



Peace, Be Still



Amahoro Shoroko!



helen cheung

This is my 5th year in a row going on missions to Rwanda. During our mission trip there last year, Praise, Florence, Priscilla and I stayed behind in Rwanda for another week after most of our other teammates had left. Flo, Pris and I had all been going to Rwanda for the 3rd or 4th time by then, and we got given our Rwandan names!

Flo's called Kwizera, meaning "faith".

Pris got called Umunezero, which is "joy".

I got given the name Mahoro, meaning "peace".

And Praise already had her Rwandan name for years - Ishimwe, i.e. "praise". =>

This year, the theme which God gave to our mission team is "Peace, be still" - precisely on my Rwandan name - Mahoro / Peace! Our theme is taken from Mark 4:35-41 ~

Jesus Calms the Storm

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"

And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

And so God took us on a journey of peace amidst the storms. As usual, there was spiritual warfare back to front:

- Our Canadian team leaders and members got stuck on transit to Rwanda due to changes in visa requirements, with their arrival delayed by 1 day;
- Failing power generators for projectors to show the Chronicles of Narnia at our village outreaches;
- Misunderstandings with our good old Rwandan friend; etc. etc...



God of course triumphed in all those spiritual battles and challenges. And amazingly enough, we even had some whole week of storms and rain and lightening in Rwanda! It was the first time I saw rain in Rwanda after not having seen a drop of rain for the previous four years. We always go there in June / July which are meant to be dry season in Rwanda, and this year the Rwandans said the weather's just been weird and changing. And this rain was despite the recent severe drought in most of the other parts of East Africa. God provided the perfect stormy setting for us to share the story of Jesus calming the storm and calling out, "Peace, be still!"

Apart from the stormy physical surroundings, God also brought me to face the storms in my heart - the storms in my relationship with Him and others, which zap away the peace in my heart. For most of the past year, I had struggled with a wound from a breaking of faith by a good old friend, which shook my worldview and cast this doubt in my heart and mind - in my place of hopelessness where humans are all weak and can't always be trusted, including myself, how do I really know that there is indeed a God who is always good and trustworthy? In a world of different shades of gray, how do I know that there is truly a God of pure white? I thank God that He has blessed me to know Him well and see Him a lot over the years, but a seed of doubt was sewn in me and I needed healing from it.

And thank God for healing me completely in Rwanda. Rwanda has always been my sanctuary where God focuses my vision on Him and refreshes my spirit and soul. In this special country, my eyes are always opened to see God so clearly. True peace can only come from God alone. And thank God for His gracious forgiveness for my doubts. Praise Him especially for teaching me this in Rwanda this year - I needed faith in order to have peace - only when I have undoubting faith in God can I have true peace in Him and in everything. And in faith and peace I also find joy and sing praise! Full circle with our Rwandan names. =>

Praise God for bringing me on this journey of peace in Rwanda, and sing joy to God for blessing me with faith to still the storms in my heart. And this journey of peace continues after my return to Hong Kong - in the midst of all the big and small storms in life - at work, at home, at church, with friends, and within myself. And God continues to speak to me, "Peace, be still". A journey of my new identity of Mahoro / Peace.

"... and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end"

(Isaiah 9:6b-7a) *



cherry ho

"Let's go over to the other side"

Like one of those serial films, my second trip to Rwanda was like the continuation of last year's trip. The message of love hasn't changed, but on top of knowing that nothing can separate me from God's love, He is challenging me to respond to His love this year.



"Where is your faith?" - Mark 4:39

For weeks, the preparation of Almond Tree Films' (ATF) premiere lacked nothing but this - money for refreshments to host the guests. With even the short two years of experience promoting the Hong Kong film and TV industry, I know the importance of this event to market the company and attract business partnership. However, although the films to be screened received International recognition, the government was unable to approve any financial support.

With one day to go, excited yet worried, ATF had no choice but to ask the HK team if there was budget to cover the needed expenses. As of that day, the answer was no, but in faith, HK team leaders prayed with ATF staff for provision and went ahead to order the refreshment. The big day came, and on the same day we welcomed more members joining the HK team. As the team budget was reviewed upon their arrival, the leaders suddenly found a surplus, and to everyone's amazement, it was enough to pay for the refreshment!

For sure, this was no coincidence. Although I was not one of them sweating, I was in awe because I knew from my brief event management experience that this night was important for ATF, to build relations and celebrate the great films they have made. This incident tells me that when what we do aligns with what God wishes, in ATF's case, to promote faith, hope and love through their films, the needs will be met.

Q. When has He asked you to have faith in His provision, even when you don't see how it would appear?

"Come, follow me, I will make you fishers of men." - Mark 1:17

"Let it rain, let it rain, open the floodgates of heaven..." was what the HK team had been singing and praying for Rwanda during week 1. Then for a couple of days in week 2, the sky was really dripping rain unusually in the supposedly dry season. When it rains in Rwanda, people tend to stay home, so for the support group we were going to join on a rainy day, we were pondering to cancel with low attendance, as only four people with a small child showed up to the gathering. After several trips of mud paddling to communicate, I was feeling a little grumpy and was wishing this to be over with soon. However, considering the long walk these people took to come, and as it doesn't make sense to send them off in the rain again, we kept the gathering. One by one they shared their stories and prayer requests and I tried my best to pay attention.

Then Lady B, the only non-believer with the small child, told us how she got infected. Staring at the ground mostly, she told us bitterly with dry giggles that her husband had passed her the HIV virus. What's more, he abandoned her when the baby was two months old. She is left with no husband, no house, poor health, no job or money, but a child to raise. Hope is out of the equation. Our hearts sank, but they really broke when her son, little Y, yelled out, "My father left us!?" repeatedly. Silence immediately followed, and for the next moments, we did the only thing we could - pray. For those precious few minutes, I also held Y tightly on my lap, praying for God to protect him and his mother, and that he would grow up to know Him personally.

As we looked up after the prayer, lady B was sobbing. I took Y with me for a walk around, when the others tried to comfort her. After amusing Y with a couple of songs in Kinyarwanda and Swahili, lady B was a new person. Although her pain remains, the virus hasn't left her, her husband hasn't come back, and there wasn't money popping out of nowhere, she was a new creation because she's invited Jesus Christ into her life.

