



Matthew 22:37-40: "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Testimonies from Mongolia

Mongolia Mission Trip 2011

October 2011

Mongolia

Introduction

Mongolia is a beautiful country in Central Asia, with lush grassy plains, endless blue skies and dry barren deserts. It is an independent country (not part of China!), bordered by Russia and China and unsurprisingly, was heavily influenced by communism in the 20th century. Traditionally, Mongolians have been nomadic people who move around the country following their herds on the vast boundless steppes. Around a third of the Mongolian population still follow a nomadic lifestyle, but in recent years, owing to pressure from climate change and the desire to seek a better and more stable life, many have moved into the city.

Social Issues

Many social issues have arisen from the breakdown of communism in the late 80s and the growing urbanization including poverty, alcoholism, unemployment, breakdown of families and a growing number of street children and orphans. It is estimated that approximately 36% of Mongolia's population live below the poverty line (i.e. are unable to buy essential food and non-food items) and that over half of the adult population abuse alcohol.

Religion

Mongolians have historically been influenced by Tibetan Buddhism and have practiced it with a hint of shamanism. However, during the communist era, religion was largely repressed, resulting in a lacuna in faith and religious activity. This has enabled other religions to grow since the fall of communism and the end of religious repression. From having virtually no believers in the 1990s, there are now approximately 400 Christian churches and 50,000 believers in Mongolia.

Read about how you can pray for Mongolia on page 15!



Our Mission

To love because He first loved us!!!!

This year, Island ECC sent 31 people to Ulaanbaatar to serve street children, orphans and people who live in the slums (the ger district).

The team organized a summer camp, a vacation bible school, a bible study for teenagers and visited and prayed for local missionaries and families in the ger district. **Flip to pages 13 and 14 for photos of the activities that we did!**

God used this experience to give each of us a new perspective on love, compassion, money and on our faith and we just want to share our testimonies with you, in the hope that they will encourage you and draw your nearer to him too! **So please read on!**

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" John 3:16-17

Ian Foo

This was my second trip to Mongolia after having been there last year on the same mission trip. I was asked to be one of the leaders for the trip this year, and agreed almost immediately. I really had no idea what that meant at the time, but my usually reserved self just leaped at the opportunity.

My heart was not just for the people of Mongolia who we were going to meet on this trip, but also very much for the team members who were coming along. I noticed how mission trips provided fertile ground for God to show us His beauty, kindness and love. I learned so much from last year's trip, and I wanted the team members to experience the same, if not greater things, that I had experienced and learned last year.

There were many beautiful moments at camp. I know God was showing me how He would redeem everything, every lost child, every broken heart and every weak spirit. This year I found myself observing others more than being involved in the activities at camp. I found myself praying and hoping for the HK team members to deepen their faith, and to pray for those who do not know Jesus. The camp team was very united and I was deeply moved when we shared our stories with the children between ourselves at the debriefing session and during our daily morning and evening devotionals. The children were a conduit of God's love, they were the object of our affection and they were the means by which God opened our hearts by loving them through us. I learned that we experience God's love not when we feel loved by God, but when we love others in the way Jesus loved us and served us.

After sending the camp week team off to the airport, I and the other co-leaders were ready to get some good rest, but instead, God led us to climb a hill on Sunday, just before the UB week team would arrive. The view at the top of the hill was beautiful – God knew better than to let us stay at the guesthouse to “rest” (i.e. play with our iPhones and laptops). When the UB team arrived, I was filled with excitement and energy – it was so refreshing and I knew God was always providing me with strength throughout the trip (I don't usually have such endurance).

It was actually during the UB week that I could see the brokenness and poverty in Mongolia. I was convicted to look at money differently. So often we are told that we are stewards of God's provision, but



so often we don't take it seriously. Even now, I am still learning to use money wisely. But the wealth I stored up started to reek an odour and I knew I had to change the way I used the money I was given. Being a co-leader meant I was intimately acquainted with how much we spent on our trip, how much our meals cost, how much we could have saved if we had chosen this or that over something else. A little bit here and there goes a long way for those living in poverty.

