**Allison Choi**

As a kid, I grew up going to church every Sunday. When I was 6 years old, my dad passed away suddenly. When we were coming home from an airport, he had a heart attack. I remember my mom telling my sister and I to pray over and over again. At the time I felt scared and confused, but trusted that God would save my dad. Although it was very hard for my family, especially my mom who felt angry and helpless, I felt really loved because many friends brought us dinner every night, and took care of us. After, my family moved to a new church, KCPC, where we met many new people who became good close friends. If anything I felt more loved and taken care of after my dad passed. This was a huge blessing. But I felt embarrassed of being a Christian and going to church. My friends at school would ask me why I had to go to a boring church every Sunday, instead of playing or relaxing. I had a hard time trying to talk about God and taking my friends to church. When I started freshman year in high school, it was even harder for me to share about God. I spent most time rowing, where many people had a bad image of God, and nobody believed in God either. Also, coming from a K-8 school, I never had to learn how to make new friends so Freshman year challenged me, and I felt very alone at school. That year I went to the youth group retreat, where I realized that I didn’t know if I truly believed in God. But I honestly also felt too scared not to, because I didn’t want to imagine not seeing my dad in heaven. I was also very afraid of the idea of hell. I cried to my youth group teacher and friends upon this realization and they comforted and prayed for me. Since then, I have become aware of how I sought God and wanted to truly believe in him. I prayed for God to give me a sign or moment where he would reveal himself to me. In my sophomore year I started a new religion class where I learned a lot of new things about god and religion. At this point, I knew that I believed in God and heaven and hell enough to deeply fear them. At the next retreat, the pastor gave a sermon that really comforted me because it was exactly what I needed to hear at the time. During praise, I also started tearing up at the lyrics because I felt so moved by the overwhelming presence of God. I felt like my journey with God had at least started and God had opened up my heart to him. But after a few days, I came down from my spiritual high and still really struggled in my faith and had many questions, worries, and doubts. This summer, I questioned whether my faith was strong enough to go on a mission. Going into the Paraguay mission, I honestly had no expectations or intentions in going. I almost dreaded going, because I kept thinking, ‘How can I spread the gospel if I’m still having a hard time believing it myself?’ But after the mission, I realized that God’s way of answering my years of prayers about doubt, was by sending me to that mission. In Paraguay, I could really see the work that God was doing there and finally understood and felt what God’s presence was. The genuineness and happiness of the Paraguayans made me rethink and reflect on my own mindset, attitude, and lifestyle. My team members’ willingness to serve wholeheartedly inspired and motivated me to leave my comfort zone and do whatever I could as well. I understood that God really does answer prayers; it just may not be on your expected timing. My faith grew more in that week than it had in the past few years. Now, I’m trying to work on incorporating God unto my everyday life instead of jumping from spiritual highs to neglecting God in my real life. My faith in God will be a journey throughout my whole life, but I find reassurance in the fact that if you seek out God and ask him to open up your heart, he will never leave you in the dark.

**Sydney Kong**  
Hi, my name is Sydney. This year was my second time going to summer missions in Paraguay. God called me to return back to witness the love and gratitude of the people of Paraguay that I experienced last year. I also saw this as an opportunity to build on the relationships I made last year.

Throughout the week, we visited the impoverished neighborhoods of Ytotoro. We evangelized, visited families of the local church, distributed baskets of food, and invited people to Hygiene day, where we wash locals' hair, hands, feet, and have a VBS for the kids. Pastor David, a dedicated pastor who we spent the majority of the week with, prayed for each of the families and told us their stories. When we were going to different houses, I recognized an old woman who attended the Hygiene day that I participated in from last year. I remember we called her Abuelita. Pastor David explained how she has been a committed member of the church for a long time. He told us about how one Sunday, they asked for donations for a children’s event at the church. Despite not having much money and having to pay for her son’s hospital bills, she came up to Pastor David and gave him all that she had, saying it was for the kids. In response to him telling her story, she said praise be to God. Seeing such humility, joy, and gratitude without having much at all made me realize how selfishly I’ve been living. At home, there are people who have everything, but are unhappy with their lives. In Paraguay, they don’t have much but they still have a joy that cannot be contained. She is full of happiness because God fulfills her.