Looking back, we know this was not in our control. If there was no rain and more people turned up, or if the rain was too heavy and too few people came, we would have no chance to hear lady B and about her heartache. All God asked of me, was to walk a few short trips in the muddy ground, so I could witness the life changing moment of lady B. At the end of the gathering, I no longer minded the mud on my legs, because with the heavenly angels, I was rejoicing that I could witness God's effort in searching for His beloved sheep.

Q. Do you have a trail of muddy ground He has asked you to follow so you can see the wonder of His work and share the joy? *



"For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness." Isaiah 38:18

"It's easier said than done." - Often quoted, and I know it well enough for one action - forgiving others. However, never had I encountered an example that impressed me until I met Ms. L. A widow, Ms. L lost her husband during the genocide in a painful way. Instead of someone killing him, he was trying to kill her because of their difference in tribal inheritance. He was caught and put in jail. She was injured with a back that she could never bend properly again.

With four kids to look after, Ms. L became a follower of Christ when her husband served his sentence. One thing she felt God asked her to do, which was one of the hardest things, was to forgive her husband for hurting her. Understandably, it took her some time to debate in her mind, but in obedience, she made the decision to forgive. When he was released eventually, he returned home to live with the family.

Seemingly having a complete family, Ms. L's husband woke up everyday feeling guiltier and guiltier for what he did to his wife. Instead of starting a new life, he attempted to end it. Instead of believing that he is forgiven by God and Ms. L, he didn't see the worth of his life. After failing to commit suicide at home, he simply left his family quietly one day, leaving Ms. L with four children.

Until now, Ms. L has no idea where he is or whether he is even alive. Nonetheless, because of her relationship with God, she has hope that God will take care of her and provide for her even though life is tough. She is able to praise and worship with joy because God has heard her cry and has healed her.

Out of many visits that we did, Ms. L's story challenges me most in my daily living. She is also the first person I have prayed for who wept so hard. I knew what I said was no grand words or wisdom, so I trust it was God who used those words to touch her heart. I could feel her pain and the process of healing as we held hands in praying, and somehow, I was receiving healing too, because tears were falling off my face. If there is one thing to learn, I hope I can live a life in worship and be strong like Ms. L.

Q. Are you able to forgive, let go and reconcile with people that had hurt you, or even forgive yourself for something you'd done, so you can spend time to praise rather than gaze?



"Be still, and know that I am God." - Psalm 46:10

For a few months before the trip to Rwanda, I went through a couple of changes in life, which were rather stormy and heart breaking, and almost lead me to seek professional help. I anticipated that God would show me something to help me grow during this trip and I was not disappointed.

Being still has always been a challenge for me, and sometimes I actually thought good of myself for being busy or making the most out of my time. That is, until something you treasure is destroyed or taken away, and you realise you cannot plan or control everything. Almost like having a big sign put in front of me while driving at high speed, I banged my head hard, and expectedly, I bled. With a bloody face, I was forced to take a turn. As I slowly continue my journey in pain, I notice I was actually blessed to spend time with people who love me and are important to me, and I got to review the direction I should head towards next. I am also really thankful to know many friends, including many sisters in this trip who prayed for me. Although I don't understand why pain had to be involved, it seems that God is saying I should have faith in His provision, follow and be fishers of men, and praise Him in all circumstances, because He is the one in control to calm the storm and He will get me to the other side as promised.

Q. What is your storm and can you trust that God will calm it and get you to the other side? *



Undying energy



So this testimony is quite a miracle. A miracle that I even started writing it, due to my chronic tussle with a vicious disease commonly borne in teenagers - procrastination. I whiled away the day asking people, "So are you done?", and then laughing uneasily, as if I too had already made a start, and was wrapping it up. In actuality, the title of my testimony was the only mark on my document for hours. I 'began' this some days ago (or weeks, I can't tell the difference in summer), with the mindset of a student undertaking a mundane piece of homework, rushing to meet the deadline in a matter of hours. What to say? How do I appear deep and philosophical? How can I get full marks? **WHERE IS THE CRITERIA SHEET?** Only after the surge of adrenaline that comes with realizing that I had a little under 3 hours to finish this, did I understand that this was not an assignment, with an inflexible deadline and imminent doom if I did not complete it. If I didn't write it, there would be no dire consequence, except of course, the one personal consequence of not taking the time to come to terms with the amazing discoveries and lessons learnt in this one trip to Rwanda.

The past academic year has been hectic, to say the least. With the workload increasing exponentially, and the everyday challenges that high school reliably presents, I found little to no time for quiet time. I knew that something was different this year, but I wasn't entirely sure what it was. Only towards the end of school did I notice how much angrier I had become. Gone were the days of simple displeasure, and a new time of bitter, blind tirades had arrived. I felt that I was always tired, and that the constant fatigue was not related to the amount of sleep I got every day. By the start of the summer holidays, I was sick of school and life in general. Then, in the village of Gahanga, where we visited a community of widows, I was struck by the Holy Spirit.

One particular woman, Lucy, had the biggest impact on me. The widows performed a wonderfully spirited musical piece for us to welcome the group, and watching them stomp their dusty feet with the vigour of young children and seeing the smiles weave snaking creases through their glowing faces, I think I can safely speak on behalf of the team that we were all entranced by the raw passion that filled the small hut. Afterwards, we proceeded to Lucy's own house, where we all squashed into the cramped room to listen to her testimony. She stood tall, about a head taller than the sea of a large majority of Asians in the room. Speaking steadily, she began her story, and only pausing to allow the translator to relay her message, her woeful tale began.

Lucy's husband had been a Hutu, and during the time of the genocide, the Hutus were the ones strictly attacking the Tutsis. Consequently, Lucy being a Tutsi, saw her husband turn against her, and wield a machete in an attempt to kill her. He only managed to cut her lower back before fleeing the house and village. Some time later, he came back after being let out of jail, and he begged for her forgiveness. She let him back into the house and they carried on as though nothing had happened.



However, upon seeing the struggle Lucy had just to bend at the knees because of how he'd injured her, her husband couldn't deal with his inner turmoil, and fled the village once more. Tears rolling down her face, Lucy explains how she tells people that her husband is dead, but she isn't very sure. Suddenly, the bright red blouse that she is wearing seems symbolic of her silent strength that seems palpable in the pregnant air in the hot little hut.

