



Pastor's Corner

Pastor Brian Leong



This summer in Belize I had a pretty amazing experience. One of our team members was feeling sick and had to rest in the bus, so I started walking around the streets looking for a shop where I could buy him a cold drink (not an easy thing to find in the slums of Belize City!). I found a shop and walked in and was shocked by what I saw—I had accidentally stumbled upon the Belize version of 99 Ranch Market. The shelves were stocked with imported food from China—everything from tea to spices to shrimp chips.

I was so curious about this place and how it could survive in Belize so I went to register only to find a teenage boy, about 16 years old running the entire

shop. I asked him a little about the shop and started talking with him a bit and, soon, I saw God giving me an opportunity to share the gospel with him. At one point, I could see tears start to build in his eyes as I shared with him that our Heavenly Father is a parent who never measures us by our academic achievement or hard work or where we go to college. I could see I was speaking to his heart and his pain. But when I asked him if he wanted to commit his life to Christ, he told me he was not ready for that. All I could do was invite him to the Chinese church on Sunday where I would be preaching and pray for him.

You may ask why I would share about what could be considered a failure. It would be a much better story if he prayed with me and changed his life and was now a strong believer. But then, that would be a story about how great I am and this

story is about how great God is. I often think about that kid and when I do, I pray for him. I

wonder what God will do with that first encounter he had with the good news of Jesus Christ and I wonder if I will ever know that God will do something the outcome. But I also trust with it because I know that God *can* do something with it. And I am okay with that because even though I cannot control that young man's destiny, I can be faithful to the opportunities the Lord puts before me. And I can let Him do the rest.

The apostle Peter wrote, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have." (1 Peter 3:15) Are *you* ready?

今年是我来到湾区的第十年. 长期的忙碌加班, 有一点时间还围着孩子瞎转, 无论是在身体上, 还是心灵上, 都是处在一种严重的透支状态. 感谢神, 就在我心灵几乎处于瘫痪空白的时候, 在我感到孤独无助的时候, 祂的恩典奇特地降临了, 祂让我在医院里有一段安静的日子. 主里姐妹探望我时留下了一本小册子<<雅比斯的祷告>>Prayers of Jabez.

一段平凡人的故事, 一段简单浅白的祷告, 我却被深深地震撼了. 一个来到世上就被命名为“痛苦”的小人物将自己交托于神, 大声地祈求: “甚愿你赐福于我, 扩张我的境界, 常与我同在, 保佑我不遭患难, 不受艰苦.” 神就应允他所求的(代上4:9~10). 雅比斯就此步入了新的人生. 神的恩典是丰富的, 无处不在. 雅比斯全心祈求, 全然依靠. 他听凭神决定要赐下什么福, 也听凭神, 决定赐下的地点, 时间, 方式. 这种全然依靠神的信心与我们, 至少是我, 截然不同. 我们常常是相信自己, 按需祈求(为自己的需要去求神), 达不到目的就抱怨神你在哪里. 我真的从来没有想过求神赐福应该是将自己先全然投入到神的旨意, 神的计划中去, 他所赐的福应该是神的荣耀显现在我们身上. 也许神赐的福并不是都合乎人的心意的, 但是合乎祂的计划.

2010年对我来说是多事的一年. 但是我要感谢神赐的大福, 祂用雅比斯的故事教导我: 透过一个简短却充满信心的祷告就能改变我的未来. 为什么不呢? 现在我每天早晨都会大声祷告: “神, 请赐福给我, 帮我脱离苦难.”

Children's Ministry

The Children's Ministry (CM) strives to provide LGCC a nurturing place for children to grow in God's stature. With the opening of the Children Center and the launching of the Parenting Ministry this year, LGCC has moved one step closer to their mission (goal). We have the opportunity to interview and to hear from three sisters who served dedicatedly in this ministry. They are Vivian Mark(V), Vanessa Lam-Tsui (Va) and Candy Chan (C).

How many years have you served in Children's Ministry (CM)?

V: I joined LGCC CM since we served in the South Bay branch church.

Va: I was recruited by Pastor Tom Chang (LGCC former senior pastor)16 years ago to join the C M.

C: I have served in my church in Canada for 2 years and in LGCC for about 1.5 years.

What was your experience with kids before you started in this CM?

V: I volunteered at the New York Chinese Christian Herald Crusade (CCHC) during college. Later I became a full time staff running the After School program and Summer School under the direction of the CCHC CM director

Va: I did not have much experience with children other than raising my then 4 year old daughter.

C: I have led singspiration, taught Vacation Bible School (VBS) and kids during mission trips.

What is your calling to this ministry? (in other words, why do you choose to serve?)

