



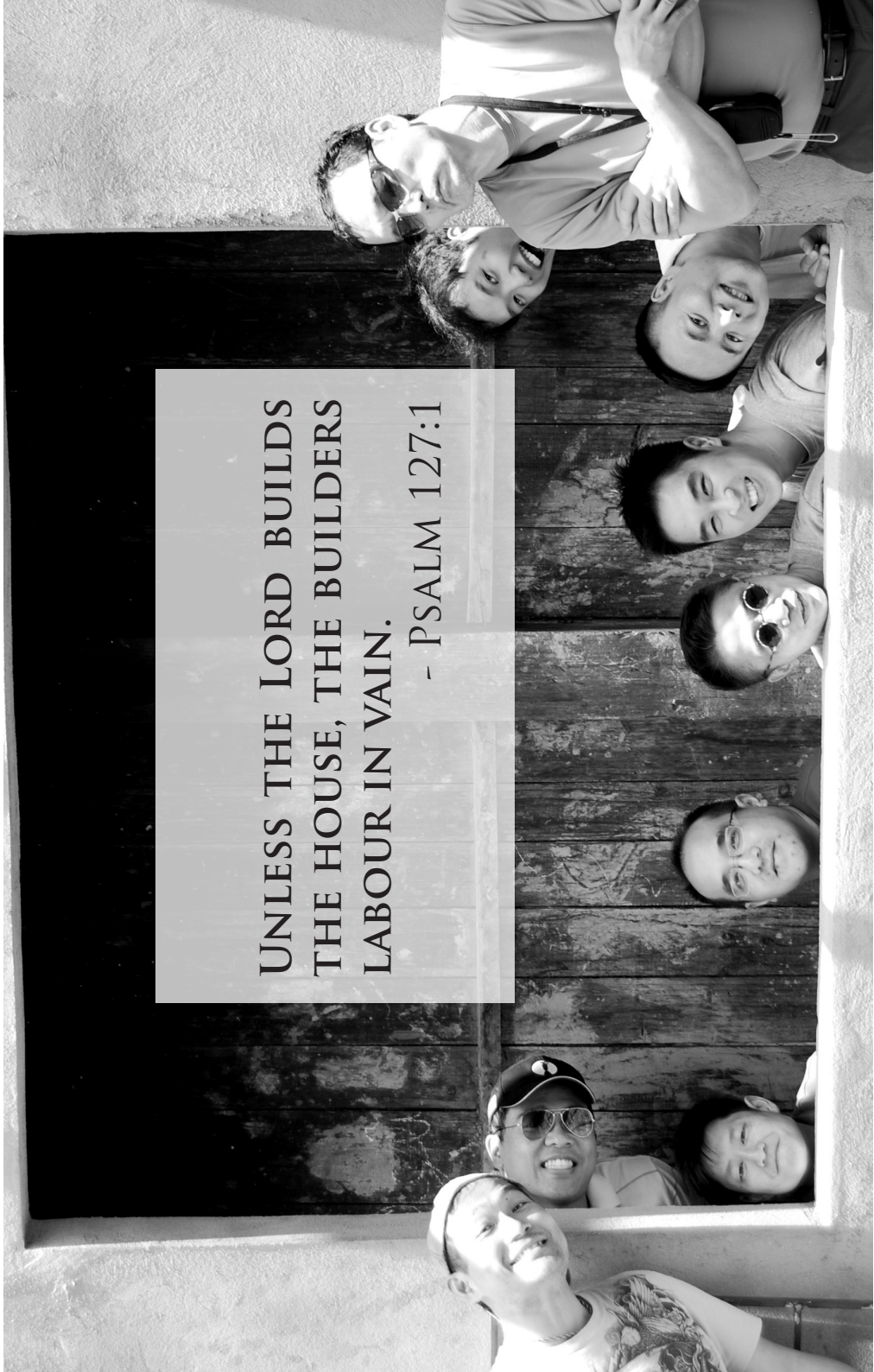
No DEP Left Behind

2013 men's mission trip to Vietnam



UNLESS THE LORD BUILDS
THE HOUSE, THE BUILDERS
LABOUR IN VAIN.

