

Judy Chang

Thank the Lord that I had the opportunity to join the Brazil STM to Sao Paulo, Mogi das Cruzes, Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba and Belo Horizonte and share the Gospel with the Chinese there. I was able to go mainly because Mrs. Christine Pi, the Executive Director of CIM, shared about the mission work there at our annual mission conference last March. I saw that even though Rev. Clarence Pi had gone home with the Lord many years ago, Mrs. Pi is still fervently involved in the ministry and have a heavy burden for the gospel to spread in Brazil. From that sharing, I was moved to go on this STM trip. Even though I had the opportunity to go on mission trips for the past twelve years, I had never represented our church on my own. This time I joined ten other brothers and sisters at CCIC to embark on this journey and it was a different kind of experience and training. Three months before our trip, we began our training at CCIC in San Jose over five weekends and every time I had to drive four hours round trip from Sacramento. Even though it was tiring, the task was accomplished smoothly.

Another challenge for me during this trip was that part of the time I had to participate in the VBS ministry. This was held at the Happy Kids and Happy Teens Center in Sao Paulo. The principal and the teachers there are all Christians. They use Bible as the foundation to nurture the children's characters in Portuguese and Chinese. We had to prepare some songs, skits, stories, crafts, and games, and took turn in leading them. I had helped with caring for the infants at our church but had no experience in the ministry of teaching children. This time I had the opportunity to lead them in singing and crafts and it was a new experience and learning for me. I also realized that to teach the children to know God from when they were young and helped them to walk in God's path for the rest of their lives is such an important matter. They are all innocent and lovely. Seeing that they are able to grow up under the teachings of Christian teachers is indeed a blessing. As we were ready to leave after the four-day VBS program, it was rather difficulty.

There was a single mother on our team. Other than the last three days in Curitiba, she was my roommate for the other ten days. Every night we had a time of sharing and praying with our held hands. I have a certain burden in helping single parents and the Lord had a plan by arranging for us to be roommates. This allowed us to be able to support and encourage each other in Him.

God also allowed me to have the opportunity to befriend two sisters there who love the Lord. I was inspired by their examples in serving. Both of them were single parents, a bit older than myself, have the same last name as mine, and were also from Taiwan. We were able to hit it off like old friends right from the beginning. The first was a sister we met right after we arrived in Sao Paulo. She shared that she was greatly touched by God to offer a large sum of money for our team. This providence was more than we could imagine. We were deeply touched by her love. Her husband had passed away for many years and she has four children, just like myself. Even though she is very busy, she continues in her seminary study and serves God wholeheartedly. She really let me see what an example of someone who loves God and loves man. In the end we decided to give a large portion of that offering to several churches and gospel organizations there to help them with their gospel work.

The second was another sister, Sister Chang, who loves the Lord every much that we met at our last stop in Belo Horizonte. She came specifically from Sao Paulo to help the church to partner with our team. Because the church there does not have a pastor, she would sometimes come from Sao Paulo to help with leading the meetings. She had also studied in seminary and zealously serves the Lord. During those few days there, I was staying with her at the house of a church coworker and therefore had some opportunities to exchange sharing and encouragement with her. She mentioned that her husband was taken to be with God two years ago and at the time she was a bit sad that he died so young. But last year while a coworker from the church in Belo Horizonte died suddenly, his wife was filled with grief. Sister Chang rushed to comfort her to help her walk out of the valley of sorrow by leaning on the Lord. This time she saw the widow again and they were able to encourage each other. She felt that precisely because she experienced the pain with losing her husband, she was able to help and encourage others to be strong and lean on the Lord. The little sadness she first felt disappeared completely. This is exactly how I felt for many years. God had promised that through all the sufferings, He will bless us so that we may become a vessel for Him to comfort and encourage others.

During these two stops on the mission trip, God arranged to have these two godly sisters to be by my side and provided me with such good role models. It was as if He was reminding me that even though I am a single parent and getting older, I have to continue to spread the gospel and serve Him fervently. This is what I experienced the most on this trip.