

How a Short-term Mission Trip Changed My Life

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Our journey in life is defined by our life's turning events. If you ask me what was mine, I would tell you: coming to the US, getting married, having children, getting my Ph.D., accepting Christ, and quitting my job to stay home were my major ones. Although any above important event deserves a long article, what I want to share with you now was how a one-week missionary trip to England changed my life.

A life with Many Duties

Six months ago, I was a typical working mother. I worked for a company during the day, took care of kids in the evening, and went to church on Fridays and Sundays. My life was braided by corporate duties, family duties, and church duties. I was constantly juggling among different chores; hardly having any time to study the Bible or to actively seek God.

However, I watched my husband Bing grew spiritually very fast, as our small church needed more and more coworker's involvement. He is a person with a big heart, and he automatically shoulders more when he sees the need. In order to serve God, he had to equip himself so that he could carry out his duties properly. Therefore, I witnessed something quite amazing: the more he faithfully served God, putting his other secular duties on hold, the more blessings God gave him. I knew that he was being blessed and I am very proud of him. But, I still found it was very hard to put down my other duties and to put God first.

In late 2007, Bing needed to coordinate a short-term mission team from New England to help COCM's Year-end Mandarin Camp in England. He hoped that our whole family could join him. I was really hesitant: not only did we have to give up our holiday time, but we also needed to cover our trip expenses, including hotels. With two children, Reece 16 and Mina 6, it made more sense to me that Bing should go to England while I took care of the two children at home. However, two senior spiritual leaders contacted me and invited me and my family altogether. Under pressure, I decided to give it a try, even if I didn't think I could help them much. "Maybe they just wanted our family to be there to show our support to Bing", I thought to myself. Regardless the reasoning, I decided to obey. So our whole family flew to England with the rest of the short-term mission team.

The COCM Mandarin Camp

The first two days arriving at camp, we were all busy discussing the camp agenda, since we came from all over the world. Mina was happily playing with her friends, but Reece was completely left alone, as there was no one there close to his age. Being dragged on to this trip involuntarily already made him quite unhappy, being unintended for two days made him furious. I felt really sorry for Reece but there was nothing I could do to help; he would not like to sit down with us to discuss camp agenda; neither would he like to take care of little kids or play with them. I was at my wit's end when the campers began to flow in. Most of the campers were young Chinese kids between ages 18 to 25. Reece made friends with them

instantly. When we saw Reece going off happily with his new friends, Bing and I felt instant relief: God always had better plans and His plan is always better than ours.

The year-end camp was a 3-day camp: with two sermons a day: one in the morning, and one in the evening. Each afternoon had two concurrent workshop sessions: one for non-believers and one for believers. To accommodate the lively nature of young campers, Pastor Henry Lu designed a very special agenda to attract campers' attention. Each 30-minute sermon was delicately wrapped by personal testimony and Bible story dramatized with modern applications, which was play-written by a COCM co-worker but acted out by campers. The sermon was followed by graceful hymns, reflection with prayer time, and group discussions to help resolve non-believers' faith issues. The sermons were very powerful, the hymns were very touching, the dramas were lively and funny, and group discussions were very effective in helping non-believers to overcome their personal barriers to accept Jesus Christ.

Most importantly, the Holy Spirit was among us during the camp. Almost all of us were touched by the Holy Spirit, crying and confessing our sins to God. Our hearts were filled with joy and peace. We sang joyful hymns to God and praised Him with our hearts and soul. On New Year's Eve, the campers who had just accepted Jesus Christ during this camp lined up to sharing their personal experiences. We were so touched and felt so happy for them; we could not help but praise the Lord for His magical work among us. Vast majority of the non-believers accepted Jesus during this 3-day camp. I could not stop my tears when I saw so many young people accepting Christ and they were all so happy. God is so great and faithful! When we are willing to submit ourselves and serve, God is willing to use us even if we are not well-equipped to do the Gospel work.

During the camp, Reece went from sermon to sermon with his new friends. He was completely absorbed by the Holy Spirit as well. From his friends' eyes, he found that his family is very special and adorable. He told us that he was very proud to be part of our family. I was so touched by his words, tears came to my eyes. I know that was something he really felt from his heart, and I could not thank God enough for His blessings.



We all came back excited with those amazing experiences swirling in our heads. We felt much closer to God and much closer to each other. Our family had never been this close before!

Reece wrote in his journal "It is because of God that I was able to meet these wonderful people... Their hearts were full of love, and they all serve as a testimony to me that God is real. I realized it is not the Bible or the church that serves as a first step into Christianity, but the love of a Christian, a human being. It is this abnormal compassion that has allowed so many people to turn their lives to the Lord..."

Our lives were all touched by God, and we are not the same people any more. Our spirits were high although our bodies were tired. Our hearts were all full of unspeakable joy and peace. If I was stubborn, I wouldn't even know what I had missed!

The Life after the Mission Trip

It took time to figure out how much we were changed. I think that Reece is the one who changed the most. The second day after we came back to the US, Bing and I were adjusting jet lags, sleeping in the afternoon. When we woke up, we found Reece and Mina cooking dinner for us. Reece is good at cooking but this is the first time he taught Mina how to cook. This scene was so harmonic that Bing quickly grabbed his camera and shot this very special moment.

The very next day, Reece, for the first time, encouraged me go to prayer meeting in the evening and offered his help to take care Mina... Our relationship now is so close and natural; you could hardly imagine that he is the one who argued with me most of the time during our car rides before.

I cannot thank God enough for blessing us with what we needed most: the intimate relationships within our family, so that we could open our hearts to help and to love each other unconditionally.

I am thrilled by Bing's changes as well. After almost 20 years of marriage, we have always been so busy we hardly had enough quality time for each other. After this mission trip, Bing all of sudden changed his workaholic pattern. After sending Mina to school, instead of going to his office directly, Bing began to come home to pray with me and working remotely from his home office! The joint prayers have given us so much joy and peace; it has become an important channel that we communicate our thoughts to God and support each other's needs. With much of love and care, I drag him to do some morning exercises and fix him nice breakfasts now. Our life has become so sweet that we call it our second honey moon!



My relationship with God has changed dramatically as well. Before I was not very interested in praying because most of time, I could not really feel that I was being refreshed while I was praying. I was so passive and quiet in the Gospel group in our church, which I had been thinking I should remove myself from that group and give that spot to someone who was more enthusiastic about the Gospel work.

However, after this trip, I feel that I was really attracted by the Holy Spirit. Not only had I become interested in the Gospel work, but I really enjoy going to the prayer meetings and pray with my heart and soul now. After praying, I can really feel the peace, joy, and the emotional relief. I also find the Bible is more interesting than before. Nowadays, if I didn't have a good prayer with Bing in the morning, I feel that my day wasn't started right. Just like if I didn't run in the morning; my body isn't refreshed and I feel moody as well.

After praying, my heart is filled with peace and joy. I feel like I have unloaded my worrying and burden to God. With Bing's praying together, I know exactly what he was up to in his day. I no longer feel like I'm losing touch with him. We love God more, and we love each other more.

Can you imagine how your life would be changed if you came closer to God? You may have many wishes but what God gives you could be completely different from what you ask for. What God gives you will always be better because He is our creator. "But seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33). This is the promise that God gave us and it is true to all of us.