On the bus ride back to the base, I realized that I would never be able to fathom what Lucy must feel everyday. Not only with mental scars, but a physical reminder of the pain in her past. If she could weather that storm and come out singing and dancing as if her soul were on fire, why then couldn't I get over selfish little issues, that in the bigger picture, seem comparatively petty? Why then was I, a soon to be 15 year old, always thinking of sitting down and sulking, when women much older were walking barefoot around the village all day, exclaiming cheerful "Muraho!"s without a trace of disgruntlement? Clearly, the Lord was stronger in this woman's sparse little house than I had let him be in my privileged, albeit busy life. This led to the revelation that with the coming year being an even more important one, I would not be able to survive it, let alone grow from it, without the simple blessings of joy, and energy.

I can't pretend that there has been a sudden, dramatic transformation during this trip, but what has happened is a gentle nudge in a new direction, and with new knowledge and stronger motivation, I'm excited to see what God has in store for the coming year! ❁

emily lau

In the months leading up to my mission trip, there were times when I was so certain I wanted and needed to go to Rwanda, and other times when I was just as uncertain about it all. By God's grace, providence and the loving prayers of my family and friends, I finally found myself on African soil for the very first time this summer (it's hard to describe that joy and excitement!) and was pleasantly surprised by the incredible beauty, tidiness and development of the capital city, Kigali. My love for this place, where I would be staying in and ministering to for two whole weeks, was ever increasing by the time our minivan pulled out of the airport parking lot.

I knew that our team's mission and vision was to serve, to bless, to encourage and to bring God's peace and love to the people of Rwanda. But I also knew that, in many ways, I would be blessed and encouraged way beyond what I could do to serve this nation. I was eager for, yet apprehensive of what God wanted to teach and show me in the process, of how He would use the experiences in this mission trip to continue challenging, growing and shaping me in the future.

As I went through my Rwanda journal and devotional materials earlier, in preparation for writing this testimony reflection, I was slightly overwhelmed at just how much God had shown me here and there, all my thoughts, feelings, and wondering how I could possibly sum up my two-week experience in this writing! It just cannot do the trip justice, but...

God is Love

One thing that God was teaching me about was Love. How do I really love others? How do I, as a Christian, show that the love of God is in me? Before going on this mission trip, I knew that one of my personal challenges would be to truly love the people of Rwanda and, more broadly, the people of Africa.

In a ministry event one afternoon, we were ministering to a group of HIV/AIDS women. We were joined by an American missionary, Jeff, who shared a message which particularly spoke to me. One of the Bible passages that Jeff brought up in his message sharing was 1 John 4:7-8

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God...because God is love."

This reminded me of my caregroup leader's prayer for me before my mission trip, that God would teach me what love is, so that I may have a deeper, more personal understanding about the meaning of "God is love".



In his message, Jeff also told a story about a pastor's wife and her medical ministry for children – bandaging wounds, relieving children's pain and giving hugs to little ones. After a particularly memorable day of treating a little girl's very deep wound on her hand and a young boy's seriously infected foot injury, the pastor's wife had a dream that night. In her dream, the little girl's hand and the boy's foot became Jesus' very own hand and foot. And she realized that each child, whom she ministered to, is in fact Jesus himself, and that Jesus loves them all so much more than she ever could. When she cared for the injuries of those children, she was caring for and loving Jesus himself. (Matthew 25:40)

The very next day after that ministry event and message, we were doing street kids ministry—some of us playing soccer with our streetkid friends, others worshipping and singing praise songs on the sidelines—when one of my teammates opened his first aid kit (I later found out that this was something he had coincidentally started doing on last year's mission trip) and he began to treat the younger streetkids' injuries and infections. It just reminded me so powerfully of Jeff's message from the day before! I thank God for letting me witness such a moving, real example of love, through my brother's loving actions. God is love. It can be simple. Love is helping others when they have needs. Because God loves us, we are to love others. While I've grown up learning this in Sunday School, I can say that in Rwanda, it became more real to me than ever before.



Genuine Thankfulness

On our second to last day in Rwanda, riding back to the YWAM base, I was looking out of our minivan window at the beautiful sunset, and was just reminded of how much I've taken for granted, of how I don't truly appreciate enough. I was touched by the simplicity of the House of Hope (orphanage) boys' testimonies. They were grateful and thanked God for no longer leading a bad life (as street kids), for a good home, good food, a school to go to, a bed to sleep in, and just for the fact that they were happy. These are things that daily I take for granted, things that I just don't really think about (though I do feel immensely blessed!). In the House of Hope boys, and in many of our Rwandese brothers and sisters, I see genuine happiness, love, thankfulness and steadfast trust in God. I pray that I can continue to be reminded and changed from the inside out. Imana ishimwe! ❀

karen chan



After several years of hearing my colleague, Praise, tell me about her trips to Rwanda, her 'adopted' brother and seeing all those photos on her classroom board, I finally decided to join the Rwanda trip. I had been asked why I hadn't been before and had not given a reason, but I knew I didn't just want to jump onto the bandwagon but wanted to go because it was 'right' - that it was God who wanted me to go too.

I've been on mission trips before but this one was different. There were no surprises as far as giving testimonies, praying for people, doing a skit, singing and dancing (although this was a first for me to attempt a choreographed dance!) were concerned. One of the things I heard from a couple of people I met in Rwanda was that they just appreciated our presence. It was evident as we visited a village of people suffering with HIV/AIDS, footballers, people from Almond Tree Films, and widows, that this was so true. Everywhere we went people were warm and welcoming, and although at times there was an obvious language barrier, you could still read the faces and actions of the people and know that what we were communicating to each other transcends language.

There were opportunities in the villages for us to pray for people for healing. As there were so many people to pray for, translation was impossible, and not necessary! As we prayed for people in small groups, we often received similar words or images from God - which showed us that we were praying in accordance with the Holy Spirit and God was at work in these people's lives - even though they may not understand what we are praying for them.

I was glad we had been given historical background before we embarked on the trip and were more informed by the visit to the genocide memorial. We listened to stories of the people we met and how they hope for a better future for all Rwandans. It wasn't just about us and what we were bringing to Rwanda - but visiting Rwandans who are reaching out to their own people and doing as much as they could to show God's love in spiritual and practical ways. The House of Hope was one such example where ten young streetkids had been brought to live in a house to be looked after and cared for.