- PSALM 127:1



Bennet W



When have you ever seen a group of nine men chatting inside an approximate 7x7 square foot room for hours?

Wong

We were that group of men and we stayed inside a four-berth cabin on our way back to Hanoi on 21 April. That night we had a session of profound sharing.

Actually, we started our men's talk since the first day of the trip.

We took turns to share our lives. I could say that each sharing raised the bar higher, and the next sharing become longer and deeper. Our sharing did not stopped at the end of the mission trip and it is still continuing today. I am sorry that I cannot tell you what we have

shared as we have non-disclosure agreement.

If you are a guy, I encourage you to join us for the 2014 men mission trip and experience the brotherhood bonding. If you are a lady, I am sorry again that this trip is for men only. However, you should recommend your husband, boyfriend, brothers, father, uncles, etc, to join us next year.





This is my second trip to Lao Cai to visit the school there. After helping to build a playground last year I was looking forward to continuing to build relationships and to this year's project. The key prayer item has always been that we would have a chance to share the gospel.

However, with Vietnam being closed off to Christianity we realise that opportunities would need to come only after having built trust and relationships. Honestly, I

thought we would need to visit a few more years till we would have such a level of trust.

This year we were building a kitchen and interestingly we were asked to slow down and take a break. This was so that the kids could work with us after school. While the performance, achievement oriented side begrudgingly accepted taking a long break I didn't realise that God was about to teach us something about trusting Him, and how he answers prayer.



Brian Kusunoki

Anyway, having a long break we decided to do devotionals and while studying, the headmistress asked if she could join us. I remember being completely flustered as I was leading and we were discussing Leviticus, difficult enough without having to explain it to a non-Christian and non-English speaker as well. All I could do was a quick sentence prayer to God to just take over, as I had no idea how to adjust Leviticus to a meaningful message for her.

But you see God

orchestrated the whole moment. I had just simplified my notes the night before to mainly emphasize how Christ replaces the temple sacrifices.

Also, though I hadn't planned on it I had in my backpack bracelets that help you explain the gospel with colours. All of the team were wearing them and the teachers and staff had noticed them.

So while explaining through an interpreter how in the Old Testament there were so many sacrifices. The headmistress asked "if you do

Brian Kusunoki



not do these sacrifices now, how can you be made right with God?" Pastor Sherman then walked her through the gospel using the colour bracelets: black for sin, red for the blood of Christ, white for justification, green for new life, and gold for glorification. It was an amazing moment

and truly an answered prayer.

Shortly after another teacher came by and asked what we were discussing. The headmistress gave her a bracelet and walked her through the gospel as though she had been doing this for years! Bracelets then went out to all the teachers and we know for certain they have all heard the gospel message.



Our prayer is now for God to work in the hearts of these teachers. It is so amazing to see Him taking whatever we offer to transform lives. I can't wait to go back again next year.

DEP JAI

noun - approximation for Vietnamese "handsome guy"; MF-speak for "brother in Christ, forged in Thai Giang Pho"



Oh no! Not again! Ten days before I was to co-lead the annual men's mission trip with pastor Sherman, I sprained my ankle so badly during a Thai boxing training session that it was easier to crawl on the floor if I needed to move from one room to another...

Last year I had a high fever and some serious infections that the doctor suggested I should give the trip a miss... This year, the same advice! Is spiritual battle real? I believe so. I believe the enemy will try to do everything he can to cast doubts and give excuses to so many people (including myself) so we can have good reasons to opt out from serving God in such capacity.