I believe that moment made me realize how selfish and sinful I was back at home. What hurt the most was that I remember seeing all of these things last year and telling myself that I would change and commit myself to God. The guilt swept over me like a wave and I couldn’t help but feel overwhelmed with shame and anger towards myself. During testimonies, I heard my team’s stories of grace. Many of them found Christ later on in their life after facing hardships. I compared my life to theirs and used their stories as an excuse to doubt whether my faith was genuine or not. How could I be so young and already believe in God? I haven’t faced any hardships in my life so how do I know whether my faith is genuine or if it’s just a habit grown out of having Christian parents? Those initial feelings of insecurity and wanting to compare myself to others made me want to hide away from the world. I believe God rebuked me. He made me realize how broken I was and how I rely on my own selfish intentions and insecurities to make decisions. I realized I needed God more than anything.

After missions, I was able to reflect and talk to my sister about how I struggled with a lot of guilt and uncertainty during the trip. She told me that God pulls us towards him all at different points in our lives. It just happens that he pushed me towards him at an earlier age. My relationship with God will always be different from others and I just need to be willing to take those small steps towards building that relationship. Those small steps of recognizing God’s presence throughout my life is what will eventually lead to me fully giving everything to God.

I hope to apply this trip to my life by praying more and doing devotionals everyday so I can build on my understanding and relationship with God. I am overall thankful for the Paraguayians, the missionaries, and the people on my team who taught me about humility, maturity, and love. I encourage anyone to come to Paraguay to witness the joy and love that I experienced.

**Esther Han**  
Though as sinners, the redemptive love of our Father is profoundly impossible to replicate onto others, but to merely be at the receiving end of this gift of salvation is simply inadequate. Knowing that the greatest commandment is to love God with all of our hearts, our souls, and our minds, the perfect outflow should result in the fulfillment of the second greatest commandment: to love others as yourself (Matt. 22: 37-39).

When the first announcements were made about the 2019 Summer Missions to Paraguay, and Cambodia, my prayers were general, and broad. Admittedly, the extent of my involvement to any global missions, began, and ended with receiving support letters, lifting up of prayers, and offering financial contributions. This was the only way I knew how to support the ones who had the bigger heart, and the “calling” for missions. To consider serving in such a direct capacity seemed out of reach. I was convinced that mission trips were ventures reserved for the holier, more seasoned Christians. This was quite difficult to relate to.

In the following week, my prayers about summer missions became more specific. I was influenced by a deepened curiosity in how God was working in other parts of the world through missionaries who dedicate their whole lives to serving as messengers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The more I prayed intentionally, the more unsettled I felt about continuing on this trajectory of passive servanthood.

Through obedience, I was blessed to have had the opportunity to serve in Paraguay, in unity with other members of CCSF and CCSC to form what functioned so perfectly as one body in Christ. Each member unique in their own gifts, yet so adaptable through the like-mindedness for the glory of God. This reminded me of how sovereign God truly is. He uses each of us in His own specific way, and as long as we respond in obedience to Him, we should find comfort in the knowledge that He is in control despite our weaknesses.

Though we set out to be a blessing upon our brothers and sisters in Paraguay, I was that much more blessed to be awakened to what it truly looked like to love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. To praise with so much joy in the Lord for His mercy, even in genuine suffering, is to truly trust in the love of our Father.

I pray that my reliance on the Lord will mirror the depth of trust I’ve been so blessed to witness during this season of awakening.

“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.” Romans 12:12

**Nolan Ku**

I was blessed to join the 2019 Paraguay short-term missions support team for the second year in a row.  God worked mightily in, and through us (but mostly in us). We spent the majority of our time serving the city of Marangatu with the school ministry (sharing testimonies, performing skits, painting the courtyard, hosting a special needs seminar, teaching English) and helping serve the more impoverished area of Ytororo (handing out care packages, VBS, hygiene day). Overall, we were able to deepen ties with the pastors and locals with boots on the ground, and we were able to forge new relationships, with the new short-term missions support team and new faces of Paraguay.

