



SHARING RWANDA

From the journal of Melissa: Tracing God's Hands

Africa, being my hometown and the place where my adventures with God began five years ago, holds a special place in my heart. After a two-year break, I returned to Rwanda this year, making it my third trip. Although my third time, this trip was different. A bit of background to explain...on my first trip, I was hesitant; on my second, rebellious and a heart that was on the run away from what God had in store for me – Discipleship Training School (DTS) with Youth With A Mission (YWAM), an invitation to step out of my boat (comfort zone) and walk on water with Him.

Eventually, but not without much struggle, excuses and bargaining with God, I took off for six months and did my DTS. Throughout that journey, it was one of surrendering control, learning to trust God, recognizing His character, experiencing His love and grace and coming away knowing Him a little more. Life after the DTS very quickly returned back to the routine I was familiar with and, while waiting for what might be next, I went to Rwanda with no expectations other than to see and hear what God might show me. And it was this attitude that made the experiences on this trip unforgettable.

From the first day and throughout the two weeks, God showed me that He is the ultimate Provider. Being away for two years, as we were visiting the genocide memorial, a random thought crossed my mind – if money was freely available to the country and its people, how many of the problems that it faced would be solved. And it was then that I distinctly heard God remind me that only He was the solution, only He could satisfy, only He could provide, only He could heal. This was just the beginning...in revisiting and reconnecting with friends in Rwanda after my two-year absence, I saw God abundantly provide from a new generation of adorable babies and children to a huge house to accommodate a growing family who used to live in one room on the YWAM base. Even in my absence, God was in control over all the details. He has not forgotten and cares more for the people of Rwanda than I could ever hope to. Personally, this was a huge encouragement for me and confirmed that God is faithful and He is good all the time. Interestingly, this tied in with the theme of healing for the team – I needed to learn to let go and trust God completely.



In spite of the many spiritual battles we fought, including the experience of casting out a demon, I was encouraged and touched by the honesty, openness, struggles and willingness to share and express vulnerabilities that went beyond age, culture, backgrounds and experiences. The love and unity which bonded the team this year came from sharing a love for the same God and truly knowing and understanding that nothing could separate us from the love of God. From Romans 8:35-39:

More Than Conquerors

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

My lessons of trusting in God did not stop when the two-week trip ended. One week later, I resigned from the comfort zone of my job to step out on the water into the unknown, on a new adventure with God – International Care Ministries... a connection that began three years ago when I was on the run from God!

“I NEEDED TO LEARN TO LET GO AND TRUST GOD COMPLETELY.”



From the journal of Cherry: Oh no, He never lets go

Before I went to Rwanda, I was expecting to serve people, show love and bring hope...

Lost and found

On a football field, I witnessed not only a wallet lost and found, but a testimony that a street kid can be transformed by God and the persistent support of a sister from Hong Kong. Seven years ago, he was surviving from anything he could find to do. Now, he would go as far as he could to fetch a lost wallet for people he hardly knew, all because of God's love.

Question: Would I be able to do the same?

The generator challenge

In a two-night film screening event, I witnessed not how much "fruit" we can bear with our own preparation and wisdom, but the best timing and plan of God. Although the generator died on us 5-6 times on the 1st night of screening, the few minutes of film captured the audience good enough that more came back the next day to hear about God's love and put their trust in Him.

Question: Do I pray and expect God to answer according to my will, or His?

Almond Tree X Palm Tree

From a visit to Almond Tree Films, I witnessed not only the great work they did in getting their film selected by Cannes Film Festival, but the impact a group of young people can make through media. They were once street youth with little education, but because of faith, God provided training opportunities and now a mission in their heart to spread God's love.

Question: Am I grateful for my skills and talents, and using them to their full scale?

Healing is in Your hands

Throughout the trip to Rwanda, I witnessed not only physical disabilities and illnesses, but a lot of psychological damage from the genocide 16 years ago. My heart simply broke, but I was also touched to see many footprints of God's love, and how it was diffusing to cure the hurt. In the mean time, I also witnessed a lot of our team members falling ill. I myself finally got sick too, and altogether, our program was affected. Thankfully we recovered one by one, but I felt something more complicated than physical sickness was needed healing.

Question: What else was waiting to be healed?



Murakoze Imana!

During one of the devotional sessions, I witnessed the beautiful unity of team members in praying for healing over physical illnesses, while confessing our sins. In the process, I realised I hadn't let go of the sins of lust, and I wasn't able to forgive myself. That night, although in a lot of tears, with a lot of tissues, I was given the chance to let that go completely. I thank my teammates for their love and acceptance, but most of all, I thank God for waiting for me. He hadn't given up on me at all, and now I am redeemed and emancipated!

Question: Can I ever thank Him enough!?

After coming back, I'm healed physically and spiritually, filled with joy and much more in love with Him!



From the Journal of Charlotte: God can be TRUSTED always

I actually do not know where to start for several things happened in Rwanda and even after I came back to Hong Kong. We have been back for almost 2 months already but the memories and experiences in Rwanda are still very fresh. I still often think of them in my daily life, i.e. every time I open the faucet and bath.

I would first like to thank Praise for her obedience and leadership in bringing and showing us what God is doing in Rwanda – tremendous healing and blessing. She is really gifted in it and God has been faithful in showing her what He wants her to witness and experience.

I did not expect to be back learning the lesson on trusting God. I thought I had already learned and understood it BUT just to find out that I had not and I am very thankful that I learned it there and am continuously learning it now; really enjoying this lesson with Him. I can now say that with His help, I am a child learning to depend on Him in everything.

We were asked to choose a picture that we would want to share so I chose this picture taken with an eight year-old lovely and adorable girl because God gave me the courage to invite her to try to believe in Him. It was such a joy to pray, dance and sing with her.

God always knows what He is doing; despite the painful genocide incident in Rwanda, they are being healed and are open to the gospel. Though they are not materially rich as we are, they actually have deep, rich and intimate experience with God. We were so blessed to have a lot of unplanned outreach events too where we got to invite people to accept Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.

If you want to experience God in a different environment and setting, ask Him if He wants you to see Him in Rwanda for it is really a very rewarding and memorable trip. He also gave us a very unique team where unity in love was so evident. I was so inspired with the youth's passion and fire for Him – what a blessed trip. We indeed serve a Triune God who is good all the time!



From the Journal of Luke: Lasting Bonds

From the semi-ridiculous dances to the strange side effects of medication, the mission trip to Rwanda was a great experience for me. I saw the incredible impact that God can have on people through the Rwandan people and the reflection times with the trip members. Many of the Rwandan people have gone through so much pain and heartache, but they still have such joyful spirits and are so enthusiastic about their faith in God, who many would blame for their strife. I also saw God move the members of the trip, whether they were youth or adults. I was reminded that God's reach knew no bounds.

Over the trip, I formed/reformed bonds with many different members on the trip. All the youth connected so well with each other that it didn't take much effort at all. Whether it was through intense card games, midnight scares, some certain events with hot sauce, "vivid dream" stories, Men In Tights dances or countless others, I built friendships that I think will be lasting for a while.

During the trip I had some deep questions come to my mind about God and his relationship with mankind. I am very glad that after bringing these questions up in the group reflection time, I had a number of people who stayed up past the closing time to sit with me and discuss the answers to the questions. The trip really helped me open up to others and be encouraged to do so more often.

I really liked the Rwanda trip and I definitely will be recommending it to others and will definitely try to go on the trip again.



From the Journal of Hugo: The Bigger Picture

I never thought I would have the chance to go to Rwanda. There were so many things that bothered me right before the trip. Firstly, my dad got into some trouble during my finals. Secondly, I was waiting for admission offers from school. Those things made me feel hopeless, lack peace and feel lonely. At that time, I was so afraid to face my situation and deal with my problems. However, God brought me to Rwanda anyway.

In Rwanda, the most important thing I learned was to focus on the bigger picture from God's plan. On the second day of the trip, we were supposed to meet up with the street kids to play soccer with them, but somehow the field that we planned to go to was occupied. Also, one of us had his wallet stolen, and his passport was in it. All these obstacles made us wonder if evil was behind them. However, I have learned that sometimes in our lives, these hardships and difficulties will lead us to God's ultimate plan.

Eventually, we got another field for the streets kids and one of them got the wallet back for us. Moreover, Praise told us the story about the street kid who got the wallet back. Praise said he used to be the kind of kid who would not help us get the wallet back. However, instead of not helping us, he said that "No matter what, I'll get the wallet back." What I mean is without all these obstacles we would not have seen the change in these kids. I always heard people saying, "Don't worry! Focus on the bigger picture!" Now I finally understand that.

On the other hand, I am so glad that God gave me an opportunity to meet all my wonderful teammates. I totally enjoyed the time we hung out in Rwanda. More importantly, we shared some very special things, like the lifestyle in Rwanda. Also the things we shared everyday during devotion. I have to say I love you guys so much. I hope I can go back to Rwanda with you guys next year.



"...SOMETIMES IN OUR LIVES, THESE HARDSHIPS AND DIFFICULTIES WILL LEAD US TO GOD'S ULTIMATE PLAN."

From the Journal of Aidan: Experiencing God's love

Hello! My name is Aidan Cheng, and I went on the Rwanda trip organized by IECC this year. You may have seen my face on a clip to promote Island Youth; well, I was the person in the back, grooving to the chill digital vibrations of Jamiroquai. But pleasantries aside, I am here to talk about the amazing experience I had in Rwanda and how I experienced God's love in an amazing way.

When we arrived in Rwanda, we kept talking about how we would bless the people of Rwanda with the good news and song. In the end, if anyone was blessed, it would be us. For we have never seen people with such simple, such amazingly small, child-like faith, but at the same time, who are so powerful with speech and prayers. Even on the first few days, we were astounded that the people, although they had lost their entire families, were so filled with God that they could jump up and down to praise Him. I think that this is something that we do not truly understand the real magnitude of the feeling of losing absolutely everything. However, in Rwanda, people still had the strength to get up and live even though the family next door murdered their entire family. I found this a real testament to God's amazing love and the things that it can do.