But I was also shown that the families who were in contact with the local NGO (Flourishing Futures) who we partnered with, were full of hope and faith. Despite their conditions, they prayed faithfully and believed that Jesus would heal them. One of the ladies we visited told us how she was overwhelmed by having a group of people from HK come into her Ger to surround her with prayer. I think to her, it was far more than answered prayer, it was encouragement from God, it was God saying “I am far more capable of doing what you want me to do”. I realised it wasn't necessarily how we could provide for them materially, but it was very much about how our visits encouraged them and strengthened them. I was told the suicide and alcoholic rates in Mongolia were very high. There was a sense of desperation and hopelessness which only Jesus could heal, and we were part of His plan to bring a light of hope into the lives of people who desperately needed it. To walk along side them, to be in their midst, as an ambassador of Christ.

Mother Teresa once said *“There is more hunger in the world for love and appreciation in this world than for bread. We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty.”*

Val Chan

Fully Relying On God

Finally, I took a step of faith and went on my first ever mission trip to Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia in July 2011. The theme of complete surrender recurred time and again starting with our daily ride to the community center where we had VBS with the kids, teaching them about creation through drama, storytelling and arts & crafts. 20 something of us squeezed into a mini-van everyday without the fear of breaking down because that's the only way to go!! No room for fear!! Yes, the only way is to trust in the Lord with all our hearts and lean not on our own understanding as He is sovereign. I am very thankful for having the opportunity to share and experience His love with my teammates, the kids as well as through visiting families under the food program with Flourishing Future and praying and serving with the missionaries – Susan, Matt, Teresa and our sister Siew Ling. I am deeply encouraged by their obedience to God's calling to serve in a foreign land with His love.



Do not worry about your life...your heavenly Father knows that you need them...Matthew 6:25-34

The lady, named Odchimeg (in red) has inspired me with her joy in the Lord even though she seems to be lacking in a lot of things in the eyes of many due to poverty. She understands from Matthew 6:33-34 that ***God knows exactly what she needs and He will provide if she first seeks His kingdom and righteousness because He loves her.*** She is blessed with 4 kids and her family is under Flourishing Future's food program. Anyway, her kids went to VBS. We noticed that there's something different about this boy (her eldest son) because he took extra good care of his little brother. I did not know that those were hers until we visited her ger (Mongolian tent). During our visit to this family, we saw the sister and the elder brother kissing the baby brother and playing with the little brother. ***God's love was clearly revealed in this household as demonstrated by the way the siblings interacted with***

God's Calling and our Mission Field

We are called to serve at different capacities according to the talents and abilities that He's given us. Although we are from different backgrounds, we have the same goal which is to spread the love of Christ. Thank you for showing me the spirit of unity and this unity comes from the love of our heavenly Father. I can still remember vividly that someone said that ***we had gone on a HOLY-DAY*** in UB since we were surrounded by the family of God the entire time, praying, worshipping, serving and experiencing God together. ***The true mission field is where we are living in.*** Thus it's essential for me to bring back what I've learnt to my mission field! Great enlightenment indeed!

The Kingdom of Heaven is for such as these - Luke 18:16-17



The children's innocent smiles, eagerness for your attention and active participation in VBS have painted this beautiful picture of Jesus praying for the little children. The children reminded me the ***importance of having childlike faith*** as that is exactly what our heavenly Father is looking for from all of us.

Mongolia, a Blessed Land

Mongolia is such a beautiful place with a lot of potential, waiting to be uncovered. I just couldn't stop myself from looking at the big blue sky during the day and the star-filled sky at night, standing in awe of His creation and singing the song "God of Wonders". I pray that the seeds planted in the hearts of the families and kids in Mongolia will bear much fruit to His glory. Amen!

one another. Furthermore, we thought that we would be praying for Odchimeg, but she asked us how she could pray for us. ***She said with a joyful smile, "I don't worry about tomorrow" because she knew that she's being taken care of!*** Great reminder for me about how deep the Father's love is for us. One amazing thing happened was that God answered her prayer as she asked another team to pray for the returning of her husband on Tue (He had been away for sometime due to alcoholism). When my team went over to her ger on Fri, her husband (the guy in stripy shirt) came back! Matthew 6:25-34 said it all!

