he went on missions, he was able to see God at work, and it changed his life every time. At that moment in time, I wasn't sure if God was really with me, and I felt like He wasn't really there. I figured that I really had nothing to lose, and decided that I would spend the next couple months (that was January) preparing for missions. I thought to myself that if God didn't reveal Himself to me, and if I couldn't see that He was real, then I'd just forget about this whole faith thing.

The first couple training sessions on Saturdays were pretty good, because for a really long time, I hadn't had devotions, and I wasn't surrounded with people who were serious about knowing God and fellowshiping with Him. It felt pretty nice to go and fellowship with other Christians and be able to just be alone and have some quiet time... but it wasn't enough, and I didn't really feel that God was totally real yet. However, when I went to the intensive training for the first time, I really got a wake-up call. Throughout all of the days of intensive training, I learned so many things about myself and about God. I saw my own weakness, but at the same time, I also learned to depend on God for strength. I learned about encouragement and about being open-minded to other people and their way of serving God. That's when God started becoming real for me again, and although it was difficult to go back to intensive training day after day, God carried me through, and before I knew it, it was time to go off to Taiwan.

The first days of Taiwan were really difficult, because it was extremely humid, and the jet lag was absolutely killer. Luckily, God saw me through it and provided me with awesome coworkers-Cherry, Joy, and Grace. With these three coworkers next to me, many things felt a lot easier, but not everything. In Da Pi, our kids were pretty well behaved, so while I didn't struggle so much with the kids, I had more struggles with myself and my concept of who I was in God's eyes. It really was a time of some serious soul-searching, as I considered some of the events that went down in Da Pi. At my church, I was one of the few worship leaders, and I've led worship regularly, and was even asked to lead on the fly at a couple retreats not affiliated with my church, and so I've grown used to leading, and honestly, I do like to lead worship. However, when I was at Da Pi, I didn't have that opportunity, and so that night I was struggling a lot with that. I thought to myself, "I'm a worship leader... so why am I not leading worship?" That thought was constantly running through my mind, and I felt useless at that moment in time. I don't consider myself a man of many talents, and so worship leading is perhaps one of my few fortes, and I wasn't able to utilize it, and so I thought, "God, You've brought me here... but why? What can I do now? I'm not really good at anything, and I can't do the one thing that I'm at least decent at. What the heck?!" It was then that God spoke to me, and I realized something that was so absolutely liberating. I felt something in me that went kind of like this: "Why are you limiting what I can do with you? Why are you letting the roles that you've held in the past limit your present and your future? Trust Me, everything's gonna be all right, just let go." Then I realized that God has got it down, and that the path that He's given us all to walk is the best one. Whether we walk that path or not is up to us. As soon as we "let go and let God", we can be sure that He will sustain us, and we can live a life that is as exciting as the God that we serve. In Da Pi, which was the village we were in for



the first week, I believe that it was a time of learning about God and about myself, so that when the second week came around in Qi Gu, I could learn to lean on Him all the way.

The day that I left Da Pi for Qi Gu was a pretty sad day, because I had grown close with my co-workers and the pastor's kids, and it was sad that I had to leave them. Luckily, the drive was a couple hours, so I could pull myself together and get ready to meet a new set of co-workers in a new place. During the second camp, there was a little bit of awkwardness for me, because I clicked really well with my small group co-workers right from the start at Da Pi, but with my new small group co-workers, we also clicked, but just not as quickly, and so the first few days were a little awkward, and really tiring. Little did I know that in the days following, the second week would feel like forever. As the first day of camp came, and we sat in the auditorium waiting for our kids, there was no hint of nervousness in me, nor was there the awkward first couple hours with the kids, because my kids were very energetic... a little too energetic. During almost all four days of camp, my kids were the loudest when they were supposed to be quiet, quiet when they were supposed to be loud, climbing out of windows during lunch, and cursing at each other in Taiwanese during class. I looked around and was surprised to see that almost every other group's kids were so well behaved. My kids were extremely frustrating, and every day after school was out, I would be dead tired, and all I wanted to do was sleep, and every morning when I woke up, I would dread going to class and teaching these kids for another seven hours. However, every morning when I was praying and eating breakfast, I'd see the kids come by and watch us praying and praising God, and I would be inspired and felt that I had to go and teach these kids. It was extremely hard to be patient and loving with them every day, and I think that I probably failed lots of times, and I kept saying to God, "God I know I asked for a challenge (because the last camp felt a little too easy), but this is hecka lot more challenging than what I had in mind!" But God is good, and I learned during the second camp to really trust God, and it was made definite in my mind and heart that God's plan is always the best. The only thing I was afraid of was how much it was gonna hurt, and how I would have to let go. As the fifth day came, which was the party day, I really came to see that God is real, and that only God can change hearts. The most dirty-mouthed, loud, obnoxious boy in my group who gave me the most stress and frustration during the four days of class was also the boy who cried the hardest, hugged me the longest, and who I believe was impacted the most. I believe that everyone on the missions trip saw God at work that day, and I was blessed with the opportunity to help lead two kids to Christ. However, I can't take credit for it, because it was a group effort by all the co-workers who consistently showed the kids love and patience, and by the Holy Spirit. I honestly believe that God revealed Himself to me during those two weeks, and now I know that He is faithful.