Another thing that really hit me was how God was really using the youth of Rwanda to influence the older generation; one example of this would be the case of Eric, a kid who is my age, but has started a youth group that has now extended to about 30 people, all on fire for God. I felt that I could do the same thing, and that I should not be discouraged just because I am young and inexperienced. For it says in Joel:

"And afterward,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions."

So it says here that it really does not matter what age you are, but we are all part of a great kingdom of God and we are all entitled to do His good works, no matter how old we are. We can all contribute to God's kingdom as it is in heaven. Praise God!



From the Journal of Ollie: Where God is Moving

There are places in the world where you can feel God moving.

Rwanda, to me, is a place where darkness once stood like a fortress. When I try to envision the nation during the 1994 genocide, I see a huge walled fortress of darkness that stood for those 100 days and inside there were people killing their neighbours, their friends and even complete strangers. Hundreds of thousands died. So many souls lost to the darkness that lurks in the heart of every human. Walking through the genocide memorial I felt nothing but sadness and pain. But there was also a realisation, that many of the people who committed these murders were forced to do so. They took others' lives to spare their own or those of their families. Would I have said I would not join in the murder, rape and pillage if that which we would do to those others would instead be done to my family and me should we refuse? I can only say that I have no idea. The stories of the atrocities committed during that time broke my heart. That we are a people who would do such things was something I had never quite come to terms with.

Yet after the memorial, God showed me hope. As we left the memorial we saw children coming home from school smiling and playing, reminding us of what has been doing in this nation since those dark days. He showed me His power as He moves through the nation, bringing aid to those who needed it, working miracles in the lives of the poor and sick, bringing reconciliation between the Rwandese peoples in the wake of the genocide.



None of these things have happened to everyone. There are still the sick. The infirm. Those who mourn and those who hate. But God showed me hope for a broken land and a scarred people. Hope found in Him.

There are still scars, those that run deep in the souls and minds of those who lived through the genocide as well as the physical scars left on so many today. There are so many relics of the genocide from the AIDS now carried by so many women victims to the bullet hole in the souvenir shop display case at Kigali International Airport. But God is moving. Like living water over a barren and cracked land and what we see are the first shoots that come before the land becomes filled with life. The unfailing love of the Heavenly Father continues to bring hope and change to a land once shrouded in darkness. His Light is unfolding over His people.

*"The poor and needy search for water,
but there is none;
their tongues are parched with thirst.
But I the LORD will answer them;
I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.
I will make rivers flow on barren heights,
and springs within the valleys.
I will turn the desert into pools of water,
and the parched ground into springs.
I will put in the desert
the cedar and the acacia, the myrtle and the olive.
I will set pines in the wasteland,
the fir and the cypress together,
so that people may see and know,
may consider and understand,
that the hand of the LORD has done this,
that the Holy One of Israel has created it."*

Isaiah 41:17-20

And still I struggle with so many questions. Why did God allow the genocide to occur? Why does God allow so many to still suffer? Why do I have so much yet they have so little? Where is the fairness in that? I went straight from Rwanda to a family holiday where we stayed in nice hotels and ate unendingly. Some days I woke up angry. Other days I was depressed and receded from those around me. Though the torrent of emotion has passed, the questions remain. Some of them God has helped me make peace with. Others still stay with me. Perhaps I will be shown them in time and it will be ultimately better. Perhaps they are questions I will always struggle with until the day I can appear before the Lord and ask Him.

But for now I have found a kind of peace and a yearning to be where God is moving. To be His ambassador for change in a fallen world. To be a channel for Him into the lives of those He leads me to. I absolutely love the way it's put in this song:

*Where there is pain
Let us bring grace
Where there is suffering
Bring serenity
For those afraid
Let us be brave
Where there is misery
Let us bring them relief
And surely we can change
Surely we can change
Oh surely we can change
Something*

*- Surely We Can Change (David Crowder*Band) -*

Essentially, what I've learned from this trip, nay, this entire roller-coaster of a summer is this:

**"WHERE THE LORD IS MOVING,
SO TOO DO I WANT TO BE."**



From the Journal of Brian: Changed Mindset

"SNORT SOME RICE BRIAN, SNORT SOME RICE!" Yea, do you remember that night? Rwanda was full of amazing/fun/awesome/disturbing experiences, from snorting piripiri sauce, doing our dance, almost dying on the avocado tree, taking down a wasp nest and getting stung in the process. As you can tell, I had an interesting time in Rwanda. There were also the things that opened my eyes a bit more. Going to the genocide memorial opened my eyes to see what blind hatred can do, little kids were killed before they were able to live their lives, babies who couldn't speak. The mass graves under the stones, the families who are still looking for the bodies of their murdered relatives, the pictures of the piles of machetes, all these things opened my eyes to what evil there is in this world. However, I think God is using Rwanda; despite all of the misfortunes that befell upon Rwanda, many people have learned to forgive.

There are incredible tales of forgiveness in Rwanda. We hear stories about widows going to jail and talking and giving food to their husbands' murderers. Rwanda, a place that was in turmoil is now a place of peace. I think that, through God's love, people in Rwanda are able to learn to forgive, move on, and most importantly, spread God's Word. While we were in Rwanda, at the YWAM base, we were able to hear tales of people's lives. We heard Henri's story, when his mother and father were killed in the genocide, and yet he lives and prays for the whole world. We all saw the photos that he hung up on his wall. For someone who lost so much, he is able to pray for so many.

The people of Rwanda have one of the strongest faiths in God that I have ever seen. Another example, look at Henri, losing his parents has not made him turn his back or stay angry at God. Instead he thanks God for everything he has. People who have almost nothing; pray to God continually. People who are affected by AIDs continue to pray to God. People with dying husbands pray to God. Nothing will deter these people from God.

Now, lastly, going to Rwanda has most definitely changed my mind set. I have learned to appreciate the small things in life, such as running water, meat, a wide variety of foods (thank God for cup noodles), a pillow, medicine, shoes, great education, and many other things. Now I'm pretty sure that we can ALL agree on those things. All these things that God has blessed us with show that we have truly been blessed. I think it's safe to say that all of us are unhappy with what we don't have, and we're going to always be like that, but thinking back on the trip to Rwanda, I am continually reminded of how blessed we all are. There are many questions that I have for God, like why these things are happening to such good people, but I know God has a plan. And to get the answers to my questions, I am most definitely going back next summer to see what God is doing.

**"THERE ARE MANY QUESTIONS THAT I HAVE FOR
GOD...BUT I KNOW GOD HAS A PLAN."**



From the Journal of Shinjae: Fellowship

During my time in Rwanda, I was surrounded by some of the strongest Christians I have ever met. Both the people living in the YWAM base and my fellow mission trip-ers constantly had God foremost on their minds, and by staying with these people 24-7 and doing daily worship, I grew much closer to God. During the Rwanda mission trip, having a strong faith was the norm. However, I realized that I will not always be surrounded by people of such strong faith.

Even when I am in Hong Kong and have fellowship with friends from the Island ECC youth group and also with my family members, I find it hard to have God constantly on my mind. Often, after events like Resound, I was fired up about being a Christian; however, that feeling was always short lived. I would go back to school and would forget all about what I had witnessed just 48 hours earlier. The same happened after the mission trip to Rwanda. Even though I was with my family, I often had things other than God on my mind. I realized the loss of my passion for Jesus when I noticed that I had stopped praying. I asked God what was so different and He answered, telling me what I needed was fellowship.

Needless to say, U.S. boarding schools like the one I currently attend are not filled with people who can testify to God's grace through their own experiences, like our brothers and sisters in Rwanda can, but they do have many Christians. Nevertheless, I did not get to know many of them as a freshman during last year. Despite the fact that my parents often urged me to join one of the two Christian youth groups, I never saw the need to do so. As the weeks of the first trimester passed and winter came, I began to drift further and further away from God. Even going to church was a chore and more of a ritual than a time to be truly with God and apart from the world. I believe it felt burdensome because I was a stranger at the church, and it was not a time for me to be with other Christians and with God, but a time for me to listen to a sermon, which I mostly forgot as soon as I walked out the door.

Only after experiencing the merits of fellowship during the mission trip and then losing it soon afterwards can I comprehend how important constantly spending time with other Christians is. When I return to school next year, I will be sure to find a group of Christians to spend time with so that I can remain a strong Christian and live everyday like I am still in Rwanda...minus the bathrooms.



From the Journal of Hetty: Lessons on Faith

I really had no idea what to expect of this mission trip. I was several days late because of school exams, and I hadn't had a lot of time (again I blame my exams) to spiritually and emotionally prepare. Well, I did know from Jon Lau's emails that the breakfast menu was dominated by hot dog buns, but I was surprised when we finally disembarked onto one of the runways of Kigali airport, the smell of 12+ hours of air travel on my clothes. I've been to Egypt before, but it took a few moments of blinking and sniffing to adjust my senses to sub-Saharan Africa. I felt, for the first time in a long time, that my lungs were filled with pure unadulterated air. And the view! There is some green in Hong Kong, but it was as if a whole new palette was used on the Rwandan landscape—verdant, unkempt thicket sprouting out of crimson-brown earth, a yawning azure sky—it was like something out of a Matisse painting.



“I WAS, AT THAT POINT, VERY ANGRY WITH GOD...”

I think I was impacted most by the old woman at the widows' home, in which we were installing solar panels and lights. When she waddled up to us, perspiration gleaming on her ebony forehead, I thought for sure that she was in the final stages of pregnancy. Her stomach preceded her into my line of vision. But then the translator told us that the bulge in her wraparound dress (which looked like it could house triplets) was a tumor. So we prayed and prayed and prayed for the tumor to leave, for the demon to be cast out—and then we boarded our van and drove back to the YWAM base, her bloated figure and red-tinted eyes shrinking in our rear-view mirror.