Magdalena Wong

Revelation 12:11 says we overcome our enemy by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony.

On mission trips, it is easy to get on fire for God and get the desire to serve Him especially in the lush countryside of Mongolia. What isn't easy is to become radically, completely, and permanently transformed post mission trip.

Upon evaluating my walk with Christ after living in HK for the past year, I felt that my spiritual life has been stagnant due to my career. My career doesn't exactly allow sick days (unless you were hospitalized), nonetheless time off. I had to make a simple choice: to serve Christ or my career? At this particular crossroad, God had revealed His will for me through much prayer. I decided to put in my one-month notice the day after I was accepted for both weeks at camp and UB.

As my first mission trip, I only expected to give through outreach projects serving the people and children of Mongolia. Instead, I received a hundredfold of inner healing about my childhood through God's love and grace. Through prayer, worship and fellowship, I was able to open up about my past I had kept hidden for a long time. I experienced a much closer relationship with God and began to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

On the last day prior to departing the campsite, we had a special opportunity to sit down with each orphan from our "family" to give them words of encouragement and a small gift. One of our girls named Tamar hugged me as she told me how they loved spending time with us. As my tears began to pour, Tamar comforted me telling me that everything will be all right. At this point I was the child and she was the adult. I had so much and she had nothing. I was in awe as God cleansed my soul with each tear and overfilled my heart with His love. I saw God in Mongolia in the face of a little orphan girl. God used Tamar to resuscitate my heart. He will heal hearts of many.



As I reflect on God's love now richly engraved onto my heart, I am reminded that my purpose here on earth is to spread the good news about Christ's purpose on earth. The Gospel shows that it was the sick, the demon possessed, the hungry and the poor who came to Jesus and whose lives were changed by His healing touch. Jesus Himself declared that He had come to preach the Good News to the poor, the prisoners, the blind and the oppressed (Luke 4:18).

I will continue to pray for every member of the team that we are forever changed by what we experienced in Mongolia. I also pray that each of us continue to serve Christ by an increased measure of faith, an increased anointing, increased compassion, and a desire to do more.

We will never be the same. Our church will never be the same.



Wendy Wong

"Don't worry about tomorrow." This is the key theme of my whole Mongolia mission trip. I am a well-planned and highly organized person, tending to hold tight of everything for the feeling of security. Since my career shift to a consultant with excessive business travelling, I have felt that life is highly uncontrollable, unstable and uncertain. I started to put a lot of burden on my shoulders. At that moment, God opened the door for me. My engagement manager was one of the founders of an Island ECC care group. She shared her special experience of her Uganda Mission Trip in a dinner and it really put a seed in my heart. One day after a sermon, I read a "Mission Trip 2010" booklet and was touched by the Mongolia story of a sister, Siew Ling. I would like to take a vacation to visit this country and the people living there. That's why I applied for this mission trip.

I believed God should have his purpose on me in this trip. Instead of planning ahead of everything, I just wanted to get out my work and learn how to humbly follow my Heavenly Father to serve the kids in VBS, a school in Ulaanbaatar. With the love of god, I had a joyful time with the kids and so grateful to receive their thank you letter in Mongolian. Another most memorable moment was a family visit in ger area. My original thought was to understand how much they are suffering and be prepared to pray for them. However, God taught me a totally different lesson from this visit. The mother in this family was facing a big challenge of livelihood because of her husband's alcoholism, unemployment and insufficient government funding for her 4 children's education. She even did not know what's going on tomorrow. However, her responses surprised me, "I don't worry about tomorrow because I have faith that God would definitely provide". Not only did she not complain all of these, but also actively asked us what she could pray for us. She was such a godly woman with holiness, faithfulness and righteousness.