Two principles in the Bible came to a reality in this trip. One, God's strength is displayed in my time of weakness for I was limping throughout the whole trip, yet

Daniel Tse



He still used me despite of me for his Glory. Two, God makes all things possible! We can do all things through Him; In this trip, He again reminded me of my spiritual gift and how I need use it for the body of Christ and He strengthen my faith by reinforcing that **“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain.** (Psalm 127:1)” What



more can you asked for in a five day mission journey when God's word became real in your face?!

So, if you are a man and you have never been to a men's mission trip, I would be so bold to say that you might still be just a boy... Next year, I will see you in Vietnam! Come be part of the Band of Brothers.

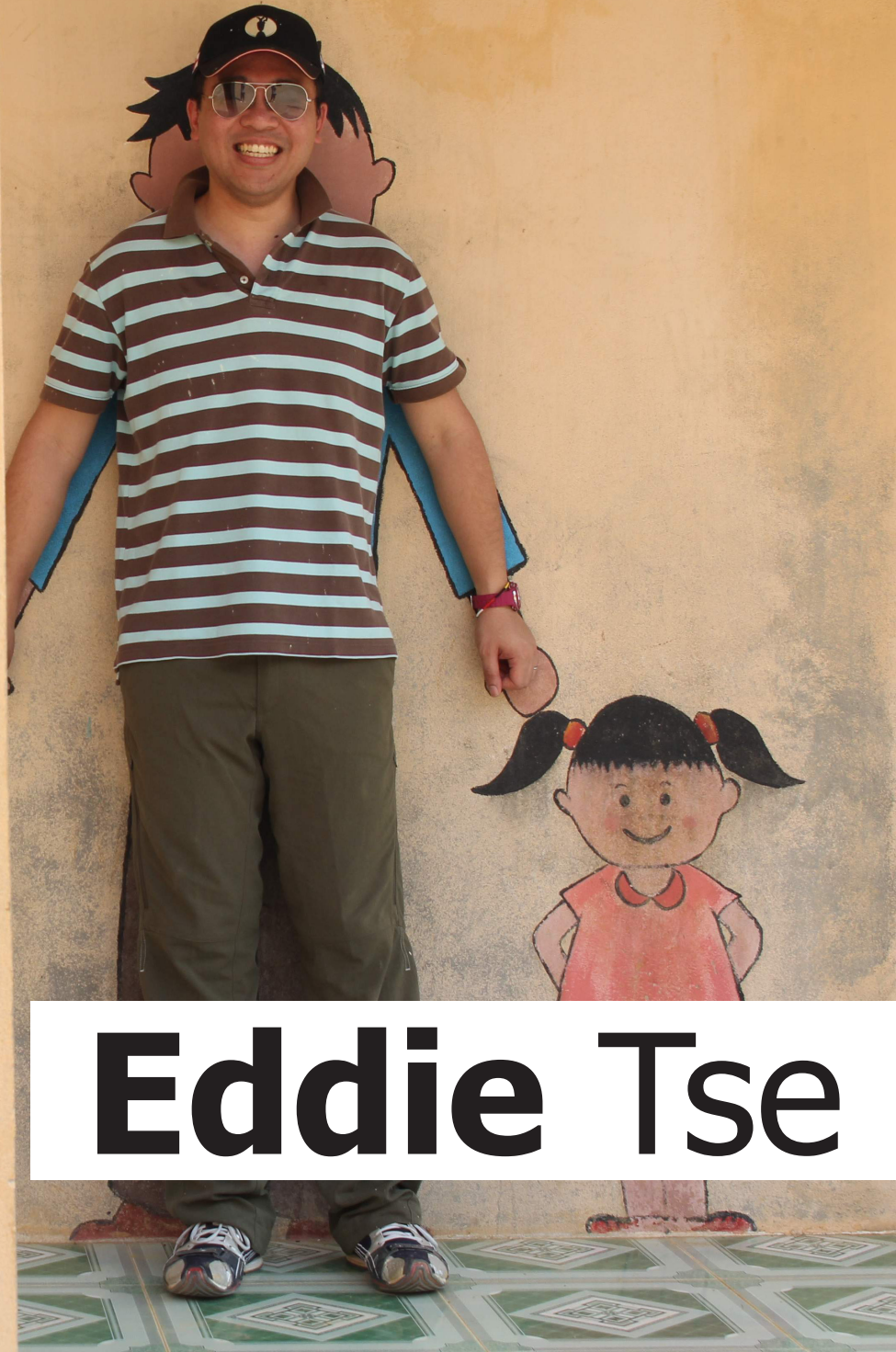


It was August 28, 2012 when I first began travelling to Hanoi, Vietnam. It seemed only a short while ago, but between then and now, I've travelled close to six times on flight KA297. Pushing snooze on the 5:45am alarm and rushing every time to catch the 8:40am morning flight. Am I ever excited to go? Ofcourse not. Who enjoys spending time away from his family and a baby of 18 months? However, ever since Adam bit the apple, we all know working life would forever change. Likewise, since that flight in August (leading to my company's decision to invest in the country of Vietnam), I knew paradigms would shift and I needed God's help to open my heart for the people of Vietnam.

I believe it was during Chinese New Year when I heard of this IECC Men's Fraternity trip to Lao Cai. At that time, I surely had my doubts whether it was within God's plan for

me. Firstly, I've hardly ever attended any MF events and obviously wouldn't know anyone there. Secondly, I've never attended any mission trips with only men but could already foresee how each of our prolific egos would clash in a setting where building is involved. Last but not least, on my last mission trip, I had my wife Tiffany beside me for support and catering to my princely needs, this time I had nobody. Therefore, I struggled with God till the date of application deadline, before I conceded to Him and said "God...this doesn't look like a recipe for success...but it's only 5 days...I guess I'll manage."

