

Clemente Newsletter

April 2015

David's Discussions

How do you say “hello” in Burmese? What about “Good morning!”? Can you please write these down for me? One, two, three. What are the Burmese words for these numbers? How do you pronounce these words?

Rebekah Liou is a high school student from Cornerstone Church in Taiwan. She is asking all these questions (above) requesting the help of another high school student from Rong Guang Church here in Yangon. Rebekah is here with our seminary mission trip Myanmar. We are all encountering this new culture, very different from what we know in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Let me back up a little bit.

We are on a ferry boat traversing the Yangon river on our way to visit a Free Methodist church outreach called Dala Church. There are about 19 of us from Taiwan and a few leaders from the Rong Guang (FM Chinese) Church under the leadership of Rev. Esther Huang. At Dala Church, our Taiwan team is supposed to lead an evangelistic program with elementary age children. We are grateful that Pastor Esther’s team has several leaders who are able to help us interpret our gospel presentation from Chinese to Burmese.

So, we are on this ferry with three hundred or so people crossing the river. In front of me are several monks feeding the seagulls that are flying beside the boat. We are all trying to entertain ourselves watching the seagulls shriek and catch the food thrown at them by the monks. After about twenty minutes or so, we dock into a wharf and the multitude line in to disembark. I notice a few yards ahead of me three Western tourists taking pictures of everyone. They are constantly standing in front of the monks and without asking permission take several close-up photos of the monks. I feel a little awkward. Okay. To be honest, I feel anger. They are disrespecting the monks. They are treating these religious people like objects—as subjects of the tourists’ camera to be later displayed in someone’s living room with no regard for their humanity. They did not even pause to ask their names, or smile and carry on a courteous chit-chat. No matter if they do not know the local language, they should have at least stopped taking pictures and just stand with the monks, like the rest of the people moving towards to the exit doors. I think these tourists are very rude. Now, why am I sharing this experience with you? Let me explain.

Do you remember Rebekah’s questions above? Now, compare her approach to the

tourists' way of documenting Yangon life. Which one gives respect to the local people? The answer is obvious. Rebekah with her pen and paper is the clear winner over the tourist with her camera. I share these two contrasting experiences to illustrate the fact that mission trips can sometimes be offensive. They can bring damage rather than help to the local people. On the other hand, I share these encounters because I am very proud of our Taiwan mission team members. They came with a heart willing to learn from the Burmese people. When we visited the FM Chin Church and painted the Bible college dormitory walls, Supt. Pakep noticed how the team worked together as one group. When the team served at the Rong Guang Chinese Church, Rev. Huang mentioned to me how efficient everyone was in doing their assigned tasks. Of course, there were set-backs and other minor snafus, but overall the team was incredible. We were invited to come back next year. Already, we are talking about 2016.

Pastor Paul Siwei Lo, the Outreach Pastor for Cornerstone Church is encouraging his church members to join the seminary mission trip to Myanmar this 2016. (Pastor Paul was with us in Yangon.) I am sure Rebekah, a member of Cornerstone Church, is already getting ready for this trip. I am also encouraged because Pastor Paul is a recent graduate of our Holy Light seminary. And now, he is leading his church members to participate in missions trips like this one. We look forward to more local church members joining our annual seminary mission trips.

I do not have a photo of Rebekah with her pen and paper talking to one of the local Burmese youth. However, that scene is very clear in my mind. I remember on another occasion Pastor Paul going around with a pencil and notebook asking questions about Burmese life and language. In other instances, I recall team members playing soccer with the kids on the street or playing the guitar with church youth members. We experience God with the local people. We learn their ways. We experience learning from the ground up.

Jacob's Journey

Last last Friday, we went to the city pool. My mom and I had some fun. It had chlorine in it and it had four sections. One was the kiddie pool, another was an adult pool, the other was a hot tub, and the last one was the deep pool. My favorite part of the pool was the adult pool. It had geysers under water and it had showers.

Last Friday we had parent/teacher conferences at our school. While my parents talked to my homeroom teacher, I was playing video games and reading Garfield.

C-YA guys.
JACOB

Home Assignment

It's that time again! Our family will return to the United States for a period of six months in order to visit our supporters and share what God is doing here in Taiwan. Our departure date is Wednesday, June 3rd. Please pray for us as we manage all of the details. We hope to see many of you this summer at General Conference 2015 in Orlando, FL or the North Michigan Family Camp in Manton, MI.

In the past, we have traveled as a family and home schooled the children, and we were blessed with wonderful experiences each time. This year, we will be doing things a bit differently. Our plan is to have our "home base" in Greenville, IL and for Carmen and Jacob to attend school there. This means David will be the one doing most of the traveling and speaking, especially in the North Michigan Conference. Please pray for the scheduling process. Most Sunday mornings are already confirmed, but David is eager to visit Bible studies, prayer meetings, small groups, or other gatherings that happen during the week. If you're interested in inviting him to your group, simply reply to this email to start the conversation.

Transportation

We still need to secure a vehicle for our family to use during our time in the States. Please pray with us regarding this need.

Upcoming Events

*** **April 5** Easter Sunday

*** **April 23** Holy Light Theological Seminary 60th Anniversary Concert, directed by Dr. Joe Noble of Greenville, IL. This will be a time of celebration and a presentation of the life of Jesus Christ.

*** **April 24-25** Taiwan Annual Conference

*** **May 25-29** David will be co-teaching a module with Holy Light's D.Min. students during the month of May. Please pray for the students who will be traveling from Singapore, Malaysia, and other Asian countries.