God is great! I realized, opening my hand, though is full of uncertainty, is the only way to let God to lead me, to open my eyes, to open my ears, to open my heart to rely on him. At the beginning, I regarded this vacation as a rest. But at the end of this trip, I found it was more than a rest, but an opportunity to build a more intimate relationship with my Father. For he said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew, 11:25-30)



Andrea Ma

Humbled. Inspired. Loved.

Even though I had been on various volunteer trips before, this was my first mission trip. The week before our departure the team leaders told us to be still and rest in the Lord, but I started getting nervous. What could we do in 1 week to help the Mongolians? What if I didn't know how to pray for them, given the cultural differences and language barriers? What if the children didn't like me? My prayer was that I would cast my worries aside and let God lead. And surely, He did!

Humbled

On our first day, Flourishing Futures hosted an open day where the people living the ger district (slums) were invited to the community center, and we spent the day playing with the children and getting to know the families. The first person I noticed in the large crowd of faces was a tall middle-aged woman; she had a beaming smile and was carrying a young baby. I walked over and between our broken sign language, I learned she had 4 children, the baby was 3 months and her name was Ordchumig. I felt like she was full of joy and love, I knew she was special and I wanted to find out more about her background, but since we were split into designated groups for activities I didn't get a chance to talk to her again that day.

The next day, we went out to the ger district to do home visits and to my pleasant surprise, our first visit was to Ordchumig 's ger! It was only then that I found out that she had lived an extremely difficult life, that her brother and sister had passed away, her brother-in-law has cerebral palsy, her husband is an abusive alcoholic and rarely comes home, leaving her to care for her 4 children alone. But the amazing part was she had an incredibly strong faith, a grateful heart, supernatural joy and peace. She thanked God for her beautiful children and that He always provides beyond our expectations, she said she would have never imagined 10 missionaries all the way from Hong Kong would be in her home, praying for her and her family. She even asked us for our prayer requests and said she would pray for us every morning! It was so humbling, I realized that as I went there with the intention of helping the people in Mongolia, there was so much to learn from them! God doesn't look at how many people we lead to Christ, how many ministries we lead at church, how eloquent our prayers are, but delights in our simple faith and pure heart. As I started to pray for her, my heart overflowed with love and I couldn't stop crying. I knew this must be God's love and tears of compassion flowing through me for her, because I rarely cry!



Inspired

Another special part of the trip was meeting and learning from the long-term missionaries in Mongolia. Susan, an American missionary who founded Flourishing Futures, shared her testimony on how she felt God calling her to Mongolia for long-term missions when she was 27 years old and how she began fostering orphans, raising up youth and comforting the families who were struggling in poverty. She never expected anything in return but loved and served the people selflessly. There are now many families around the ger district which are filled with God's joy and love because of the seeds she planted and sowed for many years. We met a young man who was from the LET centre (government-run shelter for street and abandoned children) when he was a child, since his family couldn't provide for him. Susan supported him financially and spiritually throughout his teenage years and now he is studying at university, mentoring the children who are currently living at the LET centre and a strong man of God.



Loved

The trip was filled with many more precious and touching moments but most importantly of all, it was filled with God's love. The love between us and the local Mongolians, the sibling love between the children we taught at VBS, between us and the missionaries and between the ECC team members. In a short period of 7 days, we learned and experienced that God's love has no age restrictions, no language barriers, no country boundaries, no limits!



Jeanne Ng

I had no expectations before going to Mongolia. The only thing I knew was that I was really thankful to be able to go. It had been a long time since I last went on a missions trip, almost exactly four years to the day we left for Mongolia actually. During those four years, my life played like a Korean drama - career changes, moves, break-ups, passing of loved ones. As much as I had wanted to join a missions trip during that time, things kept popping up that prevented me from going, so when I was finally able to go, it was like a breath of fresh air, because that at the very least meant that I could get off the roller-coaster ride long enough to go!