I thought about what I was personally challenged with. What was it that God was highlighting for me about my life? As I spent time on this trip and observed my surroundings and the people I met and the joy they have, it brought to mind 'The beatitudes':

- 3 " Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
- 5 Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
- 6 Blessed are those who hunger and
thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
- 7 Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
- 8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
- 9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
- 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted
because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.



To me, this seems to be describing the people that I met. The people we met may not have a lot, but they are aware that they have needs and many are open and willing to turn to God. I think about all that I have and how easily self-sufficient I have become. Do I really acknowledge that I'm spiritually poor and need God? Do I hunger and thirst for righteousness?

As I continue to stay in contact with friends that I met during this trip, I love the fact that we can ask each other to pray for our different needs. I hope this helps to remind me to be reliant on God so that I too can be blessed. ✨

What do you think of when you hear about Rwanda? Genocide. Murder. Loss of innocence. Anger. Pain. These were the first things that came to my mind when I first thought about Rwanda. I feel like when we think about Rwanda, we tend to focus on the past, letting the past define the present and future. I feel like when the rest of the world looks at Rwanda, we see only pain and suffering. The genocide is at the forefront of our thoughts. We're stuck in Rwanda's past, unable to think about what has happened since the genocide because we are still trying to understand the pain that the nation has gone through.

When I went to Rwanda, I thought I was going to help others heal and find peace. However, I realized something that I hadn't thought of before. The Rwandans are moving forward! True, the genocide still touches many aspects of their lives even now, 17 years later. But they are forgiving and healing. They are learning to forget their anger without forgetting the past. They are being filled with the joy and love that their Heavenly Father pours into them - joy and love that flows out through their songs and dances and actions! Do I wish the past could be undone? Yes. I wish the friends I made while I was in Rwanda didn't have to carry the memories and the scars. But what my Rwandan friends taught me is that even though the past cannot be changed, it does not need to be dwelled in! Once I was talking with my friend Aloys about his past. He had to quit school and used to live on the streets because he had no money. He told me that while suffering is hard, it can also be good. To whom do we turn to when we cannot find the strength to carry on? Our Father in Heaven. Suffering brings us closer to God. I'm so thankful that God is carrying his precious lambs forward, out from under the shadow of the genocide into a bright future that he has planned for them.

lauren lahr

While we were in Rwanda, Uncle Gary (Cheng) preached on Isaiah 61:1-4. This passage is full of God's promises of hope, restoration, and healing. As I listened to Uncle Gary speak, verse 4 in particular stuck out to me:

"They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations."

I believe that this verse is God's promise to his children in Rwanda. He will help them rebuild what was torn down. He will piece together what was ripped apart. He is raising up leaders in this and future generations to repair the damage done by former generations. He has promised that he will bring his Rwandan children out of the pain and sorrow into new life. ✨

cameron lahr



Last summer, I heard about how great the Rwanda trip was from my friends who went on it last year. After hearing these stories I immediately decided to go the following year. I am so glad that I went on this trip. God opened my eyes to many of the wonderful works He is doing around the world. One of the things that stood out to me was the happiness that the people had even though they had seen intense pain and suffering. As soon as I met the people I was overwhelmed at how welcoming the people are. Even though I was a complete stranger they treated me like family.

The hardest part of the trip for me was when we went to visit the genocide memorial. As I went into the memorial I was already thinking "this is not going to be just another museum," but I never thought it would affect me the way it did. As I read about the horrors of the genocide, I not only felt sadness and pain for the people, but anger. I was angry that a person could go into their family, friends, or neighbor's houses and kill the people inside. I was angry that someone could take an innocent baby and slam her into the wall until she died. I was angry that God would let Satan do this to a country... But, after thinking about these things I realized that if the genocide had never happened, then the tribal separation would still be in place. That if it had never happened, the unity that the country now has would never have come about. I am amazed at how God can take such pain and sadness, and still use it for good.

Through this trip, God has opened my eyes to how big he really is. It was great to see how God has worked and is still working in both Hong Kong and in Rwanda. I am very blessed to have been able to go on this trip and hope I can go again next year. ✨



Peace. Be Still. That was the theme of our Rwanda mission trip this year.

This trip to Rwanda was my first mission trip ever, and honestly I didn't know what to expect from it. I didn't know much of the hurting past of this beautiful country, nor did I believe I was spiritually prepared enough for this trip. Yet God showed me his new mercy and gave me new revelations throughout the trip. What else can I say? I am blessed.



A world of evil and suffering

On the second day that we arrived at Kigali, Rwanda, we visited the genocide memorial. As we entered the memorial, surely I was baffled by our capacity for such hatred and evil, but again it didn't come to me as a shock, especially after having seen the multitude of heinous atrocities we're capable of throughout history. But the memorial did leave me one question, one that I am pretty sure that many of us had and will continue to contemplate on: when we are amidst all the darkness and sufferings, how can we possibly reconcile with the belief that there is indeed a sovereign and righteous God, one that is all-loving and all-powerful, that is in control of all things?

'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' (Isaiah 55:8-9)

An important precaution in approaching this enigma is to come to realize that we are mere humans of such insignificance could never fathom the ways of an omniscient and omnipotent God. But God does have a plan for all of us, as written in Jeremiah 29:11, one that is to prosper us and not to harm us. A perfect God that is all-loving is incapable of lying, and therefore we must cling on to this truth, and simply walk in faith. By the truth that is instilled in our hearts, we will and can muster the fortitude to withstand lies the enemy continues to bombard us with.

'Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.' (Galatians 6:7)

The striking reality of a world of pain and suffering came about as a product of the evil and defiance in human nature. Free will breeds desires, which allow evil to lurk in the dark. Once we are given the freedom to make our decisions, there is a potential for us to do evil in accordance to our own desires. Yet God loves us so much that though he will not tamper with our ability to make our decisions, he did give us a way out, which is restoring us to our original and perfect state through the sacrifice of the Holy Lamb.