Now that missions is over, I know a couple things. I know I'm going to continue to sin and continue to fall against temptation. I know that I'm still going to face hardships and also continue to have desert experiences. However, I also know that God has shown Himself to me in ways that have impacted me so much that I cannot go back. He is more real to me now than ever before, because I have seen Him at work in the hearts of children, and in my own life. I have seen that everything that happens for a reason, and that reason is so that, if we choose to, we will come to learn more about the God that we serve, and we will see his faithfulness and goodness. I know that there will still be times when I will have difficult questions and face circumstances that seem unfair, but I also know that every single thing is under God's control, and if I don't find an answer now, or in this life, I've got all eternity to ask Him. My prayer is that if you are reading this, you will also see God's goodness, and be inspired to go on missions so that you can experience a new side of God for yourselves.

Testimony: 2006 Taiwan VGM Missions Jeannie Huang

I have never encountered God's presence as strongly as I did on this mission trip. The prayer support coming from our Taiwanese coworkers, the churches we met, and especially from CCCNJ were almost tangible in presence, and you could actually see God working in the kids and in ourselves as the weeks wore on. For me, the most revealing moments of the trip came through the relationships we made: with the children we taught and the Taiwanese coworkers we learned from.

The kids themselves have so much desire to learn-about English, about America, about us, and about God. One Simon in my Chi-gu group managed to ask enough questions about Jesus to fill up 40 minutes of class time and then continue to stay after class for another hour or so, listening and learning. He ended up making a commitment to Christ in his heart, and was one of the most sad to see us go. That kind of heart in a 10 year old was amazing to see, and one of my coworkers was so touched that she made the effort to drive all the way back to Chi-gu the week after, just to give him a Bible. But it's not only the Bibles

we gave that imprinted God on their hearts; it was the love. Many of the kids, raised in families broken by absent parents, debt, alcohol, gambling, or divorce were desperately in need of love. Just taking the time to ask what they liked or hugging them occasionally seemed to open up in them a wellspring of love, and they tried to reciprocate with small gifts and cards or whispered words of thanks. The last day of camp always ended in tears, as they hugged us fiercely and made promises to write emails.

Our parting with the Taiwanese coworkers ended similarly, because the love that we had extended to the kids had branched from the love that the Taiwanese coworkers had shared us. The care and consideration they gave us was immense, and we felt so spoiled and pampered by all the attention they lavished on us. From help with our skits to translation of hard Chinese words, they made every effort to assist us, and we found in them wonderful friends and even better brothers/sisters in Christ. Their passion for God was evident in their every move, and their cheerfulness under all circumstances is still a miracle to me.

There were many such small miracles present in this Taiwan mission trip, and we have God to thank for that. Without His help and presence, none of our efforts would have produced lasting fruit, but because of Him, I feel confident that the seeds we have planted will one day blossom. Thanks to all who have supported us, whether financially, time-wise, or through prayers; most of all, thank Him who has given everything we needed and beyond.

Testimony: 2006 Taiwan VGM Missions Grace Hsiao

This was my first missions trip, and I have to say, I couldn't have asked for more. I believe that I truly learned so much in the two weeks, and I hope that I have returned as a changed person. I hope that the short-term missions was merely preparation for me to live my entire life as a missionary, whether that means evangelizing to those around me in my community, or one day becoming a long-term missionary in a foreign country.