Going to Mongolia helped me wrestle with the issue of poverty. We hear about it often, statistics like how 7 people on earth control more wealth than 41 of the poor countries combined, or how 20% of the world consumes 86% of the goods and resources of this earth. But it's one thing to hear about the statistic that nearly 1 billion people lack access to safe water, and a totally different concept to experience it first hand when you help senior citizens and little kids haul water from the water station back to their homes that do not have access to running water, homes that make up 70% of Ulaanbaatar (the Ger district). Yet, I learnt that although the people in the Ger district may not have running water, that doesn't mean that they are necessarily lacking materially. Some might already have homes and clothes and jobs, but they could still be poor - they could still be feeling distraught about life or still be going through pain and suffering. And to Jesus, they are poor as well. Going to Mongolia really made me question the methods in which I had typically used to try to help the poor; it made me open my eyes to see that there are many areas of poverty, and that there are many more who are living in poverty than I had thought!

Going to Mongolia also helped me to wrestle with my own poverty. Before going to Mongolia, I thought I was doing fine; I loved my church, I enjoyed wonderful accountability with great sisters, I prayed with fervor. But it wasn't until I went to Mongolia that I realized how stale my spiritual life had become, how devoid of joy it was. Hearing stories from local missionaries in the field challenged my dedication to the Lord; whatever happened to my passion for the



gospel? Fellowshiping with my brothers and sisters in Mongolia helped me to realize how withdrawn I had become; whatever happened to my love for the body of Christ? And spending quiet time of reflection with the Lord made me realize how dry my relationship with Him was; whatever happened to the overwhelming sense of thanksgiving for His abundant grace? How humbling it was to be convicted of these issues in my heart, and how ashamed I felt. At the same time, amongst the ashes (dust) of Mongolia, rises the beauty of the Lord. How quick He is to forgive! How mighty He is to save! And how glorious it is that this redemption is not just for me, but for all those who are poor in spirit! "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3.

So friend, I encourage you to be open and to go. Because if you go, at least you will see, you will understand, and you will know, but if you don't go, you will never know what you have missed out on! God will meet you in amazing ways that you would have never dreamt possible, and with that will come an abundance of indescribable and irreplaceable joy and peace that can only come from Him.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Isaiah 61:1-2

Rochelle and Alex

Mongolia has been a life changing experience for my husband Alex and I. We saw the best and worst in mankind and nature in 7 days. We have been on many voluntary trips before and this has proved to be a special one. This is one where everyone put in 150% of their effort into the trip.

Language barrier

Day 1 - we have been anxious about communication as we couldn't speak the language. However we had no problem with that as soon as we arrived. All the stuff we learn in communication skills workshop was put into life - eye contact, body language were clearly more important to communicate with the kids.

Unconditional love (**3rd attachment)

The children taught us so many things - unconditional love, forgiveness, the gift to share. Day 2 afternoon, the kids in our family disappeared. We thought they went to play with the other kids. In fact, they actually walked up to the mountain to pick wild strawberries for us. They came back running to us just so we could eat the strawberries fresh. The strawberries were so sweet and delicious.



The gift to share

Day 3 - a boy in our family Eegi, made a key chain in the arts and crafts class. He drew flowers, bears, cartoon characters on the key chain and carefully decorated it with stickers. It turned out that he actually gave the key chain to us to bring back to Hong Kong. So we would remember him and think of him. We have the key chain hanging in our living room to remind us everyday.

Appreciation

Day 4 - a girl in our family, Lvvsma touched my

face that day. I was totally shocked. She then said "you are beautiful!". This touched my heart not because she praised me for my (!) but how she appreciation and tell us how much she appreciated us being there.



You are my sunshine

Day 5 - when we were walking back to the camp after lunch, Eegi suddenly started singing this tune:

*"You are my sunshine, my only sunshine
You make me happy when skies are gray
You'll never know dear, how much I love you
Please don't take my sunshine away"*

Tears just flooded my eyes. To my surprise, the kids went up to Alex and asked him to comfort me. I hugged and kissed everyone of them tight. I thank God for showing us what true love and appreciation really is.