Looking back now, this was probably the silliest thing I could have said. A lot did happen in those five days and it was nothing I could have imagined. 1.) We set out with a purpose to construct a simple kitchen for primary school children. Instead God paved



Eddie Tse



the way for conversations with principals and teachers which gave us the opportunity to share the gospel. 2.) We thought nine strong men would be responsible for the heavy lifting of all materials. Instead the children from the school performed 90 percent of the work with bare hands. 3.) We emphasized the key factor was to build relationships with the children and the people we came in contact with.

Instead the greatest bonds we came away with were the ones built between ourselves. It is no coincident that God had blessed this trip right from the beginning and like all good recipes, each ingredient has a place within the dish, but only as whole does it taste even better.

I believe God challenged us all during this trip and bestowed upon us numerous lessons that we can bring back to reality and meditate on. For myself, I have learnt not to only focus on "my way" how things

should be done. "Let go of control" he whispered to me time after time. It felt as if I was comparing my plan to HIS plan. Ha...We should all know better. Furthermore, from listening to each of our testimonies, I finally realize how our brokenness also binds us together on common ground. We are no different than each other in the eyes of God. Behind our corporate credentials,

behind our mask of wealth, and even behind our devotion to God... We each have a story to tell, and each of these stories are glorifying to God.

If I had to answer to God once again on what my expectations for a mission trip to Vietnam would be? "God...I don't know what will happen... eventough it's only five days... But I know I'll be 50 times stronger when I'm done".

Amen.



The Thai Giang Pho school.

What's said in Bac Ha, stays in Bac Ha...

- Dep Jai adage



**Jonathan
Chan**

I wanted to join this trip for 2 main reasons: 1) my last mission trip was almost 6 years ago and I really missed stepping into other people's lives and doing life with them. It was also a personal retreat from the monotony of the daily grind, and the overwhelming amount of work, food, and entertainment; things that so easily capture our attention and turn us away from the more important things in life. 2) It was a men's only trip, and I was looking for a few good men.