I have to admit that I was, at that point, very angry at God. I had really believed, with faith that I had thought was much bigger than a mustard seed, that we were about to witness a miracle then and there, that the tumor would simply deflate before us. But then I stepped back to contemplate, and realized that I was angry largely because my own pride had been hurt. I think I had just wanted to prove something to myself, to be able to go back to my school and say “I healed a woman with a tumor as big as your backpack.” I don't know what God's plan is for that woman, and maybe our prayers impacted her in another way. Maybe God will heal her in His own time. I still pray for her.

The Rwandan peoples' faith and persistence are truly indescribable. My faith seemed so inferior, so compromised, in juxtaposition to theirs. Some have had to experience so much, and I so little—it was almost embarrassing to share my testimony in front of the people in the YWAM base—as if my trivial teen angst could even compare to the tribulation and loss some of these people have had to endure. How can we even begin to explain God's love to a people so broken? How can we, the privileged and well-fed, go to a country that is only just beginning to recover from a horrific genocide, whose citizens live like ascetics compared to the average person in Hong Kong, for two weeks and expect to leave any sort of lasting impression behind? Should I just leave everything, take up my cross and become a missionary in Rwanda? I continue to struggle with these questions, but I am praying. I think I will go back next year, in the hope that God will meet me again like He did this summer.



The family tree has grown

Yes, this is my 6th mission trip to Rwanda! When someone asks me why I always go back and visit the people there, I have no hesitation in saying "Rwanda is my SECOND-HOME!" Yes, God blessed me with the chance to go with Island ECC's mission trip to Rwanda for the first time back in 2004 and my life story has changed since then. I am blessed to see God's marvelous miracles working amongst these people. I was so happy this year when I saw that God had blessed our close brothers and sisters (Serieux, Prince, Jackie, Rafiki, etc); most of them have gotten married and even given birth to the next generation. These small new born brothers and sisters are blessed with good health and joy. I am sure God has His plans for them and they will bring changes to Rwanda in God's way as their parents did.



Initiation, Recovery and Reintegration

This year I devoted some of my time in Rwanda to review some of the vocational training school projects. Throughout the past few years, I have had a great burden for those street kids who are suffering from the AIDS pandemic and the terrific aftermaths of the war and 1994 genocide. Most of them are forced to leave school and focus on day-to-day survival. I have been touched by most of them who are gifted (particularly in music) but just lacking resources and opportunities to explore their hidden talent. This reminds me how much I am blessed with ample resources in HK and yet not fully utilizing God's talent to me. I visited some of the vocational training schools during this visit and tried to explore opportunities to help them reintegrate into the society. I am truly confident that they will be God's salt and light when doors are opened to them. Please continue to pray for these street kids and their future!

“BE A PART OF RWANDA - LIVE WITH THEM DAILY WITH HOPE”



Narnia's Lion

Until now, I am still impressed and amazed this year at how God worked in the people during our movie night. As we are new to the village there, we needed to greet people on street and ask them to hear the gospel. Yes, it's been a great joy for me to invite people along the muddy roads to join us, hear the gospel and watch CS Lewis's "Narnia" movie in a small chapel nearby. I know their lives will be totally different once they open their hearts to God and accept Him. Thank God, the seeds have been sown in their heart and I still remember the scene when they all clapped their hands when they saw Aslan the Lion come back to life again. At the end of movie, I saw countless people accept Jesus as their Saviour. God, you are so good and amazing !

Taking the Adventure

I feel honored that our Father Lord has allowed me to participate in His saving plan for Rwanda. Despite difficulties and challenges in the past year, I found there is healing in the process of sharing with my brothers and sisters. Whenever I am upset or disappointed with my life in Hong Kong, my Rwanda brother and sisters always remind me of one thing – surrender yourself, pray to Him and be total dependent on Him and He will find the best way for you.

It was such a great pleasure again to be in Rwanda this year and grow with them daily. When I look back, God has transformed my life totally through my experience in Rwanda. Father Lord, please let me know what I can do for you; I am willing to take the adventure with you. Though it's risky, I know it's rewarding and you will take care of me. In closing, I would like to quote one of my favourite bible verses Matthew 28:18-20, which is printed on the wall of the dining hall at the Rwanda YWAM base – "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Reflections on Rwanda.

1. The evilness of every man's heart and the great need for God.
2. The power of prayer.
3. A grateful heart.

Rwanda was the start of married life for Daniel and me. Africa is a strange place to us, having never travelled there before. Unexpectedly we found the people gentle and slender of build. It was at such variance with the events in 1994.

The genocide of 1994, which saw more than a million women, men and children, massacred by neighbours was heart wrenching. We read in the genocide museum, met survivors amongst street kids, YWAM workers and AIDs widows. And this was brought about by otherwise good and normal people. It brought home once again that evil is inherent in all men and there is a great need for God. Only God can bring healing and forgiveness. Only God can bring reconciliation. I am especially saddened that it has happened before in the holocaust and then afterwards in Bosnia, and Cambodia. It was not a uniquely African problem, but our inherent ability to bring death and destruction and not be deterred by rightness or by the consequences.



The power of prayer. We were able to meet people who had turned to God. Antoinette shared how her family had been massacred, how a Hutu man at the YWAM base had gone with her to find her mothers bones and bury them, and how difficult it had been to accept his help. We met street kids, who had survived by stealing and by cunning. They had turned to God and assisted in the returning of stolen items and craved education and jobs. We met people whose lives have been touched by the HK team over these last 7-8 years. They have become movie-makers, law students and are leaders in their communities. And we had the youth of Island ECC, loud and vibrantly praising God and praying for His will in their lives and the lives of the people they met. It is a testimony that the power of prayer is beyond the power of men, of medicine or money. Faith is the hope of what is not seen, of things yet to come. And this is the faith that brings power to prayer.

Finally, it is impossible to return without a grateful heart. By the grace of God, we were born into families that gave us opportunities for education, and life. We live in homes with flushing toilets and running hot water. God has revealed Himself to us and we have the opportunity to freely worship Him and we can only do so again and again, everytime we take a warm shower- Praise God!

“FAITH IS THE HOPE OF WHAT IS NOT SEEN OF THINGS YET TO COME. AND THIS IS THE FAITH THAT BRINGS POWER TO PRAYER.”



From the Journal of Minsun: Inadequacy and Prayer

Having been a Christian for so many years, I went on my first mission trip only this year. You might say I didn't believe in 'testing the waters' or 'getting my feet wet' first. By going to Rwanda, I just dove right in. Perhaps it was because of the preferential treatment I, along with my husband Yong, received as older married members of the team, which spared us the hardship of the outhouses and having to haul our bath water, and because I didn't much mind the limited menu consisting of variations on beans, rice and plantains; whatever the reason, the overriding, overwhelming feeling I experienced in Rwanda was that of helplessness. As we visited widows, one of whom had a child who was wearing the same overalls he had been clothed with by last year's team, as we prayed for a child whose abnormal heart beat thunderously at an inordinately fast tempo and whose grandmother was suffering from a stomach tumor which made her stomach more swollen than any pregnant woman's, as we visited a poor church made up of the marginalized Twa tribe whose deplorable living conditions, poor hygiene and dirty water supply made so many of them sick, and as we prayed and cried out with people who've effectively been given a death sentence by HIV and AIDS, I felt helpless again and again.

In the face of so much need and suffering I really felt at a loss. I regretted not having prayed more in preparation for the trip so as to be better equipped spiritually. I felt keenly my inadequacy. (It didn't help that I somewhat fumbled the message I had a chance to share.) I wished that spiritual gifts of healing and prophecy could abound in me and that I could be more effective against the powers of darkness. I was determined to pray more, much more, once I got back to Hong Kong.

Prayer is essential and it's through prayer we have intimacy with God. It's what moves God's kingdom. However, God has been teaching me and dealing with me. Through a series of mistakes on my part and His precious and loving revelations to me concerning those mistakes, there's an additional issue related to having the power and anointing of God to touch the lost and the suffering. I was made to come to the conclusion that if I want to be effective spiritually and want God's love and power to be released through me, I have to make sure that there is nothing in my life and walk that would hinder the free flow of God's anointing in me. I could be naturally the greatest speaker and have the most powerful insights and pray powerfully, but without the Holy Spirit flowing through me with no hindrance, I would be useless spiritually and I would not be able to change a thing – no heart, no situation.

In order to have that flow with nothing hindering, I am to go after the last bits (or huge chunks) of the idolatry in my heart, to judge my sin and repent, turn away from compromises and double-mindedness, and to treat like dung (recall to mind in all sensory detail your experience with the outhouse) the things that contaminate me. (That means rejecting prejudice, rejecting envy, rejecting one's worldly value system, and can even mean foregoing a facial massage, which was the case for me at the time of these revelations, as trivial as that may sound.) I realized that if I didn't do that, but let these things linger in my life and heart, either through fear or lack of faith, I would not be able to walk in the fullness that God has for my life. It didn't mean that He would stop loving me, I realized (nothing could separate us from his love), but it did mean I would be missing out on the full blessing and anointing of the Holy Spirit that God wants to give me. I don't want to miss out.



I want the Holy Spirit to work through me. I want my prayers for Rwanda answered. I want God to touch the lost and the broken in these perilous times through me. May God give us grace.

“IT'S THROUGH PRAYER WE HAVE INTIMACY WITH GOD.”

From the Journal of Yong: Humbled and Edified

It is difficult to believe that, as of the time of this writing, almost two months have already elapsed since our return from the Rwanda mission trip. Pondering at this juncture what kind of "testimony" to commit to paper in respect of the trip has provided me with a valuable opportunity to look back and reflect on the experience as a whole. It was undoubtedly one of the most memorable -- and meaningful -- experiences I've had in a long while. Among other things, the trip was for me a home-coming of sorts, in that it was the first time I had returned to Africa since my days in college, when my parents were living on the continent. It was also the first mission trip that my wife (Minsun), our two kids (Hetty and Shin-Jae) and I went on together, as a family. The Lord used the occasion to bless each of us mightily.