Once we have returned to Hong Kong, we keep thinking about what we can do for the kids. I continue to pray. However 2 months down the line, I suddenly realised that it was more "what the kids did to us". To our surprise, our marriage/bond have become a lot stronger and deeper. We have become a lot more understanding to each other. We really hope that we could return to Mongolia next year to thank the kids for showing us their unconditional love!

Ricki Yuen

Love & Grace

This is my first mission trip to Mongolia and I had the opportunity to join both camp and UB week. The experiences from both weeks were so different that it nearly felt like I went on TWO mission trips! It is only until now as I'm reflecting on it; I realize God was speaking to me about one message – His unending love and amazing grace.

Before I left for Mongolia, I wrote an email to my close friends asking for their prayers. In my email, I told them the one and only reason I was going was because I wanted to be reminded of how much God loves me.

God didn't disappoint. He answered my prayer by lavishing His amazing love on me during those two weeks. I had a great time bonding with children (something that I didn't think I would enjoy previously). I had an amazing time talking to missionaries and being inspired by their "mountain-moving faith". I got to hike up a beautiful mountain, sat in the midst of his awesome creation and just to be in awe!

All that was satisfying but I was also feeling something was being stirred up inside of me. I was reminded of a passage in Mark 12 where Jesus spoke of a widow who, out of her poverty, put in two very small copper coins for offering; while the rich people in the congregation threw in a large amount. But Jesus praised the widow because she put in everything - all she had to live on; while the rich people gave only out of their wealth.

I was convicted I was only giving God my "excess". I wanted to reciprocate the love I received. I wanted to give unconditionally. After all, my favorite verse (which was also the theme verse for this trip) is Luke 10:27 - "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself."

But as the week progressed, I found myself doing just the exact opposite and I was displaying all kinds of bad "fruits". When I caught myself having these ungodly thoughts and feelings, I tried the hardest to fight them and slowly but steadily I noticed I was losing my joy.

One night, our team was having dinner with a missionary friend. He noticed the weariness in me and offered to talk to me. I shared with him my struggle and he looked me in the eyes and said, "Ricki, you can stop trying to reach up and let go. Let God reach down from heaven to you..."



I didn't hear the rest of his sentences because those words had already pierced my heart. And the next thing I knew, I was sobbing uncontrollably. I DID IT AGAIN! I WAS TRYING TOO HARD!

Somehow I thought His love for me is depending upon my capacity to reciprocate (like any human relationship). If you take someone's love for granted, one day the person will eventually get fed up and leave you! I was so afraid of losing God's love.

But God is not human. God is love and love does not keep record of wrongs. God loves me just the same whether I recognize or reciprocate His love or not. God cannot love me more or less because He is love! Once again, He reassured me of His unending love despite of my failure.

Since I became a Christian two years ago, there were many times I felt I have failed God. But each time, He picked me up gently and reminded me this:

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness... For when I am weak, then I am strong." (1 Corinthians 12:9-10)

I love this old Christian song that beautifully summarizes the power of God's love and grace.

*Lord I come to You
Let my heart be changed, renewed
Flowing from the grace that I found in You*

*Lord I've come to know
The weaknesses I see in me, will be stripped away
By the power of Your love*

*Hold me close, let Your love surround me
Bring me near, draw me to Your side
And as I wait, I'll rise up like the eagle
And I will soar with You, Your Spirit leads me on
In the power of Your love*

Isn't His love and grace amazing? :)

Janice Chen

"...God's love empowers us to love others"

"We love because He first love us" – Since turning to Christ last year in June and as I seek Him, I find it difficult to grasp the love that I am supposed to receive and to give. I remembered reading this verse and learning it in my head. But little did I truly comprehend or put in practice. I was much convicted by my selfishness and conditional love, yet I did not know how to change. But God is faithful in transforming my heart; He saw through my weaknesses and chose to use me as part of His plan despite of them. Reflecting on the trip, it seemed almost surreal the way I even came to know about it. During my struggles and conviction, I was reconnected with a long lost sister and simultaneously met new sisters who shared with me in several occasions their experience in Mongolia. Not only did they encourage me to think about the trip but they also shared one common message: The power of God's love and lives changed by His love alone. This is when I knew I had to go.