For me, this trip didn't turn out to be about serving the locals, even though that

was a large part of it; it was about the guys. I've never really had a mentor or a group of guys I can find wise counsel with ever since I became a Christ follower. I have a great dad who provides in all areas except spiritual matters. So by default I operated on memorising Scripture, reading Christian classics, and listening to sermons with sound doctrine. These have shaped who I am today, but I still felt lonely, sometimes even irrelevant. I had no brother I could confide in, no mentor who could affirm my decisions. On many occasions I found myself at odds with

Friendship is one of the sweetest joys of life; many might have failed beneath the bitterness of their trial had they not found a friend.

- Charles H. Spurgeon

Jonathan Chan

culture, and I would make the unpopular choice, the hard choice; and then suffer for it. I remember praying "God, do my decisions even matter? Does obedience make any difference when I'm the only one doing it?"

I went through a period of searching, putting my hopes in the wrong people and

being let down, before I eventually encountered fellow companions; kindred spirits travelling on the same road, sharing similar values and convictions (Amos 3:3). I felt blessed because I now have counsel (Proverbs 12:15), but I still wanted the wisdom of some older men; and on this trip I found them. Throughout the trip we each shared our testimonies, and I was amazed at how far we

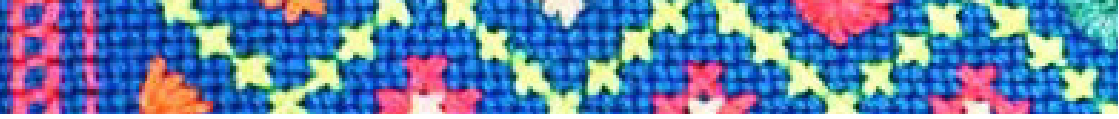




True men fight for holiness.
Will you join our fight?



could stray, but even more amazed at how far God would chase. And I was struck by God's undying faithfulness (2 Timothy 2:13) and sufficient grace (2 Corinthians 12:9). While their past may tell you otherwise, I saw in these men a desire to follow Christ. I saw that all men are fallen, and if left alone will head to destruction. Yet in these men, awakened by the love of Christ, I saw that they wanted to fight. I was inspired also to continue the Good Fight (1 Timothy 6:12). I was reminded once again, that **True Christianity is a fight... Where there is grace there will be conflict. There is no holiness without conflict** (JC Ryle).



When and where

- April 17 to 21, 2013.
- Thai Giang Pho School, Bac Ha District, Lao Cai Province, Vietnam.

What made him to join the mission trip

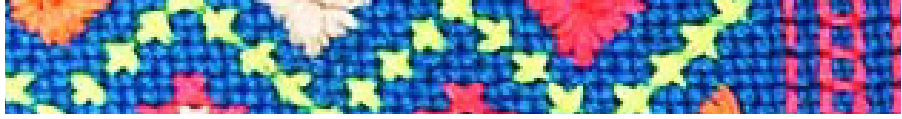
- The event was organized by the Men's Ministry from my church – Island ECC through a local mission organisation GVI.
- It was a follow-up mission

trip from my last year's mission to the same school.

His experience

This is my second mission trip after I served on my first ever mission trip last year. The main reason for me to go back to the school rather than taking a break or going to another place this year is the understanding I got from the GVI staff that many people just went to a place and never





Malcolm Chin

come back making the local people a feeling of abandoned or rejected.

The most unforgettable experience

I had a very low expectation as to how much actual spiritual sharing we can do even on this second trip because from last year's experience we were only able to sing one Christian song, Give Thanks, at the end of the trip. Most of the time was spent on the actual construction and some generic team building and relationship building activities.

However, God always had His way to mighty things, we were asked to slowing down our physical work on Saturday morning to allow the students to complete the work with us together in the



afternoon and so the team gathered around to do devotional. Then the principle come and join us while we were sharing and Pastor Sherman got the chance to share the full gospel with her. Shortly afterwards, their English teacher also joined us sitting beside me with our GVI staff translator on the other side, and I got the chance to share the complete gospel with her again using the colorful bracelets brought by Brian.