Words will never be able to capture the feelings received when a town full of kids, with no clean water or food on the table, run up to you simply for a hug.  I had the opportunity, with my broken Spanish, to connect with locals to share food and the word. To pray with one another and realize how God is so much bigger than just our Bay Area.  He reaches out to the furthest parts of the world and uses his people to shine bright. I was able to see so much of God in Paraguay through all the kind people; who despite their lack of resources, loved us so deeply.

Paraguay has a very soft spot in my heart.  I come back to San Francisco a better man, more humble, more giving, and more willing to serve because of such fruitful interactions with people in Paraguay.  Interactions fueled by Christ and sustained by the Spirit. It is my hope that everyone has the opportunity to visit Marangatu and Ytororo one day. To be blessed by being a blessing.

Thank you Pastor David, Pastor Christian, and Pastor Pedro for all that you do; until next time.  Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions. Just do it. All the glory be to God.

**Ryan Shim**

This was my second trip going to Cambodia and I can say with confidence that it only gets better! When I decided to become a follower of Christ, I remember it all started with a simple gesture of someone approaching me and sharing the good news. Seeing how much the Gospel changed my life, I wanted to take part in the great commission and share the good news across all nations.

This year, I was able to dedicate two weeks towards Cambodia missions where our church partners with missionaries involved in the MTW organization. On the surface, it’s a trip that involves learning more about the Cambodian history, teaching English to the youth, various crafts and games, sermons and worship, supporting bible studies, and to build stronger relationships with the church, the students, and the missionaries.

But more than the events we organized or the lessons we taught, I am reminded of how great our God is. I am reminded of the courage and strong faith that is needed to go against what the world tells you and to say that God is good. I am reminded of the brothers and sisters that are across the world and that despite the differences in our appearances and in our languages, we worship the same God. I am reminded of the day where there will be no more sorrow and no more pain and until that day to hold on to the living hope that is within me.

With this being my second time, it was different in a sense where some things felt familiar. I wasn’t as culture shocked and it didn’t take long for me to adjust to the surroundings. At times, it felt like I was visiting friends hoping to encourage and be encouraged. For me, it wasn’t just a come and see kind of experience but more of a partnership - one where I feel invested in their lives and their lives to mine. I hope to see them again soon.

It’s always difficult to put everything you experience into words, but I can only encourage those who are reading this to take a leap, to see what’s happening and be a part of it. You never know. A simple gesture can go a long way.

Much Love,

Ryan

**Madison Kong**

I did not know what to expect from this trip. I remember hearing about Cambodia from past mission reports, but Cambodia always seemed so far and removed from my world. It was difficult to imagine how God worked in a foreign country known to have such a dark and broken history. But God works in mysterious ways because being there has completely opened my heart to the country and its people.

In Angk'jeay village, I was amazed by how faithfully and joyfully the students served one another. At the end of class, all the children helped clean up the chairs and tables without complaining. As we instructed them about games and crafts, the older students translated for us so that the younger students could understand. They acted as role models and initiated serving without expecting anything in return. Young kids, as little as 5 years old, gladly practiced putting others before themselves. This was the norm. It was a reminder for myself that serving is a humbling act, meant to demonstrate Christ’s love for us.

Although my time in the city was completely different from the village, I felt equally blessed to experience God’s faithfulness and presence there. The student-led praise at Khmer Christian Church was powerful. As they sang “Give Thanks” and “Broken Vessels” with eyes closed and loud voices proclaiming salvation through Jesus, I got choked up realizing that even though we were from different sides of the world, we worshiped the same God. They worship knowing how their choice to believe in Christ will bring persecution and hardship. For Christians in Cambodia, choosing to live as a Christian means going against so many aspects of their culture and as a result, it’s common for Christians to be disowned by their families. Despite the external circumstances, they hold on to the constant truth that is the gospel and happily declare it.