Peace Unmeasured

The next thing I know we have our first meeting discussing details of the trip and for the next two months, God has guided the planning smoothly and through prayers with the team, I learned to plan by faith and constantly reminding myself that it wasn't how perfectly the plan would work but how God is using His imperfect servants to achieve His amazing plans already in place. Stepping into the undermanned and crowded airport of Mongolia, my heart was racing with excitement while at the same time overwhelmed by a nervous anticipation in the heart. I remembered on the first night, I poured out my worries and prayed with a sister for guidance and God to open my tightly gripped hands so that I can surrender all to Him. That night, I experienced an unmeasured peace in the heart, the peace that God bestows transcends ALL understanding and guarded my heart and mind in the coming days. I looked up to the sky filled with gleaming stars and know that God is always with us, watching over every one of His children.

Love Unmeasured

God is omnipotent; He used whatever little we brought to the children, and allowed us to communicate our hearts and love for them despite the language barrier. He saw us through the children's program, giving us patience and energy to love the children and the families. With God's guidance each step at a time and day by day, the children's program worked out so well in His plan. The children opened my eyes to see the LOVE among them and



the team, and they opened my heart to be transformed. The Spirit filled all of our souls, to where we couldn't hold it and the whole community center was overflowed with joy and laughs. I would image God must be looking down from heaven and chuckling with us. We all came together as a family, to love the children. I remembered telling myself in the head that this is how I should serve as a Sunday school teacher, this is what God wants me to love. God has unlocked my heart and poured out His love through me. I am never the same again.

Walking by Faith

Mongolia, a country of serious alcoholism. Scenery of single mother with their children holding bags of food or bucket of water constantly reminded me of how serious the problem is. But the omnipotent God is faithful in loving His people and committed in changing them. Throughout the trip, we have the privilege to meet, spend time and pray with the missionaries that God has placed in their hearts a burden to minister in the country. Only a short few days of the visit, friendships bonded in the Lord himself are formed, and through their stories and sharing, God tells me that by His grace, He can make all things possible. Yes there will be uncertainties, struggles and lost direction but He is in complete control. They teach us what it means to walk and live by faith; when I see them, I see this army of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ loving God with all their hearts, minds and strength.

A Dialogue with God

"Prayer is the exercise of drawing on the grace of God" – Oswald Chambers

Nadia Wong

This is my second mission trip to Mongolia. Last year, I spent a week camped out at one of the most beautiful campsites in the world. I had a great time running around under the warm Mongolian sun in the midst of loving and energetic children. Although these children had so few possessions and so little going for them in the world, they seemed to be joyful, healthy and playful just like children anywhere else in the world. It was in this setting that God showed me His majestic creation, power and love, convinced me that He would take care of the children and that I need not feel guilty in my inability to help them.

This year, God moved my heart in a very different way and gave me a new perspective on his heart for poverty.

Prior to this trip, I thought that poverty relief meant providing food, shelter and education to the poor. I thought that having an ulterior motive (such as evangelism) was a bit impure and distasteful.

However, God used an encounter with two families in Mongolia to help me understand that poverty relief requires the gospel. Why? Because if we only provide the poor with material possessions and fill them with a desire to earn more and receive more, the things that we give them will only satisfy them for a little while and will leave them wanting more. But if we give them hope in Jesus, it will fill them with contentment and joy that will enable them weather all storms.

This is what Jesus meant when he said to the woman at the well: ***“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”***

Sustainable poverty relief is what we need to give and the only way to do it is through proclaiming the message of the gospel.