I have not share the gospel directly like that for almost 10 years! God's work doesn't stop from there either as later on in the afternoon, Brian all of a sudden suggest me to bring out the guitar to sing some songs out in the hallway. Very soon, I was gathered around

by many students singing two Christian songs, "Give Thanks" in English and a Chinese songs called "Searching" in Mandarin. Brian was holding his iPad in front of me with the song sheets I send out to him via e-mail from a weeks ago and Jon was leading the students doing hand motions because we don't understand any Vietnamese and none of the students understands English and Mandarin. Despite the at the most non-ideal place and unequipped environment for an singspiration worship, it is one of the most wonderful worship experience in my life.

Lesson learnt from the trip

Following God's plan and let God do His work is the main thing I've learned this year. Sometimes, I think we are just doing too much of God work, it is His work that we are helping to do, we should make ourselves become his tools and vessels rather than we are doing our own work



using God's kingdom as our tools and platforms.

Any messages that he would like to share

- One interesting thing this year is that the last section of the road leading to the school was under construction in a way that our van cannot pass through, so we have the walk a few kilometers before reaching the school and the same on our way back at the end of the day.

The walk was a wonderful experience which brings up a verse in my mind -

- How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?
- And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?
- Or him whom they have never heard
- And how are they to hear without someone preaching?
- And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As

Malcolm Chiu



it is written, **“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”** (Romans 10:14-15)

to help rebuild their toilet and shower facilities, at the same time I am also pray for a family mission trip. Will let God guide me on my assignment.

Will he continue taking part in such trips in future?

We wanted to go back for yet another trip, may be





A pave road is being built to connect the village of Thai Giang Pho with the nearby town. While this mean our team would have to talk to the school everyday, we are delighted to imagine how this would benefit the students and their families.



The students preparing dinner.



Phillip Chin

My first missions trip was awesome!

I was blessed to be able to serve God and bond with eight Brothers in Christ.

One of my memorable moments was sharing to one of the teachers that "God brought us men to Vietnam". This was after she asked if we

grew up together as youths, lived in the same area in Hong Kong and why only men come to Vietnam? I shared that we came from various countries now living with our families throughout Hong Kong. Our preference was to keep this a men's only trip because of the hard labour and bonding.

God was the primary



reason we were together serving here in Vietnam.

The Vietnamese culture also taught me that people relationships are more important than work. The head mistress instructed us to slow down the shoveling in order for the children to join us in the labour, after their classes ended. Coming from Hong Kong, I have been too accustomed to working hard and trying to increase productivity. It was nice to experience a culture that values participation and teamwork.

Additionally, I enjoyed the physical work building the kitchen, playing with the children, volleyball with the teachers and fellowship with all the brothers. Though I expected hard physical labour and poor living conditions on the missions trip, I was pleasantly surprised with the close bonding encountered

with the other men.

God spoke to me during the testimony time as I listened to a few of the brothers. Unknowing to them, their testimonies challenged me personally. After a bit of soul searching, I shared with the brothers a personal struggle of mine a few years ago that I have never shared with anyone apart from my wife. The sharing to the brothers was like lifting a huge burden from my back and also helped me start rebuilding trust with men, which was broken over 20 years ago.

I'm blessed to have a loving wife, beautiful daughters and now a group of brothers that I could call anytime for help and support.

Lastly, I definitely plan to join next years Vietnam trip and look forward to future mission trips with my wife and family.