As strange as it seems now, we initially struggled with the decision to go to Rwanda this summer. The kids had potentially conflicting summer commitments, and we also had a great opportunity to visit the Holy Land (Jerusalem), where my sister and her husband are living during this year. In addition, I must confess very frankly that I was not terribly enthusiastic about returning (albeit briefly) to the heat and squalor of a developing African country, which I had experienced earlier in my life. I toyed briefly with the idea of sending only the kids to Rwanda as part of the youth team, while Minsun and I went on one of those fabulous Greek island cruises! However, as we prayed in earnest about what to do during the summer, we felt that the Lord was pointing us unmistakably toward Rwanda.



I thank Him with all my heart for leading us in this direction -- He is indeed the Good Shepherd! Looking back, the Rwanda mission trip was for me a time of great humbling and edification. First and foremost, I was humbled and edified by the people we met in Rwanda and their incredible testimonies and invaluable ministries: Rafiki, who by the grace of God escaped life in the streets and is now ministering to children and youth; Antoinette and her amazing story of forgiveness of the enemies that murdered her family in the genocide; gentle Sylvan and his widows and HIV patients ministries; Coach Richard and his heart for reaching the street kids through soccer, among many others. In equal measure, I was humbled and edified by the other members of our team and their powerful faith as well as varied gifts: Praise and Flo, and their great leadership and compassion; Helen and Charlotte, and their heart for prayer; Judith and Daniel, who chose to come on the mission trip as part of their honeymoon; Prescilla, Hugo and Brian, and their courageous testimonies; the talented and ever-resourceful Patrick and Alex; Marcus, Amanda, Jon and Matthew, the fearless leaders of the youth team, to name but a few. I was also humbled and edified through my growing realization that, despite all my worldly education, experience and skills, I was absolutely incapable of doing anything truly useful for anyone during the whole of the mission trip, apart from praying and supplicating to God for that person.

Indeed, it seems in hindsight that the Lord wanted to use the Rwanda mission trip to bring me back to a place of intimate communion with Him through prayer. At every turn, I found myself in a situation of utter helplessness, with no choice but to cry out and cling to Him like a child to his father. Before we even arrived in Rwanda, the team I was traveling with got stuck in transit at the airport in Nairobi, Kenya, unable to get on the short flight that would take us to Kigali, because the engineers at the airport decided on a whim to go on strike that morning. Alarming, no one at the airport could tell us whether this inopportune strike would last a day or a week. As hour after hour passed by with no news regarding the status of the strike, someone made the brilliant suggestion that we use the waiting time to pray. So we prayed, first for our flight, then for the rest of the team already in Rwanda and their ministry planned for that day, and then for Rwanda and its people. Thankfully, the strike was resolved in the afternoon and we arrived safely in Kigali in time to join the evening ministry event. This turned out to be a harbinger of things to come. Time and again, we ran into similar kinds of difficulties and stumbling blocks, large and small. More importantly, we met with so many people in desperate need of help, financial, medical, spiritual or otherwise: the old woman with the bloated stomach, the child with the ear infection, the street kid who can't go to school for lack of funds, the HIV patient shunned by her family, the widow in danger of losing her home.... Each time, I felt that the Lord was bringing us to our knees before Him in prayer, since there was very little we could do in our own strength.



As I conclude this brief reflection on the Rwanda mission trip, I once again fall on my knees before the Lord and pray that He continue to be with each of the people we met in Rwanda and fulfill their every need. I pray that the Lord will continue to bring reconciliation and healing to the Rwandese people and to bless that country with political and economic development, especially in the wake of the recent elections. For myself and my family, I pray that the Lord will write the lessons we learned in Rwanda onto our hearts, so that we will remember them as we approach the end of summer and resume our everyday lives. I also pray that the Lord will continue to keep me humble before Him and others, and constantly on my knees in dependence on Him.



From the Journal of Shannon: The true meaning of His saving grace



Rwanda is a country that has been war-torn, conquered by other countries, separated by tribes by the other countries and involved in much internal conflict. Before I went, I felt almost as if I had nothing to even offer the people of this country, those who have suffered so much pain, something I can't fully understand. How do I dare come to this country and to these people and tell them to forgive their neighbors that killed their family? Something was telling me that my attitude was wrong, and so I listened and decided to let go of any expectations and give everything to God.

The first few days I was full of sorrow. My heart was breaking for everything I saw and heard about the death and destruction on the land that was once almost 100% a land that was for God. There is much poverty there, little water and no electricity in the villages, children running around without shoes or proper clothing. I prayed a lot, I tried to think of anything I could do in my power to change their situation. I kept coming up empty-handed.

Then, in the village of Gahanga, at the church, I met a boy named Fils. Fils is 7 years old and is not in school. The first night we met, he became my friend. He followed me everywhere holding my hand the whole night. That night we were showing 'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe' as an outreach to the local people. Our generator kept dying and we thought it was an attack of the enemy, but we knew

that if God wanted to fix it He could. When we realized the generator was not going to work right, we decided to leave and come back to try again with a different generator the next day. None of us knew why things didn't work out and we went back to the YWAM base camp a bit disappointed.

The next day we went back, I was so happy when I saw Fils again. But this time I was seeing him in the daylight. He was covered in dirt, had no shoes and his clothes were torn and falling off of him. I knew that this sweet boy deserved so much more. I closed my eyes and could see him at my house where he could shower, have all the clean clothes he wanted, go to school and have a bright future. In that instant I broke down sobbing. I wanted so badly to make this boy my son, a boy I barely knew yet already loved so intensely and that's when a new vision came into my mind. A vision of heaven, a vision of life in the end that has no pain, no suffering, no poverty and more love than I could ever give Fils. God used this boy to show me the true meaning of His saving grace. Yes, it's about the here and now, but it's also about what's beyond. While I've always understood the idea of heaven and eternity with God and that it's all that really matters, for some reason it became more real to me than it ever had been before.

God showed me that what I had to give the people of Rwanda was nothing, but if I allowed His Spirit to work through me I could help lead some of them to know Christ and Jesus' saving grace.

Now that I'm back in Hong Kong, the Good News means more to me than ever before and I'm trying to live my life in a whole new way, a way where I don't fear sharing Jesus' story with my unbelieving friends. I try all the time to speak more confidently about my faith with others and let the Spirit just take hold of my words, but things have gotten in my way even just in this short time since I've been back, specifically my pride and my desire to not lose my friends because I'm too zealous about Christ. But I always keep the memory of Fils and what God taught me through him close and pray that one day God will show him the glories of heaven that I described.



From the Journal of Riza: Changed from the Inside Out



Ever since I came to Hong Kong in 2006, I have wanted to go to Rwanda, but it took me four years before the Lord saw it was fit for me to go. Even before the trip I would pray that the Lord would reveal Himself and His will to me.

When we arrived at Kigali International Airport, I was so expectant that the Lord would start from there and He did. The warm welcome and embrace of the people that met us in the airport thawed out the fear I had for black people (they were one of my apprehensions upon going).

As days went by, I would long for something stunning to happen in my spiritual life but it seemed that God was silent. Every day would pass by seemingly "dry" until the day we went to the place where HIV/AIDS patients would gather. I was deeply touched by how they worshipped God, as expressed in songs and dance. When we had the time to pray one-on-one with them, I just broke down as I was praying for the lady because I was praying for a person who was sick and dying but still worships God with all her being, without a trace of doubt and bitterness toward her Creator. I was searching my heart then if I had a heart like hers, and I knew I didn't.

Little did I know that God was already stirring my heart through that experience along with the testimonies I heard from our teammates and our Rwandan friends whom the Lord brought healing from pain in the past. On our last night, the Lord did not fail me. All along He was preparing my heart for a personal healing and spiritual breakthrough that I never thought would take place in Rwanda. I told Florence, Priscilla, and Praise that if the Lord brought me to Rwanda only for that reason, I will praise Him but I know that it was not just that reason. He brought me there to see through His eyes the love, forgiveness, healing, and redemption for His people and allowed me to experience it myself. I came back changed from the inside out.

*No sickness, no secret
No chain is strong enough
To keep us from Your love
To keep us from Your love
Our present, our future
Our past is in Your hands
We're covered by Your blood*

The Lord did not stop from there, I went back home and had been sick for a month as the side effects of the anti-malaria pills kicked in. I was all tired and sick of being sick but I praise God because my spirit was not crushed. I felt that God was working something in me that He would have to do to draw me closer to Him and continue what He started the night before we left.

*How high, how wide
No matter where I am
Healing is in Your hands
How deep, how strong
Now by Your grace I stand
Healing is in Your hands*

We love God because He first loved us. We long for Him because He first longed for us. We reach for God because He first reached for us.



From the Journal of Marcus: A Powerful Experience



So I've postponed writing this as long as I possibly could. I guess I, unfortunately, mirror some of the youth in my procrastination. Perhaps the main reason I have been unable to write is simply because I find the task far too daunting. The thought of summarizing the ways in which God spoke to me in Rwanda seems impossible to fit onto a page in any sort of organized fashion. But I realize I must conform and attempt to summarize, but please know that it pains me to do so and that this summary doesn't do the trip justice. So the two main things God said to me during this trip were: 1. There is always hope. 2. That hope is Jesus. These themes kept reoccurring during my time there. At the genocide memorial, the first thing we saw as a group was the mass graves and a list of those buried there. I remember the indifference in my heart as I thought to myself—I've been to memorials before and I've seen similar lists engraved on walls before. But then something stirred inside me to read the names. As my heart began to soften and

then break for the Rwandese people, learning about the horrific details and the intentionality of the genocide, I began to ask the why question. The hatred and evil that manifested in Rwanda has left, in my eyes, no hope. No hope for the daughter that lost her whole family, the son whose childhood was stolen by the militia. No hope for the opposing tribes to reconcile. And no hope for a nation haemorrhaging with hate. These people could not possibly pull themselves out, nor could the government possibly reconcile such a huge problem. But Jesus reminded me that when it seems like all hope is lost, He is there. Sometimes we have to be brought to the end of the rope to realize our need and sometimes we have to be brought to a point of despair to realize Christ's power. In conclusion, in Christ and in Christ alone securely lies our hope for the nation and the people of Rwanda. In Christ and in Christ alone securely lies hope for me...