Witnessing the Cambodians’ excitement for the gospel was moving and it forced me to reflect on myself. If they are able to live for the Lord with such joy and complete dependence on Him while they have almost nothing, then I, who have much more than I need, should be able to do the same. My time in the village and the city was heartbreaking and humbling, and I am grateful that God has so clearly taught and shown me how He is in control. God truly works in His own time with a greater plan in mind.

It is incredibly clear how God is working in Cambodia. But I was only able to witness God’s presence because I was there. I encourage you all to come for yourself to serve, to witness, and to be blessed. Until next time, “joom rip liuh” [bye] and “preah yesu s’rawline neyeck” [Jesus loves you]!

**Simon Yang**

I’ve been to several mission trips in the past but this was the first time with Christ Central. Through this trip I was reminded of several things and I wanted to share some of them with you all:

1. The opportunity that we have. A verse that kept going through my head on missions was Luke 12:48 - *Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.* The churches in Cambodia have so little compared to us and yet God is using them to do great things. I was challenged by this. We have so much more freedom and resources simply by living in America. We can do more. I can do more. I can give more.
2. The necessity of prayer. Because it was my first time, I didn’t know what to expect and I quickly realized I was underprepared. I hate being underprepared. I like to write down every single word when I preach. Thus, during down time, I found myself constantly thinking about the next sermon. In the midst of all this, I forgot to do the most important thing, pray. I was reminded that my words are not what save people; rather it is the Holy Spirit who uses the preached word who does the saving. I recognized then how much I have been doing ministry on my own abilities and how I need to be on my knees much more often.
3. The importance of missionary care. What made this trip so unique for me was the opportunity to get to know the missionaries there. It was a tremendous blessing to be able to share stories and struggles with them. Through these interactions, my heart for them grew. Missionaries aren’t super heroes. It’s not always pretty; in fact, their struggles can be amplified living in a foreign country. I don’t have any tangible long-term solutions but what I do know is that as a church we must continually seek to support them as best we can because we are co-laborers. I miss them and their families dearly and I hope to see them again soon.

**Gloria Park**

I didn’t feel like going to Cambodia. I made my decision but one of my prayers going in was, Lord break our expectations and make way. Honestly, from the first day he answered that prayer.

During our 13 hour flight to Taipei, I was starting to feel really off. It wasn’t until we landed, everything hit me all at once. I had been undergoing an allergy attack the entire time of traveling. Immediately, Pastor Tim took me to Family Clinic, the hospital clinic of missionary Dr. Mark. I was put on IV and I was super nervous and disappointed that missions had to start out like this asking, “God what is this”?? Dr. Mark comes in but then he began to preach so much truth I actually needed to hear. It felt like was as if God had sat me down to speak in the midst of all the noise in my heart. Dr. Mark mentioned:

* This analogy of the “Bowl of Soup”. That after missions when we go back to the States, it’s a reality check. The huge difference in our way of living. It’s as if we are coming back as a hard carrot, but the more immersed we are in the world (soup), we become like this cooked, soft carrot blending in with the rest of the soup.
* He shared that Jesus asks us to do 1 of 3 things: to go, to send or we’re being disobedient. I heard stories of trafficked girls with many health issues that are in need. I immediately felt attached because of recently having a heart for human-trafficked victims and how aligned that vision was while being in there.
* That this trip is all about the change that God is transforming in me. That he is already revealing my weaknesses and what I can’t control as I’m laying here on this bed.

It ached my heart to see what the enemy had stolen from this country and what I can’t wait for God to redeem, whether it’s many baptisms/ the spread of the gospel. Psalm 102:18 was a verse that rang in my head throughout the trip. It goes: **Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord.**

The example led by the MTW team stirred my heart more than anything. It felt like I was watching living and breathing examples of how we decrease so that Christ may increase.

I’m currently praying to hopefully return to Cambodia long-term. I don’t know what that means but I know that my heart can’t stay still from it. God showed me here what true Christ-following living looks like for his glory alone and I really can’t wait to go back. Praise be to God.