One of the things that touched me the most was all of the Taiwan co-workers and their intense love for God. Despite the language barrier, the differences in culture, and being halfway around the world, these people had the same souls as us, ones that desired to be closer to God. Because of this common purpose, to share the Gospel with the children in Taiwan, we were able to really bond, praising Him together, praying together, and even facing countless cockroaches, geckos, and frogs together.

At Da-Pi, all of the coworkers already knew one another, so the atmosphere was filled with cheer and excitement, since everyone joked around and teased each other. We would fellowship whenever we had free time, playing silly games or just chatting with the co-workers. We grew extremely close and were reluctant to leave them, crying and hugging for at least 20 minutes until Charles dragged us away. When I arrived at Chi-Gu, I admit that I did not have the best attitude, due to missing the Da-Pi coworkers. However, on the second day, when I encountered a strange physical ailment, one of my coworkers voluntarily approached me to pray for me. She told me how important it is for our team to pray together, as she hugged me warmly. Tears filled up my eyes as I really felt the love from this sister in Christ. Gradually, I realized that although the Chi-Gu coworkers were different from the Da-Pi ones, they still radiated the love of God, and we grew to love them just as much.

Also, I loved the coworkers in my crews! At Da-Pi, Stephen and I were placed with two Taiwan coworkers, and the four of us worked together so well. We were able to help each other out in different areas, truly fitting together like a puzzle. We never faced too many problems with the kids, which we were very grateful to God for. At Chi-Gu, I was placed with two other Taiwan coworkers. While one was very outgoing and great with the kids, the other coworker was slightly disabled, and I had a hard time communicating with her. It took a lot of patience and prayer to really learn how to work together well, but I knew that God would never place me in a situation that I could not handle and I knew that He put me in that group for a reason.

One of the most important things I learned is how incredible prayer really is. I saw God answer so many of our prayers. And I know that we wouldn't have been able to do it without Him. I also realized that every single miracle that happened in those two towns was because of God, and not anything we did. From a grouchy, violent boy telling us at the end of the week how much he enjoyed the camp to a little girl in our group raising her hand and declaring that she wanted to believe in Jesus. It was all Him. And it was incredible.

Another thing I learned to do in Taiwan was to truly trust in God, and it was on the missions trip when I finally understood what it meant to surrender my life to Him. I saw Him doing amazing work in the villages we were in, I saw Him answering our prayers, and I could feel His presence there with us. All of the miracles we saw were a testimony to me that God really does listen to me, that He will answer my prayers if I ask with the right heart, that I can place my life in His hands, rather than trying to worry constantly.

And of course, the kids. These kids had hearts filled with compassion and sincerity. Even though they might not have had too much money or nice things, they were willing to give us small gifts or write us little cards. So sweet! We loved the kids so much. One of my most memorable moments was at the second camp, when we were singing a song to the children, and I slowly saw one by one, each child tearing up as they listened to us express how much we cared about them. How we want them to know Jesus. How we want to see them in heaven one day. Even if I didn't see a child drastically change or all of a sudden yearn to be baptized, it was enough to know that I loved them the way God loves me. I saw how eager they were to get to know us and to be our friends. I knew that there was a lot of room in their hearts for Jesus. I know that the rest of the work is for God to do.

Lastly, I thank God for our team, for each and every member of the team, including our adult leaders Charles and Yalin. The entire experience would have been so different if one of us was not there. We prayed together, disagreed together, laughed together, did devotions together, performed together, and cried together. Just to know that I was not going through anything alone was a comfort in itself because my team was there with me. I knew that they would pray for me if I was struggling, that I could go to any one of them for advice, or even that they would always be there to talk to. This made me realize that in this world today, I am not alone. My "team" is so much bigger than just 10 people, because it is the whole kingdom of God. We are a team, and we will never be alone.

Testimony: 2006 Taiwan VGM Missions **Good Things Come in Small Packages** Michelle Sha

Sometimes, I really wonder how God does it. I had just gotten through the worst possible school year- to put everything in a nutshell, the "junior year curse" hit me hard. Prior to our departure, I remember going before God, asking Him why he had called someone like me to participate in His work. I felt like I had nothing to give; I was, not at all, together. What could I possibly do in Taiwan?