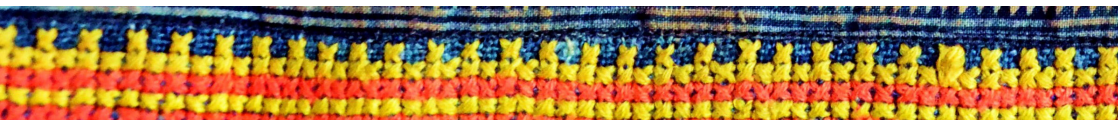
Even though my job is missions, there's a big part of the Men's Vietnam trip that is personal. I get a lot out of the "guy time" and I'm blessed by the depth of sharing and transparency in our group.

If I had to highlight one thing about this trip, it would be the value of continuity in relationships. This was our second trip to the same school in Thai Giang Pho commune, Bac Ha district, Lao Cai province. It was clear that the teachers and students remembered us. They was no time needed to renew the friendship--we just picked up where we left off last year. The teachers asked specifically about guys who were on last year's trip but absent this

year. Connecting with them again felt like the last trip had been just last month instead of last year.

This closeness, this friendship opened a very unique opportunity to share the gospel. Maybe I've been jaded from so many years of having to be cautious and conservative in order to remain in the country because I've come to not expect or hope for moments like this. I can only ascribe it to God's sense of humour that after so many years of being based in Hanoi and leading overseas missions teams to Lao Cai to try to witness through community development projects, it was only after I moved to Hong Kong that I was a part of one

Sherman





Chau




Sherman Chau



of the most incredible witnessing experiences in all my time in Vietnam.

We had a moment of down time from work. Brian Kusunoki set things up by leading our devotional time and making the most of the moment. The

headmistress, Mrs Lan, came over to join us and I felt like it was okay to continue what we were doing because we were sharing amongst ourselves and not directly witnessing to her. Gradually however, there was a moment that seemed ripe for sharing. I used a "wordless" bracelet to present



the gospel through different colours, black for sin, red for the blood of Christ, etc. Mrs Lan did not become a Christian but she was definitely very interested and engaged and a seed was planted. Not only that, but she shared what she had just heard with a few other teachers.

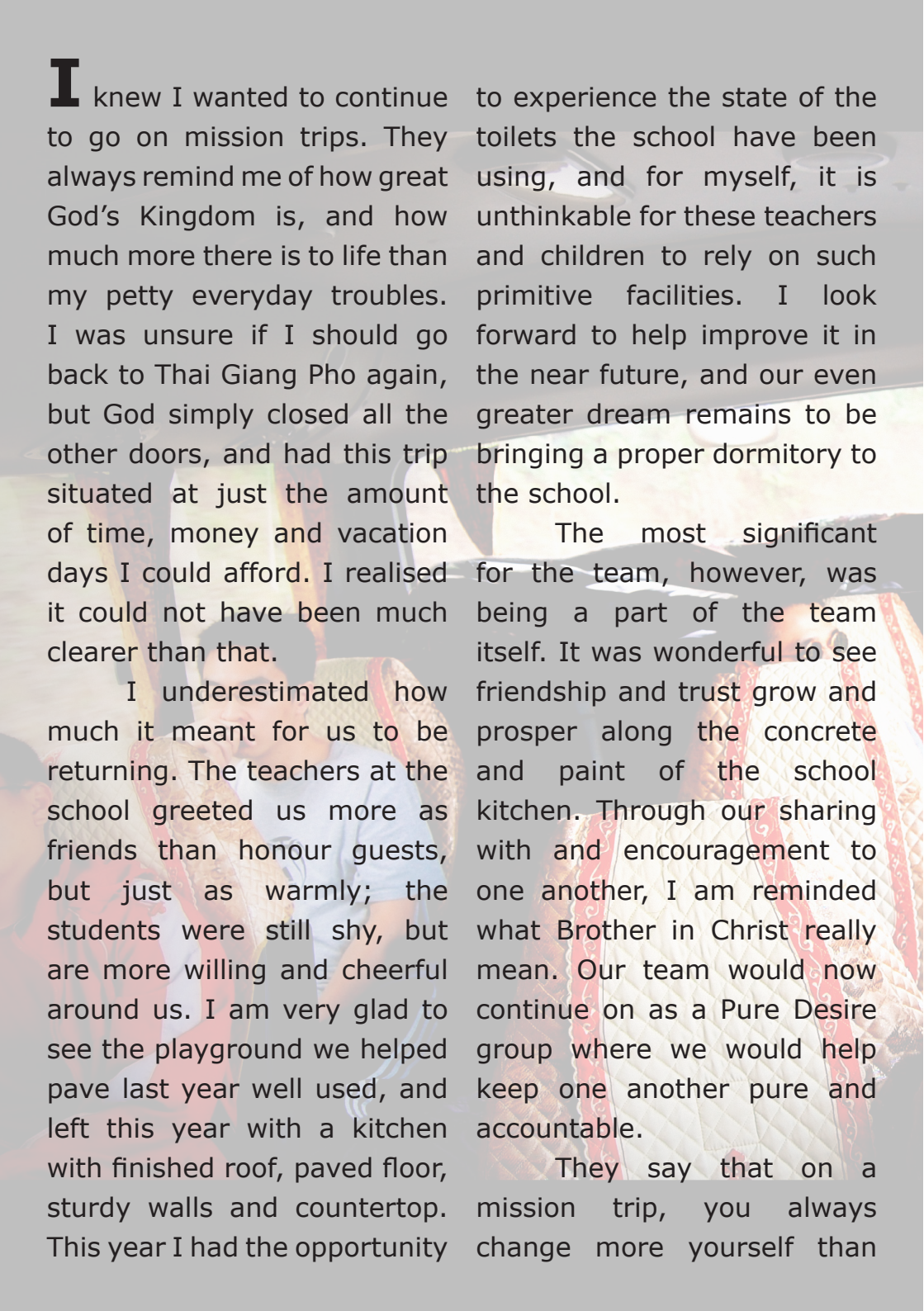
It is no exaggeration to say that northern Vietnam in general, and a very sensitive border province like Lao Cai in particular, is resistant

