

Clemente Newsletter

November 2016

Christine Liao is a student, together with her husband, Sean, at Holy Light Theological Seminary in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. She shares here her testimony of God's guidance in her life:

Today, I am going to share with you about my sweet moments at Holy Light Seminary. Sean and I made a big decision in 2014. We decided to resign (from our work) and come to Holy Light Seminary to study for our MDiv degrees. For me, this is the grace of God. When I was young, my parents taught me to work hard, earn a lot of money, and get a good reputation. These became the goals that I was pursuing. But after I achieved all these goals, my heart felt empty and lonely. I encountered a difficult situation at my work place, so I did not get promoted during that time. I had been reading the Bible every day. When I read a passage in Luke 18:22: "When Jesus heard this, He said to him: one thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." At that moment, God spoke to me. God said: "Let go of whatever you are holding on to right now and come back to me." After struggling for a while, I finally gave up all of my worldly desires. God has always been in control.

In the first year at Holy Light Seminary, I met many teachers and classmates. During one semester, I started to know what my weaknesses were. It was the pride inside my heart. After realizing this, I was really ashamed of who I was. God wanted me to change. He refocused my vision. This is the precious lesson that I have learned in my first year at school. Also in my first year at seminary, I learned to put down everything so that I can see what God wants from me. The best lesson of all is the lesson of being humble before Him.

Time flies. The second year at Holy Light, I gradually learned of God's calling in my life, and that is, to be a good pastor's wife. I never thought about it and had been avoiding it. How do I deal with this problem? I have no talent and don't know how to sing, how to play piano, even simple songs of worship and praise. Influenced by many churches in Taiwan, the tradition of being a good pastor's wife has become a difficult role to fulfill. Meanwhile, Sean and I have been doing youth ministry in the churches. At first, I'm not used to getting along with teenagers. But the weird thing is, I like to listen to them share about what happened in their schools, families and personal lives. It made me feel closer to them. And they also enjoy sharing with me. God gave me a warm heart to care about people. Fortunately, the teachers and classmates continued to give support and pray for me. I can glorify God with the gift of listening and caring. In the second year at Holy Light, I learned to be brave and face difficulties. The most important thing is I learned obedience.

In my third year at seminary, I know God will give me a whole new lesson. I have no idea what difficult situation I will meet. But I know one true fact, that is, God will always be by my side and He will protect me. The Bible says: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Carmen's Corner

Recently, my freshman class went on an overnight retreat that focused on the theme "Growing Together." If I had to share every experience, every lesson I learned, every fun thing we did during the retreat, this would go on for way too long. So, I'm just going to share one experience that really stuck with me.

It was Friday night and I was alone outside, lying down next to the dying fire, staring up at the pitch-black night sky, talking and praying to God. Suddenly, I heard a noise. It was my friends, Andrew and Parker. They came over and Andrew looked at the sky, then back at me, then back at the sky, and he stated the obvious, "There's no stars!!" "Yes, I know," I said. "What are you supposed to be looking at? There's no stars!" Parker exclaimed. "Nothing. I'm looking at nothing," I responded. "What's the point of looking at nothing?" Andrew asked. "That's kinda the point," I answered.

Then suddenly, I asked myself, "What *was* I doing here?" I'm just looking at nothing. Pitch-black. What was I doing, lying on the filthy, dusty, concrete ground next to the dying fire? I guess I had no real answer to that question. After Andrew and Parker left, I finally had some time to myself to reflect on life in general and asked myself, "What *am* I doing here?"

As I stared at the black sky, I realized why I was lying here looking at nothing. The fact is, I *was* looking at something. I was looking at space. To us, looking up at the night sky, it just seems like a dark blanket covering us and protecting us. But really it's not. It's outer space. Light years and light years of space. Staring up at space made me realize just how small and insignificant I am.

Now, realizing how tiny and unimportant we really are can be depressing at first. But then it becomes kind of relaxing. Refreshing. It makes you realize how insignificant your problems, worries, and troubles are. It makes you realize how inevitable change really is. It makes you realize you're not in control of everything. God is. And looking up at "nothing," I realized how much I needed God in my life right now.

My classmates and I have talked about God's revelation in our Foundations of Faith class -- something about God revealing Himself to us to be known. As it got closer and closer to the time I needed go back inside the retreat center, I started seeing a star staring right back at me. And then another one appeared, and then another, and then another. In total, I counted TEN stars! Andrew and Parker said there were no stars, that I was just staring at nothing. But I hung in there and kept staring up at the sky. And then the stars started to appear.