Of course knowing this as a fact from the bible and knowing this personally on a heart level are two conceptually different things. Honestly I had a hard time acknowledging this, and I still do. I do confess that I lack a faith even of the size of a mustard seed. 'Where is my faith,' sometimes I wonder. I struggle with finding this peace, this assurance that allows me to be content with the plan the Lord has in mind. But I believe that is why we should all strive even harder to come to know God and to seek his way ever more earnestly.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:27

As followers of Christ, we are one with Christ, and his presence is supposedly manifested in every way we speak or act as we are led by the Holy Spirit. Compassion and love for others are only possible after we have received the supernatural love that came from heaven above. Perhaps that is the way God had chosen, that is to use us amidst the sufferings to bring love and healing to the broken and wounded ones. And sometimes, it is these 'hardships and difficulties that will lead us to God's ultimate plan.' It's gonna be wild, and it's gonna be great, in spite of the lies you were told. I believe that is one of the biggest lessons I've learned from the trip.

Sing to the Lord a new (or maybe a couple more) song(s)

Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who live in them. (Psalm 96:1)

Throughout the bible, we are told to worship the Lord in Spirit and in Truth by the infilling of the Holy Spirit to give glory to our father in heaven. Worship isn't just singing and dancing. It could be done in many forms. Prayers, sermons, or even the way we eat or drink can be ways of giving glory to the father. But naturally we are more comfortable worshipping with music.



During our stay in Rwanda, I was assigned to the music team, and I witnessed how God miraculously worked through us first-hand. Over the course of 2-3 weeks, the Rwanda team, in collaboration with Almond Tree of Rwanda, had written and recorded 7 new worship songs. We didn't have training in song-writing, and almost none of us had experience in writing songs, yet somehow by the power of the Holy Spirit, we managed to come up with these beautiful, magnificent songs. Amazing, isn't it?

Or is it? Too often we are so accustomed to these miracles that we find them rather... 'normal'. I for one have found the mission trip rather mundane, despite it being my first one. I simply do not get impressed that easily, and that in turn hinders me from realizing the works God has been doing in my life. I believe that is evident for many of us. God could have been working in us all this time, but for whatever reason(s), we are just too blind to see it. And for that reason, I had not been in tune with God and at times led a pretty prayerless life.

But what I have seen from our Rwandan brothers and sisters is that overwhelming vigor and passion for Christ. Before this trip, I would think that since the people here are comparatively deprived of access to genuine spiritual teaching and materials, they may not be capable of fully comprehending the gravity of the gospel, or that their faith is built on a weak understanding of the word. Yet their faith and passion definitely put me to shame. I have come to realize that I am the broken one, in this desperate place in need of God's anointing. That thought motivates me to attempt to become more intimate with God, to become completely in tune with him, and to see through his eyes and hear through his ears. It is not an easy thing to do, but hey, who said being a Christian is easy?

God never promised a life without pain and suffering. Actually He was pretty blunt about there being trials and prosecutions in our lives. But, God did promise us that he will empower us through all of them, and he will be there with us, for he is forever faithful and loving. It is by knowing this that we can obtain a supernatural peace that transcends all understanding. So now, brothers and sisters, Amahoro Ahoreho. ❁



louise nettleton



I did not plan to be on this trip. I had applied to be a student teacher's assistant at my school and had my mind set on teaching for the summer.

At that time, I was contemplating my college major and was trying to choose between teaching and physiotherapy. The moment I received an email from the school informing me that I did not get the job, I had a rush of conflicting emotions. I was upset momentarily, but I soon realised that this opened the door for me to go to Rwanda, and perhaps meant that God did not want me to go into teaching. Having prayed about the possibility of going to Rwanda for a long time, I took this as a clear sign that God wanted me to go to Rwanda. When I called Amanda twenty days before the team was leaving and she told me I would be able to join them, I was thrilled to say the least.

When I arrived in Rwanda, I quickly discovered that I was not emotionally or mentally prepared. Simply put, I experienced culture shock. It never occurred to me that I may have trouble understanding their culture. On all other service trips and missions trips I have been on, I found it fairly easy to connect to and understand the different cultures. Yet, in Rwanda, I found it a challenge. The Rwandese people are some of the kindest and most hospitable people I have ever met. That being said, the genocide has made their culture complex and the Rwandese, in general, a reserved people. I began questioning God and asking Him why he wanted me to go to Rwanda if I could not properly minister to the people there.

As a part of the recording group I spent much of the trip at the Almond Tree Films house. I often felt disappointed at not being able to go on the various outreaches. However, I soon realised that being in that small living-room-turned-recording-studio worshipping with the Rwandese people was much more significant than I thought. Olivier, a worship leader who leads youth around East-Africa, came into the studio one day to worship with us. After recording a couple of songs with him, we asked about his testimony. As he shared, God showed me that my focus had been wrong. In the moment I stopped worrying about trying to connect with the Rwandese people and instead stopped to simply spend time with them and listen to them, God taught me what loving on and ministering to people truly is. Not to mention, Olivier's testimony was one of the most encouraging and inspiring stories that I have heard.

I do not believe that it was a coincidence that a physiotherapist-missionary, Jeff, was ministering in Rwanda at the time we were there. I was able to talk to Jeff about physiotherapy and I became aware of the need for physiotherapy even in countries like Rwanda. For me to know that I would be needed as a physiotherapist and that I can be effective for His kingdom is mind-blowing.

As a result of this trip and all the beautiful people in Rwanda and in our team, I learned what real relationships are all about. In addition, I have decided that I would choose physiotherapy as my major. God-willing, in the future, I will be able to help people like those I met in Rwanda and truly love on them - as a physiotherapist. *



Whatever God started teaching me in Rwanda, he is definitely still teaching me. For me the theme "Peace, Be still" has meant being still and not just knowing that he's God, but knowing that he's good. "Being still" before God has always had a somewhat serious connotation to me. You recognize his power and how big he is, and all you can do is not move because of how small you are in comparison. While this is a way of beholding and understanding his "greatness" as God, it has very little to do with trusting in his goodness. In fact without being sure that he's good, I find very little trust in my heart at all. Two years ago when I came to Rwanda I met a lady by whose story I was deeply moved. Knowing it had given me insight and in turn direction for what I wanted to do with my life, I used her story and how it impacted me in all of my college essays this year.

mel ho

I hadn't really thought about how influential this lady was on not just my education path but entire life until I found myself standing in her very same mud hut again this year. As I watched her strap a baby to her back, slap her feet against the dusty ground and praise her Father in Heaven for providing, I felt subtle tears roll down my cheeks. I mean I knew that God was great, magnificent, powerful, and all that, but I realized in that moment that I wasn't sure of his goodness, not like this lady. Her situation hadn't really changed at all, but to stand and praise God with that much joy and that much abandon, she understood that He was good.