From the Journal of Matthew: Healing and Release

As we left for Rwanda I did not know what to expect. As a youth volunteer I was praying for the youth and that God would use their experiences in Africa to transform their lives, but I neglected to pray for my own time there. God abundantly answered our prayers for the youth throughout the trip; He also did transforming work within my own life that has helped bring my time in Hong Kong to a close.

Before the trip we were told that every team member would have to share his or her testimony at some point during the trip. I began to pray about what I should share. I soon knew that I had to share about how God had worked in my life following my brother's death almost five years ago. However, as I prepared for the trip, I found myself unable to prepare the testimony beyond the first sentence or two. Many of the thoughts and ideas I felt compelled to share were difficult for me to reflect on let alone prepare to share with others.

The morning of the first meeting in Gahanga, Marcus asked if I could share that evening. As we worked that day, every spare moment was spent preparing my testimony. God helped me put words to the ideas I had been unable to express earlier. It was a difficult day as I spent many hours reflecting on the pain and hurt I felt following my brother's death, but the focus was on how God healed my anger and bitterness.

That evening was the first time I shared that portion of my story with other people. In a dark church, God enabled me to be vulnerable in front of a crowd of strangers in a way that I had not been even with my closest friends (a number of whom were on the team). I had to go around the world to begin sharing what God had done with those closest to me. While I felt that my pain and suffering was inconsequential in comparison to what had wracked the lives of Rwandans through the genocide, God

was able to use my testimony to show how He can bring healing and forgiveness following hurt and pain. The outpouring of support following the sharing was tremendous. I was deeply encouraged as both team members and strangers surrounded me.

Sharing with the group was only the beginning. Through the process of preparing and sharing my testimony, God renewed the healing process and continued His work in me. As I returned to Hong Kong, He continued to heal me, further removing the anger and bitterness that I had shared about. While it was not an easy process I was able to share it with those around me in ways that I had not been willing to before the trip.

Shortly before I left Hong Kong, a handful of team members accompanied me to my brother's grave to join me in worship and song. It was precious for me to worship and pray with my Christian brothers and sisters at my brother's grave. The time was emotional for me, but it was good. It was a tremendous blessing to be able to be vulnerable and cry with them. That day at the columbarium, I was crying with sadness and sorrow stemming from missing my brother. There was no anger or bitterness in the mix. This in itself is an incredible testimony of how God has healed me over the past several years and how He used our time in Rwanda to renew that healing process.

As we worshipped, I felt a release to leave Hong Kong. God brought me back to Hong Kong following my brother's death; now I had the sense that the healing that had to happen during this time was complete and that I had the freedom to leave. Worshipping together at my brother's grave wrapped up my time in Hong Kong in a fitting and significant way and it was not something that I had the means to do by myself.



From the Journal of Flo: Moments of Love

*On the African plains a young mother weeps for her hungry child
She prays he'll survive
With tear-filled eyes she looks up to heaven and calls Your name
She pours out her pain
You know her name and You hear her cries*

When I hear this song, it is not difficult to be brought back to Rwanda. The red dusty roads, the child who is still wearing the same overalls from last year, the widow who shared her story with us, the children running and shouting "muzungu"...so many precious memories of a land and people I love. Except that the images I hold close to my heart when I think of Rwanda are very different to the one described in the song. I know that the young mother crying out to God in desperation is also a reality, but the realities of hunger, poverty, pain, suffering, sickness and death can be seen in the light of God's beauty, love, mercy, joy and hope. That is why this year's theme was "No separation from love". Nothing can separate us or our friends in Rwanda from the love of God. This is a promise. A truth so simple, but if we truly understand it, will transform our lives.

*"I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live."
Psalm 116:1-2*

In the face of so many needs, there is so much freedom in surrendering those we love to God, fully trusting that He hears their hearts and He will answer. The song is called "Friend of the poor". It is a reminder that we are there to love them as friends. Friends can never be their saviour. Only Jesus can.

"FRIENDS CAN NEVER BE THEIR SAVIOR. ONLY JESUS CAN."



Every time I returned home to Hong Kong, I would inevitably be asked the question, "How was your trip?" and "What did you do in Rwanda?" I had to write down in my journal the people we visited each day and the things we did with them so that I wouldn't forget. But when I look back to my journal, I know that it wasn't what we did that I wanted to remember. It was the moments within those times that I considered precious. Moments of love. Moments where I witnessed and experienced God's love for His people.

A moment when we saw Rafiki as a proud father with his new born girl Precious, spending time with Jackie and James' family and her one year old son Liam, playing with Davin and Harmony, rejoicing with them the gift of children and family.

A moment of asking the Kimsegara boys about their families, dreams, and another day climbing up the rocky road into each of their homes, or rather, rooms, praying that they will know that God is with them. A moment when we visited Emmanuel at his school and how much he missed his sister as he said goodbye in tears. A moment of women's devotional with Anto and praying on the rock for our sister's future. A moment of visiting Coach and Mama Gaga and seeing her having her nails painted in love by Pris. A moment of hearing about Janvier finding the wallet back for our team member and knowing that 4 years ago, it would not have happened.

There were so many other moments I would not be able to write them all down. Each moment is a gift from God, a reminder that though there may be brokenness in those moments, His grace is sufficient, His love unending.

The lives that I started to get to know 4 years ago have been woven into a part of mine since then. Their stories have continued every year as we grew with them. Dreams become a reality, families were formed, prayers were answered. These moments of love and living life with them is what I look forward to every year. This is where I see God moving and transforming lives as He pours out His love.

I look forward to the day when there will be no more tears, no more pain and all the brokenness of this world will be made new. But will that day mean anything if we do not know Him who will come in glory and majesty? The One who is worthy of all praise? The moments of love I experienced in Rwanda was God's gift for me. But it wasn't about me. It was about the One who made those moments what they were. Jesus.

From the Journal of Priscilla: No Separation from Love

Evil? Who are you?

Working at the church, I have heard many stories of extreme poverty, injustice, international trafficking, etc etc. I was certain that God was going to break my heart during my trip to Rwanda. In fact, I know I must have missed something or something went terribly wrong if my heart wasn't broken at least once. "Break my heart for what breaks yours" was my prayer before I left.

On the fifth day in Rwanda, a woman brought her six year old daughter, Love, to Praise, our leader. Praise grabbed me on my way out to ministry time and said, "we need to pray for this little one." I wasn't sure what was going on, but I started praying while Praise held this precious little one in her arms. Our partner, Sylvan went on to translate and explain that Love was raped by a youth in the neighborhood 3 weeks before our meeting. She was tested negative for HIV but positive for an STD. Her mother was asking for financial support to pay for the STD shot Love needed to have once a day.



Me? Who am I? What?

Without hesitation, I pulled money from my money bag and paid for her medical cost. I stood around Praise and Love for the whole afternoon not knowing how to process or even interact with Love. For one of only few times in my life, I was completely and utterly powerless to the evil I was facing. What am I supposed to do or say? Who am I to do or say anything that's going to help her in her situation? Why pick me to be the person to pray for her? I didn't even know how to pray. I remember just asking God, "What's your purpose in breaking my heart this way?"

God! I AM!

We went back to the village the next day, and I was still a walking zombie not knowing how to process it all. However, I was really hoping to see Love again. After we started playing the movie, I felt a little tug on my arm. Love found ME in the midst of the village crowd, and she raised both her arms wanting me to hold her. And for the rest of the night, she was on my lap.

At the end of the movie, Sylvan did an altar call asking anyone who wants to commit their lives to follow Jesus to come forward. I was overwhelmed by the people raising their hands and coming forward. But I was most blown away by the little 6 years old sitting on my lap. Love had her right arm straight up in the air and her left arm covering her eyes. She started praying in Kinyarwanda after Sylvan. At the same time, I started crying like a 6 month old.

"I AM the redeemer. I AM the healer. I AM hers, and I AM yours. There is nothing you need to do for this little one. I love her more than you do, and I will take care of her. Healing in my hands... not yours! There is nothing that can separate her from my love. Her name is the proof. No Separation from Love."

Holding this little one, I was awestruck by God fulfilling our team theme: **Ntangutandukana N'urukundo**. It means no separation from love in Kinyarwanda. Not only was I able to witness God's healing and redemption in Love's life, He healed and redeemed my soul through hers.

Our theme song this year is Healing is in Your Hands by Christy Nockels. The song truly spoke of our experience in Rwanda.

No mountain, no valley, no gain or loss we know
Could keep us from Your love
No sickness, no secret, no chain is strong enough
To keep us from Your love

How high, how wide
No matter where I am, healing is in Your hands
How deep, How strong,
And now by Your grace I stand, healing is in Your hands

Our present, our future, our past is in Your hands
We're covered by Your blood
We're covered by Your blood

In all things, we know that
We are more than conquerors
You keep us by Your love



From the Journal of Louise: Life Stories



God's way of showing his love in Rwanda was truly a blessing to witness. The way He provides for each individual is eye opening. The way that God pours out His love to us is amazing, yet we do not deserve any of it. His compassion for us is immaculate.

This trip was definitely the most remarkable and awakening one I have been on. My relationship with God now grows everyday. He shows me new ways that He has blessed me, and the people around me. I have had so much to reflect on since going on this trip. When I first heard about the Rwanda trip, I felt a calling to go, and since I had been to Uganda the previous year, I thought that I should try something new. Although I did not know what to expect, I went into the trip with an open mind, heart, eyes and soul, ready for what He had to show me.

On the first day there we visited the genocide memorial. This was where many mass graves were. On the way, I did not really know what to anticipate. I did not think I would have been so torn apart as I was when I came out of the memorial. This was because I thought not having the person there to tell us what they felt, what they had been through that I would not grow such a strong attachment to feel such a great amount of sympathy for the whole situation. But then when I read the stories of the innocent children that had been murdered in such a brutal manner was something that I still find hard to grasp. Each child had its own life. As a group they were meant to become our future leaders, but yet their lives were cut short even though they had done nothing wrong. They had their own lives and their own families. It really made me think about how fortunate I am to live in Hong Kong, to live in a place where I can feel safe.