Family 1: The joyful unemployed couple

At the beginning of UB week, we invited families from the ger district to join us for lunch and games and had a chance to ask them about their lives. One of the couples in my group told me that they



were from the countryside and had moved into the city for a better life ten years ago. Unfortunately, they were unable to find jobs in the city and ended up with no money and nowhere to live. Through man who was preaching in the black market they found out about a local church that could provide them with housing and food. This church supported them during their first year in UB and brought them to Christ.

The couple is still unemployed and survives on odd jobs that the father picks up every now and then, government support and Flourishing Future’s food distribution program.

Despite their poverty, they praised God and expressed their gratitude for His provision throughout their sharing. I sensed their joy and contentment with the lot that they had been dealt and couldn’t understand how anyone in such a situation could be joyful. My limited faith in Jesus’ sermon on the mount and God’s economy made their spiritual wealth and material poverty a difficult idea to accept.



Orchumig – a faithful woman of prayer, content in all circumstances

The next day, we went on a house visit to pray for a woman called Orchumig and her family. Orchumig was once on Flourishing Future’s emergency assistance program, under which she received free housing and food but had to live under strict rules, one of which was abstention from alcohol. She was fine with this, but when her

husband returned from spending time in prison, he started drinking again. The family elected to leave the emergency assistance program (so that He could drink) and live with her husband's mother in their little hasha.

Like the couple's story, I found it hard to understand Orchumig's decision and the peace that she seemed to have. So we asked her: *why did you leave the emergency assistance program?* Smiling, she told us that the bible tells her to submit to her husband, so if that is his will, so be it. *What faith!* Orchumig has no income and relies solely on government assistance and food from Flourishing Future's program. Yet she seemed content with her situation and told us that she continues to pray that her husband will stop drinking and believes that it will happen one day.

As I listened to her story, I couldn't help but think *what a silly decision! Surely God must not intend that she submit to her husband if he is such a poor decision maker.*

Again, my limited understanding of God's kingdom stumbled me. This woman, though materially poor, was spiritually rich. She was full of hope and contentment and was completely at peace with her circumstances. I realised that it was pure arrogance that drove my desire to tell her she needed more.

Poverty – spiritual poverty and material poverty

As I thought about these encounters after the mission trip, I came to understand God's heart for the poor. If you read the ten commandments carefully, you will see that it has two special concerns: firstly, to ensure that we are spiritually rich by staying close to

God (no other idols, love God with all our hearts, soul, strength and mind), and secondly, to ensure that the weak and the poor are protected and the powerful restrained (love their neighbours, not to covet their possessions).

This means that in helping the poor, we need to be mindful of both spiritual and material poverty. If we only provide them with material possessions and fill their heads with the American dream, we will throw them into the dizzying spell of the rat race where nothing is ever enough. But if we relieve them of their spiritual poverty, they will live with joy, hope and contentment in all circumstances, able to forget what is behind and press on towards the goal which is heavenward in Christ Jesus.

A corollary of this lesson for me is that many people who are well off materially, may be living in spiritual poverty – with little hope in anything other than amassing wealth, buying the latest fad and things that will never satisfy. God cares for these people too. And if our hearts are aligned with God's, we should care about them too.

During one of our devotionals, someone pointed out a paradox – in Mongolia, we are actually living in the fellowship of believers and are in our comfort zone. Our actual mission field is back home, at our workplaces and among our non-believing friends.

Do we rely on God just as much in this mission field? Are we able to love as unconditionally, give as willingly and be as passionate in this mission field? Can I care for those around me who are spiritually poor though materially rich as much as I care for the materially poor?

Kodak/iPhone moments





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How you can pray for Mongolia

1. Pray for the LET center children – that they will be healthy and warm in the coming winter months and that they will break free from their broken past and contribute to a responsible society
2. Pray for the raising up of Mongolian leaders who will lead the church with power humility and gentleness.
3. Pray for open hearts to the gospel.
4. Pray for missionaries in Mongolia, in particular, the Tvirdik family, Siew Ling, Helen, Matt and the pastor of the Citylight church.