I didn't even know how to tell her that I had used her story in my college essays and how much God had used her to bless me. But in that moment I felt like God was smiling. As He reminded me of His faithfulness through my entire life, how He had blessed me in unimaginable ways, and revealed parts of His plan in his perfect timing, I could see that He didn't just like love me because He had to, He actually liked me. He was enjoying watching His own plan unfold, and I think that this is what the lady dancing in front of me understood so deeply.

If it's God who provides as I step out in faith, and if He actually is good, being still and realizing His sovereignty is not just fearing it, but trusting it. God is continuing to show me how to rest and find joy in just being with Him and knowing his goodness. *



nancy ho



Our trip to Rwanda started out with an immediate sense of spiritual attack when, at the airport, Canadians were not allowed to fly unless they had visas. This was brand new information. At once, there were pockets of intercession all through the departure hall as family members and friends prayed and asked the Lord to open spiritual gates for us. There were four Canadians being held back from traveling to Rwanda. Collectively we were three - praise, prayer and worship! (Praise Ma was the praise, I was the prayer and Mel and Amanda were the worship). After some time, there was victory and the airline agreed that we four would be allowed to fly to Nairobi, but not to Rwanda.

We were thankful to have access at least to Africa, and we knew that one of the themes for this trip was going to be about passing through and opening up spiritual gates. At the Nairobi airport cafe, we hugged our team members goodbye and left to try and secure visas to Rwanda. God provided a wonderful place of rest for us while we waited in Nairobi. We stayed at a lovely guesthouse with running water, hot showers, comfy beds and delicious home cooked breakfasts. More importantly, God really ministered to us at the Gigiri Homestead and helped to ready us for what He was about to do, before arriving at the Rwanda base. For me, I was wondering why God had called me on this mission trip, being older (in fact, the oldest on the team!) and not really having any artistic, creative talents. I felt like I had nothing to offer. Yet, there I was. The Lord comforted me and reassured me that I was in Africa because He wanted to show me wonderful things there and to share His heart with me. That really touched me and I was able to let go of my insecurities.

The 24 hours we spent in Nairobi was a time of healing, equipping and rest. I began to see my role on the team was going to be one of intercession, from a place of rest. This really made sense in light of our scripture verses for the trip and our theme of "Peace, Be Still". The Lord provided our visas in His perfect timing, complete with times for worship, songwriting, and 'walking on water' type faith as our hired driver (named Moses) parted the waters of traffic and took us to the airport again - even before our visas had been confirmed. On the little plane to Rwanda, God gave me a vision of a 'slingshot of intercession' and we four were in the slingshot!

I believed that because of our delayed arrival, there was a much greater amount and deeper fervency of prayer that had risen up all over the globe. The slingshot (of prayer) had been further pulled back and we were propelled spiritually a greater distance and with even more force! I was reminded of how the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5:16), and I determined to believe God for ALL that He had planned to accomplish this summer. Just one week earlier, in Hong Kong, I had heard a prophecy about spiritual gates opening between Africa and China, and so spending a day prayerfully cradled in the eastern Africa gate - the city of Nairobi - felt like exactly the place to be.



Once we arrived at the Rwanda base camp, we were surprised how God gave us His heart for the perpetrators of the genocide. It was fairly easy and natural to feel compassion for the victims, but for the perpetrators who murdered them and are still around today, plagued with the bitter memories of what they have done? Yes....a resounding yes! Two people on our team received verses from Isaiah 38 concerning the healing of Hezekiah's illness. These scriptures are about Hezekiah, however they also point to a people who are gripped by a spirit of death, shame and guilt. The verses speak of them being given extra years and the shadow of their darkness and sin going backwards. Isaiah 38 also shares God's remedy for those who are walking under such enormous guilt. They are to sing with stringed instruments and praise the Lord all the days of their lives. Part of God's plan was to impart to us an understanding of His heart. He wants to pour out His amazing love onto these people in Rwanda and for them to know that He lives, He forgives, He heals and restores - even murderers in a genocide.

In addition to healing the adults in Rwanda, God clearly wants to touch the youth, both in Rwanda, and on a global scale. On the night we arrived in Rwanda, our evening devotional and debrief time revolved around one question. Would we be willing to take a bullet for Jesus? Words cannot express the depth of discussion we had. I loved the open vulnerability we shared as a team. In these times of reflection and challenge, God was expanding hearts, refining lifestyles and deepening faith. There were also new songs and worship sounds rising up everywhere on this trip.

hetty lee

Recording a worship CD and music video at Almond Tree Films was a phenomenal experience. Youth are being anointed and propelled into song writing, worship, dance, drama and many other arts and media platforms. I also saw youth being equipped for prophetic intercession and healing prayer. One of my favorite memories from this trip is of our young people laying hands on adults and praying for healing for them. This happened everywhere, but my favorite place was at Aprecom, an HIV house in Busansa. There was one particular elderly blind man who captured our hearts. Our youth prayed and wept for this dear man to be able to see again. Although his vision was not restored, we witnessed him being filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit. By the time our team was leaving, he was dancing around the field and smiling. I left so encouraged by the fervency of prayer and depth of love I saw in our youth, especially in their tears. They were cultivating a lifestyle of prayer, loving people, listening for the voice of the Holy Spirit and then speaking out what He told them. Everyone was so blessed.



There was an amazing bond of love and unity amongst our team members, and between us and the people serving on the YWAM base. Though I was unable to stay for the second week and could not be directly involved in the Alpha Youth Training, I was still very much invested in and felt a part of this work through prayer, both on-site the first week and then after I left. Before I left Rwanda, the Lord directed our intercessory team to prayer-walk the YWAM grounds, anoint the prayer house, and pray blessings over their school teachers and children. It seemed that God was going to pour out redemption for the killing of a generation of youth in the genocide, and adults were going to be mobilised and trained up to bless youth all over Rwanda and to heal, restore and equip them. Our prayers and the Alpha Youth training were together laying a spiritual foundation for a youth revival and a vital youth prayer movement, not just in Rwanda but globally. It seemed like an enormous work that God was doing in just two weeks. I felt so blessed to be there and to witness His hand. Before leaving Rwanda, I was encouraged by a dream I had about an 'escalator'. In the dream, I stepped on an escalator and somehow there was a series of changes that occurred. I heard the Holy Spirit say that as we stepped out in faith, our prayers would 'change the direction of how things work' and that people's paths would be different. This really spurred me on to keep pressing on with prayer for Rwanda. I am certain God did incredible things during the second week of our trip. Thank you to all who partnered with us in prayer! *

It has been almost a month and a half since my mom, Shin-Jae and I said what seemed like a premature goodbye to the Rwanda team. Yet again, an unfortunately organized schedule did not permit me to experience the Rwanda trip in its entirety, so that the majority of the team was able to accomplish in only one year what had taken me two.