The one thing that touched me the most and showed me that God's existence was truly in Rwanda was the life stories that we heard from each individual. To hear the stories of pain and suffering really tore me to pieces, but then seeing how God has really worked in their lives and their strength to still live a fruitful life praising God really moved me. It taught me not to take the love of God for granted, and to thank him for the smallest things in life because those are what matter the most.

The Genocide in Rwanda was not something that meant much to me. It happened in 1994, one year after I was born. At that age I wasn't aware of such things. Only when I decided to go on the Rwanda trip, did I look back into the situation in greater depth. Yet they were still numbers and facts on a piece of paper. Coming to the country really allowed me to experience what the situation was like and what the people are like. I have been so touched by the work that God has done in Rwanda and it has allowed me to look at life in a different perspective and grow a strong attachment to the country. Ever since this trip, my walk with God has changed for the better. I have been drawn closer to Him and I am really blessed to be living in Hong Kong with the privileges that I have. This is one trip I will never forget.



From the Journal of Patrick: Surprised by God

Intellectually, I was prepared for Rwanda: I expected to see poverty such as dirty and poorly clothed children on the streets, inadequate and under-developed infrastructure such as a lack of running water, electricity, plumbing, and paved roads, sufferings from people with broken pasts or people with sickness. I also anticipated that the spiritual darkness and evil which dominated the land during the genocide might still linger. Thus I was not surprised, at least by all that I had expected to see. But God did surprise in two main ways.



God surprised me by the encouraging hope of the Rwandan Christians we met, who keep praying to God despite their difficult past and present circumstances, who continue to cry out to Him for what they are lacking and thank Him for what they've received. Notable was Henri, a joyful and prayerful teenager aspiring to become a youth pastor for street kids, who survived the genocide along with his brother by being covered by a pool of blood and eventually was ministered and supported by YWAM. God also surprised me by the selfless dedication of many Christian workers and YWAM staff (many are unpaid volunteers with difficult pasts and limited resources), such as Sylvan who leads the Mercy ministry, Christine who heads the Arise and Shine primary school, and Serieux who champions a soccer ministry, etc. by their loving hearts for those in need, and by their faithfulness to serve God. God's presence and His intent to bring healing and transformation to this broken land are undeniable through these Christian believers and servants.

In addition to the great work God is doing in people's hearts in Rwanda, God also surprised me with emotions that I thought were well within my control, such as tears from my eyes time after time when we prayed for HIV women, widows, street kids, and their family, as I recognized that only God can provide true comfort, peace, and hope for these people. God surprised me with disappointment and sadness to see youthful and motivated children and young men sitting idle at home or wandering the streets because they have no money to attend school and no skills to find jobs. To me, they seem helpless to change the circumstances, unless financial help miraculously comes from somewhere. God also surprised me with frustration and impatience to know that abundant resources are available and wasted thriftlessly elsewhere every minute and everyday while a few hundred US dollars can provide a Rwandan child education for a year, not only keeping him/her off the street for the period but possibly changing his/her future for a lifetime. If God's heart is in this land, why does it seem that His hands and feet are absent or restrained? Has God called only a few selected blessed individuals to share their blessings with those who are in need whom He also loves?



Since my return from Rwanda, I had the opportunity to talk with many different people about my trip to Rwanda, people including acquaintances, best friends, care groups, family members, and even part of the congregation of my home church in US. Only a selected few to whom I would or could explain about the children's longing for a sip of water from our water bottle, and how we were hesitant to share the water, since there was an inadequate supply to offer all the children and there were concerns of us being exposed to local germs or bacteria. To only a few would I share about the forgiveness some Rwandan Christians exhibit to others and the freedom and joy that follow because of God's love in their hearts. Only a select few to whom I would explain the heart-felt gratefulness and gladness expressed by the Rwandans we met, who enjoyed our visits and who felt cared for when love is in limited supply, and how we genuinely hope for the best for them, their family and friends, and their country.

The lessons God seems to be teaching me of love, healing, compassion, forgiveness, His sovereignty, etc., indeed have not ended when I left Rwanda but they have continued as I engage a different person each time about the trip and observe each person's response, and in turn, my reaction to each person. Even as I write this trip summary, I struggle to figure out how to make sense of and how to explain what God is teaching me and what I aim to achieve by sharing these experiences with others, those who are attentive, those remaining emotionless, those expressing anguish and grief, yet others who seem disinterested, who becomes defensive and argumentative, or who tactfully seek to change the topic.

I would conclude by saying how much I love the trip theme song "Healing is in Your Hands" by Christy Nockels, healing that not just Rwandans but I and everyone else need, so that we may be renewed and rejoice. "My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together."- Psalm 34:2-3.

From the Journal of Helen: A Sanctuary

Rwanda is my sanctuary. It's a place where I really see and experience God. Every time I go back to YWAM Rwanda, they'd embrace us with the warm greeting: "Welcome home." Indeed I feel at home with God there. It's a place where God restores me and renews my love for Him.

God's Mission

This is my 4th year going on mission to Rwanda. The theme of our team this year is "No Separation from Love" from Romans 8:35-39

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.'

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."



I feel that for me to live out this theme on mission, God had to first accomplish the mission of making that theme real in me. When I came on the trip this year, I tugged along a baggage of a few months of wrestles with sins which made me feel separated from God. As we sang our theme song "Healing is in Your Hands", I immediately felt that I needed healing and this trip was God's mission on me. And day by day on the trip, He was showing me:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."
1 John 1:9

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death." Romans 8:1-2

"Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." Romans 8:33-34

And so God took me through a mission of healing to set me free from condemnation. In my journey of dying to the old self, God was assuring me that nothing at all, not even sin which set me apart from Him in the first place, can now separate me from God's love because Jesus had already cleansed me and continues to intercede for me.



My Sanctuary

Last year when I left Rwanda, God gave me a vision that He was sending me on mission back to Hong Kong. It's been an eventful year in Hong Kong for me and, when I went back to Rwanda this year and prayed for what testimony to share on a youth outreach, God gave me Bible passages which summed up my past year in a way that I had never thought of before. I really felt that Rwanda was my spiritual home, and God brings me home every year to really see and experience Him in special Rwandan ways. And after renewing me in that sanctuary, God sends me back on mission to Hong Kong for the year, into my mission fields at home, at work, with my friends and relatives, and wherever I am.

"The LORD our God said to us at Horeb, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Break camp and advance into the hill country of ... See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore he would give to your fathers — to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — and to their descendants after them.'" Deuteronomy 1:6-8



When I was first informed that I would be going on this trip, I wasn't sure what to expect. And after learning more about Rwanda, I wasn't sure I was ready. What could I possibly do to serve a nation devastated by genocide? How could God use me to encourage a people who have undergone experiences so completely foreign to me? And what is it that God would want to teach me in the process?

Toward the start of our trip, a team member shared with me an image she had of Rwanda as cracks in a dry land suddenly bursting with water. Not long afterward, another team member shared from Isaiah 41: I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs... so that people may see and know, may consider and understand, that the hand of the LORD has done this. That's when it struck me. Who would look to a desert for pools of water? Who would seek parched ground to find springs? No one, because finding sources of water in those conditions would be impossible. However, when by some miracle we make a discovery that is so unpredictable, law-defying, seemingly impossible yet visible before our very eyes, we cannot help but wonder if we are witnessing something supernatural. Similarly, who would look to Rwanda, a nation devastated by genocide, in search of abundant blessing? And yet, in a place where I expected to find a people struck with anger, grief, and bitterness, I was welcomed by a people teeming with joy, hope and peace. Such an extreme contrast cannot be attributed to chance nor to man's ingenuity. Only God could produce such dramatic, miraculous transformation. I was immediately reminded that God is a Redeemer and was delighted to discover that He is redeeming Rwanda.

I was asked to share my testimony in an area called Gahanga, known to have been one of the bloodiest sites of the genocide. As I reflected on the events of my life and wondered how I could encourage a community that had endured so much suffering, God laid on my heart one particular story. A few years ago, my very healthy brother very suddenly fell ill, but, by the grace of God, woke up from a 12-day coma. However, my brother's healing, though quite miraculous, is nothing compared to the healing God began in my family. Although the brokenness of his physical body was more visibly apparent, the brokenness in my family's relationships was just as real and had been building over a much longer period of time. I can sincerely testify that my family today cannot even be compared to my family prior to my brother's illness. God has restored relationships beyond recognition. And though I would never wish suffering on anyone, I recognise that it was only because of our suffering that God was able to bring about healing. Furthermore, had we not been driven to such extreme circumstances, we may not have recognised God as our sovereign Healer and may have instead attributed my brother's recovery solely to the wisdom of doctors, modern medicine, technology, etc. In line with what I shared that evening, I am hopeful that God will somehow similarly use Rwanda's suffering to bring about healing. From what I have witnessed, I have good reason to believe the healing has already begun.

**“ONLY GOD COULD PRODUCE SUCH DRAMATIC,
MIRACULOUS TRANSFORMATION.”**

**“HE REDEEMS THAT WHICH SEEMS IRREDEEMABLE.
HE MAKES A REALITY OF WHAT WOULD
OTHERWISE BE AN IMPOSSIBILITY.”**

Toward the end of our trip, Mel Ho and I got sick. We lay in bed vomiting for 24 hours. In the evening, the team made the decision to worship and pray with us. Guitar in hand and voices united in song, they made their way from the dining hall to our bedroom to allow us to participate in one last gathering before the youth team's departure. There was an incredible sense of unity among us. There was an incredible sense of the Spirit's presence with us. And, though I felt weak (and probably looked terrible), Praise invited me to lead the song "Healing Is In His Hands", a song declaring that nothing can keep us from the love of God and reminding that our healing is in God's hands. In that moment, I felt a renewed dependence on the Holy Spirit. I had an inexplicable burst of strength as I sang the song we had sung so many times already that week, this time with new conviction. No sickness could keep me from singing God's praises. No genocide could keep Rwanda from rejoicing. No brokenness is too vast for our God to heal. No suffering is too great for our God to redeem. If our God is for us, who can be against us? Our God is on a mission of restoration and redemption. And because of Christ's victory over sin and death, nothing, not even genocide, can stop Him.