There are going to be people in life who say "There is no God." "You're praying to nothing." But sometimes you just have to keep lying down on the hard, dirty concrete ground and wait. Because God will reveal himself to you.

Jacob's Journey

There was this 6th Grade Impact Trip we took from 31st of October to the 2nd of November. We had an awesome time there. We went on awesome hikes, awesome kayaking, awesome anything! We started in Kaohsiung and drove 200 kilometers north from our school toward the mountains. We ended up at a large cabin at Sun Moon Lake. That was where we slept, hung out, and stayed for 3 days and 2 nights.

So it started off with this long bus ride with all my friends. We watched How to Train Your Dragon, since it dealt with our theme of growing in maturity. About halfway through the movie, we stopped at a 7-Eleven to get our lunch to eat on our first hike. When we arrived at the cabin area, we decorated our shared dorms by plopping our suitcases all over the place and throwing our swimming suits on rails. It was beautiful. Just kidding, it looked horrible.

And, as you probably guessed, the girls stayed in one dorm while half of the boys stayed in another. The rest were in this awesome area with awesome things in everyone's suitcases, and that was us. My roommates had very bright flashlights and tons of books. All I brought interesting with me was my Mario wallet, which looked as funny as a fried piece of chicken stuck in a toaster on a pirate ship.

We went kayaking and stand-up-paddle-boarding in the lake that day, and then we had a BBQ supper. And that was pretty much how it went on Tuesday, too, except for the longest bus ride ever part. Also on Tuesday, we wrote on a piece of paper what we wanted to grow in maturity and what we wanted to leave behind. Then at 5:30 at dawn on Wednesday, all of us got dressed to kayak to the middle of the lake to burn our papers, like a symbol of our prayer to God. Then we packed up our stuff and headed out.

Anyway, that was my Sun Moon Lake Sixth Grade Impact Trip, or the SMLGIT. (All right, it's not that good of a name.) I hope you enjoyed reading this piece of my journey through life! And by the way, my life is going pretty good, if you're wondering. ;)

Financial Facts

For the year 2016, we are currently experiencing a **deficit** of about **\$20,000**. In order to continue serving in this role of training Asians for ministry in Asia, it is very important for us to end this year with a healthy account balance.

Please pray with us as we continue to trust God with this ministry responsibility. If you feel led to help us meet our goal with a thanksgiving offering or an end-of-the-year gift, you may send a check made out to "FMWM", with 'Clemente MSA' in the memo line, to:

Free Methodist World Mission, 770 N. High School Rd, Indianapolis, IN 46214

FMWM will provide you with a receipt as all financial gifts are tax-deductible.

Commitments

As we look ahead to the coming year, it is necessary for us to secure financial commitments for 100% of our 2017 annual budget. This means we need all churches and individuals (old and new givers) to affirm their partnership and communicate their 2017 financial commitment by December 31st.

You may do this by filling out the online form at the FMWM website, or by calling Pam Sheads at the FMWM home office at 1-800-342-5531. Thank you so much for your faithful prayers and support as you partner with us in Asia!

Praise and Petitions

***** Praise God for a successful surgery and smooth recovery for Sarah's gall bladder removal. Thank you so much for your prayers and encouragement.

***** Pray for Christine and Sean as they continue to rely on God as they prepare for a life of ministerial service.

***** Pray for David's time of teaching at the seminary. He has two classes -- one on Thursday and another on Friday. Pray that David will learn from our Lord and be a resource for the 21 students. Four of them are looking into a future missionary career.

***** Pray for the Set Free Movement Taiwan, led by Aying and Pastora Tessa, who are reaching out to Filipino spouses of Taiwanese husbands. A mothers' group meets weekly for Bible study, language study, and encouragement/counseling. Pray that the women will feel that they are valuable and loved by God as they continue to work on good communication with their husbands and in-laws.

***** Pray for David's brother who is going through cancer treatment. Pray for his family. He is right now pastoring a church in the Philippines. Pray for healing. Some medicines he ordered a few months back are being withheld at the customs office. Please pray for the medicines' immediate release.

***** Pray for Carmen and Jacob and their classmates as they grow together in wisdom and maturity and the love of Christ.

We thank God every time we remember you!

In His Love, David, Sarah, Carmen and Jacob Clemente

PO Box 450 -- Kaohsiung, 800 -- Taiwan