I had to do a little bit of brainstorming to put my finger on the various disparities between this and last year's trips. Perhaps the most strikingly different were my two visits to the genocide memorial. It took the second visit to realize that the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre is not a museum, not a showcase for an unfortunate event that is only to be observed once; rather, it is a common space for people to somberly gather and reflect on the horror to which this country has been subjected, to be heartbroken and contrite, to increase in love for the people of Rwanda, to recognize the capacity for human evil, to realize that similar atrocities have, can and will be committed within many other civilizations, and to be educated on the importance of taking an active role to prevent such an occurrence. To me, visiting this memorial is like reading the Bible. It's not just another book that can be shelved after the first perusal--it is important to revisit the same passages because every reading reveals something new, and every revelation makes your love of the Word more profound and better-informed. The same goes for KGMC visits. It takes more than the first, introductory trip to experience a more appropriate degree of sorrow, empathy and love for Rwanda.

Otherwise, I loved meeting Teresa, who worshiped and danced for joy when we visited her home, recording the CD at Almond Tree, seeing some of the same widows and beautiful children again, dancing hip-hop with the street kids, praying with the women at APRECOM, and spending time with the team and the locals at the YWAM base. These two trips have been such a blessing for me, and I am looking forward to growing even more in the Spirit next year, for two full weeks, in Rwanda. *



minsun lee

I learned something about God's heart on this trip - his heart of compassion for even the wicked and the evil. God truly wants the wicked to turn away from their sins and live, and not die, and He does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23).

The Rwanda genocide of 1994 still haunts the people today. Although the country has made remarkable progress in attempting to heal from the atrocities of that time, and there has been reconciliation of the two groups, Hutus and Tutsis, on both the personal and the national level, the wounds still run deep. In Rwanda, we heard many stories told about the genocide and its effects -- gruesome, horrifying and heart-wrenching. What I had never really noticed before was that all the stories I heard, whether told from personal experience or related to us, were always about the victims. It seemed only natural that the stories coming out of the genocide would abound in accounts of the atrocities suffered and the horrible acts committed on individuals and families. It was as if everyone was a "survivor of the genocide," and I never asked, even in my own mind, about those who were responsible for the genocide. But there was a large swath of the population that was suffering, not from the wounds received during the genocide, but from the shame and guilt of having been the perpetrators, or being associated with them. But their private shame and suffering had not escaped God's notice.



One of our team members shared during our devotions that she had received Isaiah 38, on Hezekiah's sickness and healing, and that she thought it pertained to Rwanda. It seemed significant because our team leader had also received this very passage for Rwanda a few months earlier. So a few of us on the Prayer Team (i.e., those of us who didn't dance or sing and in general were not artistically inclined) decided to spend time reading and praying over the passage. What came to light as we prayed and as God revealed its significance for Rwanda touched me deeply. As we were praying, a team member observed that Hezekiah's prayer seemed to portray the anguish of a sinner. It made so much sense, with some of the phrases even reminding me of some of David's Psalms on repentance.

In the Rwandan context, it would be the silent cry in the hearts of those who had committed the genocide, namely the Hutus who had conducted those heinous acts against the Tutsis (though not all Hutus had participated in the genocide). It was an anguish coming from their guilt and shame, making them cry out like Hezekiah from "this anguish of soul" (v. 15). We heard their cry in verse 14 of Hezekiah's prayer as well: "I cried like a swift or thrush, I moaned like a mourning dove... I am troubled; O Lord, come to my aid!" Through our time in prayer into the passage, we realized that God's heart was also for the perpetrators. They had been deceived by the enemy and were now left with this incredible sense of guilt and condemnation. But God wanted to heal them. I thought, Only God! Only God would care for those whom everyone condemned and despised, those who had become despicable and hateful even in their own eyes. God wanted to restore them and have them live the rest of their lives praising Him saying, "You have put all my sins behind your back" (v. 17) and "sing with stringed instruments all the days of [their] lives in the temple of the Lord" (v. 20). I pray that the revelation of God's love for them will heal and enable the Hutus to forgive and learn to love themselves. Many of those with whom I was able to share this insight with in Rwanda identified with what we saw and confirmed what we had gleaned of God's heart from the passage. I believe God wants us to claim what Isaiah prophesied about Hezekiah for Rwanda and for the individual Rwandans: "he will recover" (v. 21). Our God is so good. *

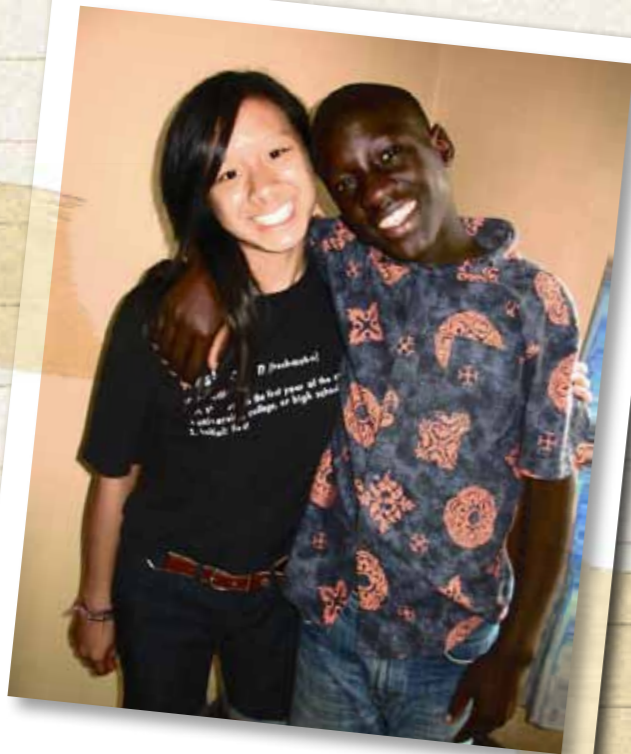
brian lee

Well this year was my second year going to Rwanda, and it came nothing of a surprise that it was amazing. Supa glad that a lot of new people came, fun to meet y'all. Coming into this trip, I knew I was going to learn and experience more things. Last year a big thing for me that I found amazing was the power of forgiveness. I wondered how it was possible for a mother to forgive the person who killed her children. But I learned that through the power of God, ANYTHING, is possible. This year what astounded me was the amount of peace and happiness in everyone. Yes there were many people struggling financially, but they kept calm and said that they believed in God and that he would make everything all right. *