It doesn't take much to realise that we are living in a fallen world. Disease, famine, poverty, murder and abuse are just a few of the many indicators that our world has been tainted by sin and that we are a broken people. However, the Bible tells us that God is on a mission of restoration. And when I went to Rwanda, I rediscovered that God's restoration does not simply restore to a neutral state; He does not take broken things and simply make them unbroken. Instead, He goes one huge step further, taking broken things and making them into new things. He takes the sick and the dead and gives them new life. He turns ashes to beauty, mourning to gladness, despair to praise. He redeems that which seems irredeemable. He makes a reality of what would otherwise be an impossibility.

In Rwanda, I developed wonderful new friendships and was granted an abundance of opportunities to encourage and be encouraged. As I reflect on my experience in Rwanda, the words "beautiful redemption" keep coming to mind. Of course, I am not suggesting that God's redemption is any more beautiful in Rwanda than in other places. However, given the experiences I have gained since my visit and the transformation I witnessed in the people I met, the beauty of His redemption has become all the more apparent. It would be naive for anyone to believe that Rwanda's healing is complete. However, it would be foolish to deny the beautiful thing God is doing in that place. Expect pools of water in deserts. Expect springs to burst from parched lands. Our God is redeeming Rwanda. Their suffering is not without purpose. Healing is in His hands. Hallelujah.



From the Journal of Rachel: A Powerful Experience



The beginning of a powerful experience.

I did not expect to go on a journey like Rwanda, nor any a mission trip in my life. It all started from the time I realized I was growing away from God and needed to remedy the situation in the fastest way, I saw information regarding the Rwanda outreach online and there you go, signed up and settled the payment for the trip, making sure that I had no self-created excuses to veer off the course to get to know Him.

Stepping out of my comfort zone.

This trip has permitted me to reach a new pasture of land that has enriched my spiritual life and emotional capability in great strides. I recall that we went to a widows ministry where each one of us went up to a widow, laid our hands on them and prayed. As a brand new believer in Christ, it was a new experience for me to pray for others in their presence, I could not help thinking that another person in our team could have done a better and well-rounded prayer for her than me, and this lady was stuck with me!! Anyhow I still did it. The appreciative look and handshake from this Rwandese lady was very positive. She had no idea that her gesture had strengthened my confidence in praying for others.

Prayer is a powerful tool.

On another occasion, we went to a primary section of YWAM base and met the street kids. I was sitting next to this 17-year old girl

who appeared to have a barrier in communicating with others. Later I discovered that she had been abandoned by her parents when she was young. Both of us prayed that she could receive education and that the psychological wall of hers could be torn down. During our prayer, she grabbed my hands tight and started crying, I felt we began to be able to relate to each other through our prayer. Her faith in God touched me deeply. My heart poured out for her in full. Even now that we are back in Hong Kong, I constantly have her in my mind. I had been underestimating the power of prayer and sinfully not fully utilizing what God has provided to us as a gift. It occurred to me why we prayed roughly more than 10 times a day during our two weeks in Rwanda. Simple answer – prayer is a powerful tool !!

Key takeaways.

This mission trip is not like any other trip that I have been on. This trip has widened my heart, deepened my emotional capability for others, brought out my courage to share my inner feelings with others, taught me how to trust in Him and fully depend on Him, last but not least, allowed me to meet and be part of a team of God-loving Christians from different walks of life. God has definitely laid out a path for me to walk on and He is going to hand hold me along my journey.



From the Journal of Mel: God will Redeem

As I stepped out of the genocide memorial in Kigali, I wondered what I was doing there. Last year I understood that I was visiting to be educated and better understand what the people in Rwanda had faced in their past, but why was I back? What had I done with the knowledge I gained last year? What could be done? We sat in a circle outside of the memorial to pray, and each question existed in my mind only to distract me. So I decided that instead of trying to speak, I would listen. I closed my eyes and I asked God why.

Immediately in front of me I saw a dry and cracked land. Above it the air was thin and a wind continued to eat at the cracks in the dirt. I opened my eyes. Great! Instead of praying I was dreaming of a desert. I asked God for focus and closed my eyes; yet again this lifeless land was all I could see. I decided that I would have to work around the desert in my mind. So I persisted to ask God why. All of a sudden from the sky that covered the land, a glorious rain began to fall. A gushing river from the sky fell over all of the land. It filled the cracks and it joined all the different colours of sediment together forming a thick mud. Streams had formed in the cracks of the land and water overflowed with a joyous force! The dust had turned into rich, wet soil and the land was now fertile. Immediately I was overwhelmed with the fact that this was God's image of Rwanda. And in my heart I felt a great hope that if God had the power to make such a dry land wet, then He has the power to even bring more lives to Christ because of the genocide than the number of lives that were lost in it. God's redemption holds the power to bring good from anything.



My second encounter with redemption this summer took place in Gahanga, one of the villages where the most bloodshed occurred during the genocide. Our team had planned to show the film *The Chronicles of Narnia* as an outreach event in the village's mud-church. However we started the film with the church about half full, only to watch the screen cut to black as our generator failed. We left Gahanga in much confusion as to why God would allow this to happen. On our second outreach night in Gahanga we decided to try to show the film again, this time with a larger generator. We started with testimonies and a message, and as time passed, the church became more full than any of us could have imagined. By the time we showed the film, kids were squished on the floor at the front and men had formed a large crowd at the back. As the film ended, the entire church cheered and roared at Aslan's victory and almost half of the church came forward wanting to invite Christ into their lives. It certainly was another instance of the power of redemption, but as I reflected on the image that God had given me, a new thing stood out. The cracks that had existed in the land were not only filled by the rain, but overflowed with it. God's redemption doesn't just satisfy; it fulfils its purpose in powerful abundance.



On my second last day in Rwanda, Amanda I fell awfully sick. We couldn't really eat, and any thing we tried to drink, we would proceed to throw up. I remember asking God as we sat in the girl's dorm why He would allow it? I couldn't understand why he would let us get sick. But on the last night, as Amanda and I lay in the dorm during the final debriefing, something weird happened. We could hear the guitar getting louder and the voices getting closer. Moments later the entire group was at our door, singing Revelation Song. They came into our room and surrounded us on all sides, singing loud and cheerfully. The joy and the love that I felt at this time was incredible. The group left our room to continue debriefing upstairs, glowing with a new level of unity. I woke up the next morning to hear that during the debriefing, amazing growth had happened. The team felt comfortable sharing new things with each other, and growing in vulnerability so that they could more effectively pray for, encourage, and even prophecy over each other in unity. I realized that even my sickness was a demonstration of God's redemption. As I again remembered the image God had given me at the beginning of the week, I noticed something more. The water not only overflowed out of the cracks in the land, but it served to fertilize it. When God's redemption fulfils its purpose in joyful abundance, there is growth.

Because of God's redemption, there is hope for even the driest of deserts. But His plans to pour down a glorious rain and make alive again a land that He loves will not stop there. His fertilization of the nations soil has already begun, and God is saying to His people, "I will redeem".



The dusty dry land, so dry and cracked as far as I could see. A yellow jerrycan poured out a stream of water onto the ground and the cracks began to fill up with water until the dirt became muddy and the cracks slowly disappeared as the ground became solid again. This was the image that I kept getting when I prayed and asked God what our trip to Rwanda this year will be about. It was about the cracks that have been in Rwanda, the division between the different people groups in the country, and also, the upcoming August presidential election. Tensions were on the rise politically and in the society in the months leading up to our departure. God was telling me to focus on his love and not on the grenade attacks, not on the erupting divisions that had resulted in the Genocide 16 years earlier. God's love that is so wide and deep for us that it can fill up all the driest land and the deepest cracks, and allows realtime overflow. So that the land is made whole again. That image encouraged me to keep going, to prepare a team of diverse age ranges to work together by the love of Christ and to be His light wherever He leads.

When I first set foot in Rwanda 7 years ago, I went with a group of youth. This year I am grateful to again see God touch the hearts and lives of the youth that went, as well as, the adults. No lesson I can plan can beat God's school of life. Reality is harsh, though God can allow us to see the glimmer of hope. So I'm glad to have journeyed with this team to understand more of God's unfailing love for us.

In Romans 8:35-39, we are posed a question and given an absolute answer. This is His teaching to us.

Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us?

The darkness in the world is strong, when being in Rwanda you face it dead on everyday. How can you not? Hatred and jealousy caused people to kill each other and commit hellish, unspeakable acts during the Genocide. There is the weapon and death sentence of AIDS cripples the bodies and minds of countless people, trying to have a life worth living. Don't forget the children and youth who have no parents to guide them, the orphans who live at the mercy of strangers or live a life trying to find food at all desperate costs. Nor the ladies who are so desperate to feed their children so they have sex for money. Almost always, the grip of poverty is unmerciful, trapping those under its power in an endless cycle of powerlessness and helplessness. Compounded with lies of inadequacies and tendencies of greed, jealousy rages and abuse of sex and drugs, surely this human brokenness cannot be accepted by God?

Over the years, I have seen people from new to strong believers, streetkids to leaders get dragged down when they were shining for the Lord. Every year I face many heartbreaking stories about how someone I know faced a battle and lost. Yes, someone is trying to drive a wedge between us and God. Though the enemy has not won.

There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture:

In my 7 summers of being among the Rwandese people, I really have seen that God's love cannot be far from us, no matter how big the wedge is. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?" as it says in Romans 8:35. In Rwanda, each of these items of separation can be seen crystal clear.

The people we were with, undoubtedly have experienced all of these things. Being hungry, having no clothes to wear, fearing for their life, and having a threat to be killed. Through all these and more, could they really know that God loves them beyond what condition they are in? How would I share this message directly from Word so it would connect with their heart?