V: I was inspired by Reverend John Fung's message "Come, Follow me" in the Spring Retreat Conference in early 1980's. He mentioned the challenges and the poor school environment that children and teenagers have to face daily. He brought the awareness of accepting salvation and knowing God at a young age would help to guide and to make right choices at times of temptations.

Va: Serving in the CM taught me to be patient, and to rely, not on my own talents or skills, but on God to do the changing of hearts and minds. Even if I do not see immediate good result in a child, I have to trust that the Lord will continue His handiwork in the children far and beyond the Sunday school years. I learn not to look for instant gratification, but to look for the eternal reward that God has installed in me.

C: Helping kids build a personal relationship with Jesus, especially through praying and reading God's Word.

Tell us one rewarding and one difficult experience serving in the CM?

V: My encouragement is when a child comes to know and accept Christ. God has made us in His gracious and interesting manner to build a character. Though we have some interesting and challenged youngsters in our group, I need to remind myself constantly that they are God's precious gift. My difficulties are not from the children. Working with parents is my biggest challenge!

Va: My enlightening moment comes when I bumped into a LGCC child and his mother in a supermarket. Upon seeing me, the child ran to me and gave me a big tight hug. I was surprised since I had been strict with him at church. His affectionate gesture taught me this: If I teach a child out of love, he would feel it. I pray to God that I will always convey His love toward any child. One challenging task serving in the CM is a lack of teachers. I wish there will be more brothers and sisters come forward to volunteer. As of now I am still in need of 2 teachers for the upper grade.

C: My recent rewarding experience was from a kid who attended the summer VBS. He told me that he would keep on reading the Bible everyday (this year's theme was "Getting into the Bible"). A difficult moment would be lack of helpers. Teachers can get sick and have emergency issues too. It is difficult when teachers cannot come and there is not enough time to find backup teachers.

What is the biggest benefit after the remodeling? (Compare before and after)

V: CM is like a home. Children now have a permanent place they can have fun and feel safe whether it is rain or shine. Hopefully, in the near future we are able to section out a corner for children to have some quiet time for reading and winding down. The outdoor playground provides a place for them to stretch and run around and "Be children".

Va: The new playground and Children Center are wise investments. The foosball machines and ping pong tables are big attractions. They are always full of children's laughter on Sunday.

C: A centralized and safe area for kids to play and learn. In the past the classrooms were scattered. Now the kids can play inside the Children Center. Kids can relax and meet friends there between Sunday Worship and Sunday school.

Do you have enough people serving in this ministry?

V: "Under staffing" is always our biggest issue. We can only look UP and pray for His guidance to bring more brothers and sisters to join.

Teaching skills can be acquired through experience. If we do not participate, we have nothing to build on. It is important that one has to see the NEED.

C: Always short-handed. We need a huge pool of about 17 helpers for the Sunday worship and Saturday program. However, a one year commitment will be too burdensome for these teachers who also have to juggle their own families, work and personal lives.

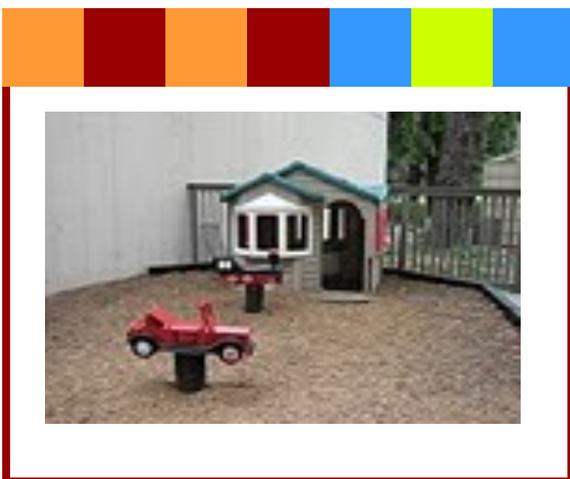
We need more teachers to rotate. A familiar set of teachers will provide a consistent learning environment for the kids. I hope more people can see the values in investing in kids' spiritual lives. They are not just our next generation; they are the ones who write the next page of Christians' history.

Any future direction /vision for CM?

V: The image of CM needs to be reestablished.

C: Personally I hope the kids can remember to "Love the Lord your God with all you heart and all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" when they graduate from LGCC.

As Candy said, "CM is a very busy ministry." It takes a lot of preparation and effort to run children's program every week. "Teaching children to do right in the eyes of God is a very long process. Sometimes, we do not see the result until years later, if at all." (quoted Vanessa). We hope this interview can open your eyes to this ministry and we pray that more brothers and sisters will serve and help. That way, we can truly live up to our church's motto "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6)



The End