I boarded the plane that Friday, just wanting to step off. I carried so much baggage from home, whether it be issues with friends, conflicts at home, or just being preoccupied with the amount of summer work I would be returning to three weeks later. I prayed long and hard on the plane, asking God to take all my worries away, that it would not hinder me from doing His work. Miraculously, God swept me off my feet and embraced me in His arms, as He alone became my motivation and my drive for my time spent in Taiwan. He blew me away with His mercy and grace, and showered down His endless amount of blessings to my team and me.

Stepping off the plane at 6:20 AM after our 18 hour ride, I felt liberated. It was the first time that I truly felt free of all that was weighing me down. I felt that God had given me a clean slate and that I could start off new; but with that clean state, came my share of responsibilities. I knew God was calling me to solely depend on Him for everything that He would be doing in Taiwan. God was tugging at my heart and telling me to surrender all that I possessed, all that I loved, all that I took for granted, and to rest them all down at His feet. But the big question that lay ahead was: would I be willing enough to do it? Would I be willing to capitulate all I had to God, for Him to take me, shake me, break me, and remake me?

The unusual combination of humidity, stickiness, and an overall culture shock smacked my team and me left and right, as we stepped out of the airport and waited for our bus to Da-Pi. Once we got there, we were greeted by Pastor Huang and his family, each with smiles so gargantuan that it was hard to let the jetlag kick in. Then we met our coworkers and the week progressed. All of the Taiwan co-workers came from the same fellowship at their university, so it wasn't difficult for us to all quickly glue together in one piece. From the first day that we arrived, we all got along so well it was as if we had known them

all our lives. One of the many lessons I learned from these co-workers was their essence of love and hospitality. I saw how each of them loved God so much, through all the words that they spoke, through all the things they did, and through all the energy they put into the camp. They quickly placed such a big place in my heart and I knew that the week at Da-Pi would really be an amazing experience.

The camp went by pretty smoothly. I was blessed with two wonderful co-workers, April and Vanessa. Sure, we had our share of struggles during the camp, but after each day's course, we always walked back to the Pastor's house with so many stories to share, so many memories to keep, so much laughter to fill God's house with. One of my fondest memories during the first camp, was when we arrived back at the Pastor's house each evening, no matter how exhausted or tired out we were, we would all form into big circles and start bonding. From silly ABCD Korean slapping games, to Charles' mastermind game, we would drink our oh-so-yummy bubbletea and laugh and play until it was time for dinner.

The only word that really comes to mind when I think of the end of the first camp is: bittersweet. Our entire team dreaded that Saturday like no other. Saying goodbye to the kids was not all that bad, but when it came to bidding our farewells to our Da-Pi coworkers, we left with tear-drenched faces and empty tissue packets. After hours of stalling, we said our goodbyes and started driving to our next campsite.

The drive was 2.5 hours; God was giving me time to prepare myself mentally. I felt very unmotivated and bitter to have to meet a new set of co-workers. I needed God. I needed Him to change my heart. I needed Him to change my attitude- to make it Christ-like, instead of dwelling on my selfish emotions. Lo and behold, God used the less-developed, more-corrupted campsite as a means to strengthen our team, as we all struggled to adjust to the foreign environment together.

Chi-Gu was very not God-centered. There was a shrine right outside the cram school we were staying at, and the village just gave me the creeps. My team and I struggled through the rough time of adjustment, but God continued to bestow His blessings upon us. The children were less receptive to Christ than the children at Da-Pi were, so it was more of a challenge to remain confident. However, one very engraved memory I now cherish in my mind was the Saturday Evangelical Program at our second camp site. We had finished our performances and both the Chi-Gu co-workers and our CCCNJ team started singing a song entitled "Ju Fu" (or "Blessing") to the children. As we sang, each kid started tearing one by one. From the most rambunctious little boy who never listened to anyone and hearing him cry the loudest on that Saturday, to one little girl in my group who showed no interest in Christianity and later asked me for my "Ju Fu" lyrics, it was all God. It was truly a heartfelt experience for me and I know I can speak for all of us when I say God is good, amen?

God helped me when I felt useless. God blessed our team with no issues =P. God protected both Da-Pi and Chi-Gu in the midst of typhoons. God loved, and still does love, all the children in ways we cannot fathom. As I continue to sit here, trying to digest and coherently enlighten you readers of all the lessons I've learned, all the experiences I've had, and all the memories I've created, I find myself in a dilemma- because no words can adequately express everything that God has bestowed on my team and me. And so that is how God does it.