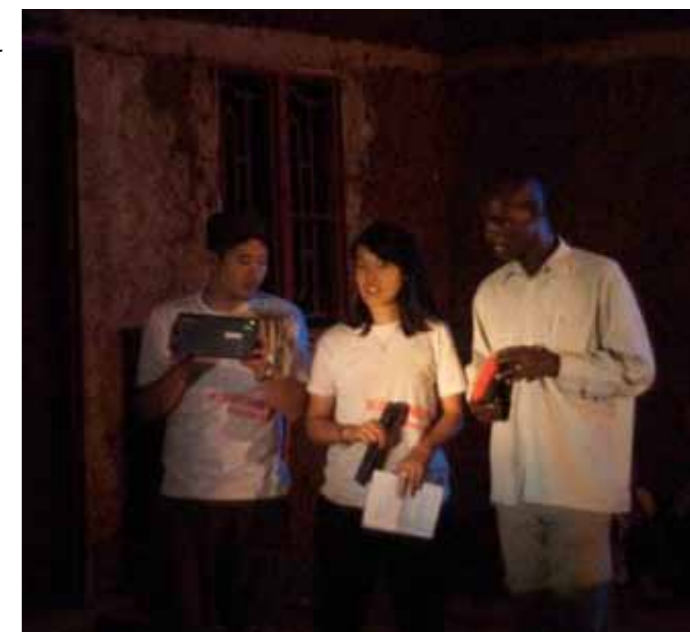
Our filled backpacks symbolized the sins and burdens that lay on the path between us and God. The heavy loads that block us from embracing Him. We can't blame the condition we are in and think that because we have all those burdens in between us, He will never love us. As I slowly took away each bag along the path, I could see the faces in the crowd anticipating what would happen next. In the dimly lit church, the uneven dirt floor became the stage. The gap closed, us and God could stand next to each other. Victory and love.



In that village with no electricity and after a failed attempt at starting the generator one night, we finally were able to get electricity the next night with another generator to show a movie. The "Lion of Judah has Overcome" as promoted in the village was in fact, "The Chronicles of Narnia". Our team worked together to bring together only what God had planned, an evening where His love was displayed in the middle of a cornfield under the moonlight where a crowd had gathered to see a battle being fought and won. Their cheers echoed into the night, though a village drunkard came to disturb. The battle was real for us and it was overcome in mighty way.

The question remains, will those in poverty know God's love without and tangible gifts? The truth is that money and gifts can be blessing or a curse. Without God's wisdom in each situation, the result could tear down what God has built up. How can they see God's truth that His love is a gift?

I have prayed countless prayers with my Rwandese friends and the people I encounter daily, for their visions, their desires, their hopes, and dreams. For youth leaders to rise up in a youth ministry when there was none, for provision of a house for rejected and orphaned kids, for school fees for streetkids to get education, for ladies to have an alternative to prostitution, for getting training and business in filmmaking to generate income, for having money for medication for diabetes, for a deaf and mute streetkid to return, kids to get off the streets and have a home to live in, for a chance to study at university, for food to eat today. Just to pray with and for them is a privilege, and when He answers in His time, it is amazing to see the blessings of those prayers. Visions and dreams being realized, promises fulfilled, in ways we cannot imagine or sometimes explain.



Love them as I have loved you. Tell them about me. Tell them about how much I love them. Oh God, if only you can see how hard it is for them to see you because they are hungry and they can't earn enough money to take care of themselves and their family. They are desperate to survive and tempted beyond they can bear, their view clouded by jealousy, they want more of everything and they are being hurt. I will never have enough to give, to fill their brokenness or needs. How can they feel your love? I love them already. You don't need to do anything but to carry my love. Be with them. Give them what I give you. You know I love you, I love them too.

"LOVE THEM AS I HAVE LOVED YOU...YOU DON'T NEED TO DO ANYTHING BUT TO CARRY MY LOVE."



As I left a class of precocious preschool kids in a village, an elderly lady who was sitting in the front of a store next door. She sprang to her feet, and holding a wooden walking stick she made her way over to where I was standing with my Rwandese friend. After chatting in Kinyarwanda with my friend, my friend excitedly said, "Do you remember her? She is asking when are you going to her house to see the blessings that you have prayed for." I looked at the lady closely and I remembered back to 2006, when a few of us went to her house to visit. Earlier, we had brought her a goat so she can raise and breed them to sell for school fees and daily needs. At her home that day, she had no food, she was hungry and so were her grandchildren.

Yet, she thanked us for the goat and knew it was from God. We had nothing to give her that day though we prayed in faith for God to provide food for her family and to multiply the blessing of that one goat. Then now a few years later, the beaming lady looked me and in Kinyarwanda she told me that she has food now, her family is good, and when was I going to visit her to see all the blessings I prayed for? *They should see me beyond what things they get. Those things are temporary but my love lasts. They know whether you love them or not. If you say God loves them, you have to love them like I do, that is how they will see me. That's the Truth.*

They kill us in cold blood because they hate you. We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one.

Don't give up. Many will want to drag you down because of your faith and peace with God's love.

Kimisigara boys, I am so proud of all of you. From all the years of being with you at the football pitch, your football skills have improved so much you are one of the great teams in the league. I know it is hard to resist the temptations of alcohol, drugs, girls, and money, yet God is hearing our prayers. Look, He provided cool team uniforms this year, He hears us! I have seen you go from living in the streets and sewers to finding income to rent a small room with others. It is touching to see your desire to get more training and education to get a job you want. Keep walking the road to your dreams, you can't be knocked down.

Emmanuel, you are loved. When I first met you when you were 12, you were living on the streets, working in the market, and on drugs. I tried to get an orphanage to accept you but you were too old. So we tried finding you a home so you could start primary 1, but you were kicked out of the home within a few months and back to find money in the market. I lost you for a year and feared you were gone. Then you came back. A door opened for you to go to a Christian boarding school and you are learning fast. You have a place to sleep and food to eat. God heard my prayers. I saw you last year after not knowing where you were. This year, I traveled out of the city to see you but you were not at the school because you were watching a football match. Though when you got back, I had left to go back to the city and you called telling me that I can't leave the country without you seeing me. So another time I went back, and you saw me before I saw you and ran to me. It was hard to leave you, crying on the side of the school, because I don't want you to think that I don't love you because I am leaving. You are always with me just like God is always with you.



Almond Tree Films, your dreams are coming true. Video production, film directing, telling stories with your own voice, they are all your dreams that God is making a reality. I am so proud of all of you for using your gifts to share with others the voice of truth. To persevere in making films, getting trained, going to school, and having your films screened at international film festivals because of their message. Be the voice for those who are hidden, be strong when society wants you to disappear, keep faithful in the road God has given you.

The past can come back to take away your hope and future but God is on your side.

None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

To show understanding of God's unconditional love for us, we got to have unconditional faith. That is a constant challenge, our faith has limits but we are asked to leave those conditions behind. Nothing can stop God from loving us. What can stop us from loving Him?

My faith has been challenged again in many ways. I saw one of my brothers who was a streetkid when he was young find a stolen wallet of one of our team members. God is transforming his understanding of unconditional love despite my previous struggles at believing it was possible. Another time, I could barely hold back my tears as I was told the 6 year-old girl "Love" I held in my arms was raped just a few months before. How could that happen? We had just sang, "Healing is in your Hands" as I carried her with her humming, not knowing how deep that prayer was for her. That God will fill all her scars and heal her STD. Yes, I believe God can do that for her. "No sickness, no secret," can keep her from His love. Even when people don't have clothes or food, I'm not sure how God can provide, but He does. Like all the kids and youth that love football (soccer) and have no football shoes or uniforms. Yet, God allowed kids in the US from Weston Soccer club to collect their old seasons clothes and equipment and after 2 years, we managed to get it shipped to HK and we brought it over to many groups of people. Their look of disbelief when seeing the shoes and jerseys was simply God's "I can." Likewise, to pray with a group of faithful refugees who were not waiting for the completion of a roof on their house of worship to pray within the brick walls reminded us to keep trusting in God's provision.

The height and depth of His love for us is not a mystery. Is our faith strong enough to receive the magnitude of it?

As our faith was challenged, we broke free of previous burdens, we prayed for healing and wisdom. God brought healing about our team and the Rwandese people. He loves us unconditionally! We are more than conquerors through Christ who loves us cyane cyane.

Ntagutandukana n'urukundo. No Separation from Love. This is the main point. The absolute truth. End of God's lesson, beginning of a new life. Take it and make it yours.

I waited patiently for the LORD;
And He inclined to me and heard my cry.
He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay,
And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.
He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God;
Many will see and fear
And will trust in the LORD.

Psalm 40:1-3

I left for Rwanda with a deep longing for renewed intimacy with the Lord. I wrote on my journal the day before the trip that I was jealous for Him. I yearned for a new song asking Him to come meet me in Rwanda.

For several years now I have been struggling to live the Christian life – quite a contrast from I have been used to. I was born to a Christian home – always the good kid, never really screwing up big time. As a result, I grew up with an awful sense of pride and self-righteousness. But suddenly I found myself stuck in a rut, feeling like a complete failure for the first time in my life. I was convinced that God had hidden His face from me, and I so badly wanted to meet Him again.

During the first full day of the trip, our team visited the Genocide Memorial. It was such a crazy experience just reading about the myriads of atrocious acts committed even just in the last century. As I moved from one room to the next, my heart grew heavier and heavier. I was just flabbergasted by how sinful man truly is. The sinfulness I witnessed in writing spoke to my own sinfulness. I am really rotten through and through – no different from those people that committed all those crimes. I did not feel an inch of contempt for the perpetrators, because I felt like I was one of them. The years the Lord has spent humbling me has culminated at this point. I have become a completely different person. The question that stands out for me is how could God love such an awful group of people?

The next day, I found myself standing in front of the widows of APRECOCOM. As the warm African sun was beating down my face, I came to finally understand this song in all its fullness:

He is jealous for me,
Loves like a hurricane, I am a tree,
Bending beneath the weight of his wind and mercy.
When all of a sudden,
I am unaware of these afflictions eclipsed by glory,
And I realise just how beautiful You are,
And how great Your affections are for me.
Oh, how He loves us.



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