to the gospel and very hard to penetrate. Even as I write this I am quite amazed at the opportunity we had and am looking forward to going back and following up on the results of this trip.

It's a mission trip!

said by one Dep to another whenever they appear to be enjoying themselves a little too much, often to no avail.





I knew I wanted to continue to go on mission trips. They always remind me of how great God's Kingdom is, and how much more there is to life than my petty everyday troubles. I was unsure if I should go back to Thai Giang Pho again, but God simply closed all the other doors, and had this trip situated at just the amount of time, money and vacation days I could afford. I realised it could not have been much clearer than that.

I underestimated how much it meant for us to be returning. The teachers at the school greeted us more as friends than honour guests, but just as warmly; the students were still shy, but are more willing and cheerful around us. I am very glad to see the playground we helped pave last year well used, and left this year with a kitchen with finished roof, paved floor, sturdy walls and countertop. This year I had the opportunity

to experience the state of the toilets the school have been using, and for myself, it is unthinkable for these teachers and children to rely on such primitive facilities. I look forward to help improve it in the near future, and our even greater dream remains to be bringing a proper dormitory to the school.

The most significant for the team, however, was being a part of the team itself. It was wonderful to see friendship and trust grow and prosper along the concrete and paint of the school kitchen. Through our sharing with and encouragement to one another, I am reminded what Brother in Christ really mean. Our team would now continue on as a Pure Desire group where we would help keep one another pure and accountable.

They say that on a mission trip, you always change more yourself than

the people you went to serve in the first place. I am grateful to have witnessed it over and over again. Should I be able to

go back again, I am excited to see how lives will be changed and renewed—ours and Vietnamese alike.



YS Tong



The kitchen finished.



Sa, our host these two years, and his family.





THEREFORE

GO

AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF
ALL NATIONS...



ISLAND
EVANGELICAL COMMUNITY CHURCH



GLOCAL VENTURES, INC.