Alex Cheng

Until Rwanda, I was limited in my own little bubble of comfort. You can say I was stubborn in my habits, but going to Rwanda was something I could have never expected or prepared for. This trip was the first time I stepped out in faith to travel to a whole contrastive country. It felt like I was diving into a deep abyss. Since this country was still facing reconciliation with its people I had no expectations except to give them all the love we can share with them. Once we stepped out of the plane, I felt a rush of fresh, pure air fill my lungs. I searched the uncharted waters and the more I searched, the more I fell in love with the people there. As we began to meet all the wondrous people that have started house churches, supported a roof for street children, all my expectations were blown away altogether. I felt dumbfounded. I was wrong about Rwanda all along, it was not about what happened in Rwanda, but what has been done to renew this country, Rwanda's story was about reconciliation and transformation of the heart.



Between Hong Kong and Rwanda, the clash of cultures is significant. In Rwanda, they faced tremendous trauma- their history was filled with stories that told of next-door neighbors killing each other, close family friends turning on each other, these people were devastated. With only 16 years to reconcile with one another, I had just assumed that people there had still a long way to go until they had reached compromise with each other. However, I saw that people in Rwanda had such a huge and tangible love for each other, for God and for their home country. Every time we met someone new whether it was at the YWAM base or at another village, they had always greeted us with a warm embrace. Even though I had no information about this village, I felt welcomed like family.

This is something almost rarely seen in Hong Kong. Hugging at first sight would be considered rude, or an intrusion rather than an act of love or affection. In Hong Kong, we have everything laid out for us, from food to education. Even in Hong Kong, I found it hard at times to have an intimate relationship with God because of so many distractions - I felt like I was blind from what God was doing all these years in my heart. However, as the days went past, I learnt of how love can be given and received in so many ways. Even though Hong Kong and Rwanda may be two different cities, God's love will never change.

All the Rwandese stories showed me the power and resilience of people who have every reason to give up but never do. One story that stuck out to me the most was the twins' story. Eric and Ale were abandoned by their parents at a very young age. Their father tried to protect them but was pushed off to the side and slaughtered by a machete. The mother was brutally raped trying to protect her two babies and had bled to death. She left while breastfeeding one of them. This story really touched me as we saw the twins, all grown up and pursuing a good education. Even though they had to live without any parental guidance, and have been trying to reconcile with the questions of why, this story demonstrated God's love and mercy for these people by keeping them safe and alive.



The story of Rwanda is amazing, to rebuild their society, piece by piece. I was so encouraged by what God is doing in their lives. Not only does He restore, heal and redeem relationships, but He takes their brokenness and makes them new again. People in Rwanda give their everything. My faith seemed so inferior placed next to theirs. Going on this Rwanda mission trip, I have strengthened my relationship with God, realized how he works in different environments, and that God knows each and every one of us well. This trip has helped me understand that through whatever storm we are going through, he promises us help and safety to the other side. Through the 10 days of our stay, God has allowed me to look at life in a whole different perspective and to grow in him more. ❁

(Inspired by Pastor
Rafiki on Isaiah 60,
June 26, 2011)

Darkness descends gently
Thick yet evasive
Hollow, empty, vacuous
Stepping into unknown
My path disappears

A race against time,
Ticking and forever lost
Blackness hovers over
Sight diminishes, but
Another sharpens up

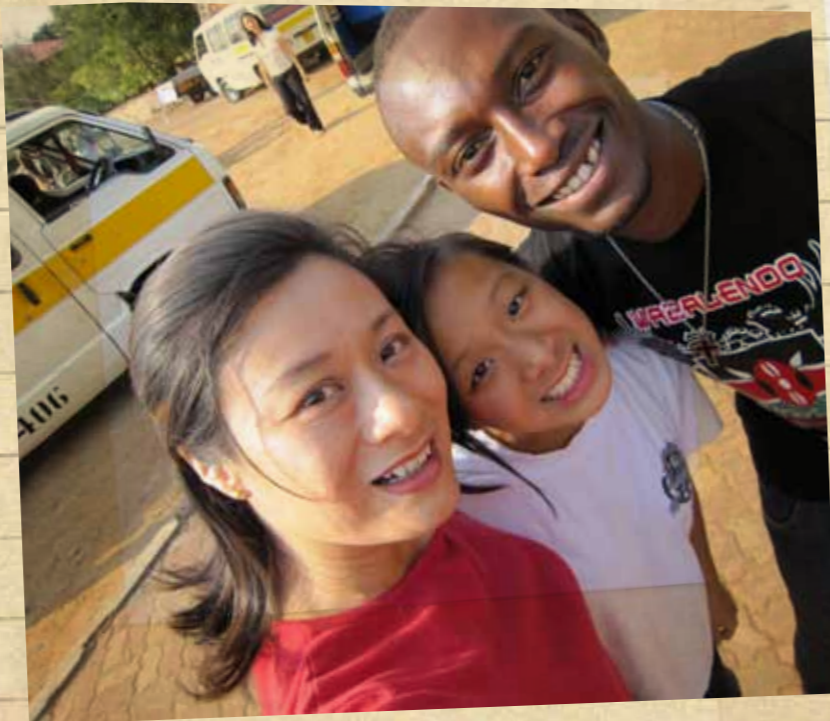
A crackling underfoot
A swish, a thump, a screech
Straining to recall what it is
Bewildering is the vacancy
Listening for the chill

Darkness was over the surface of
The deep, formless and empty
Genesis the beginning
Long ago forgotten
Then there was Light

Sixteen years recent
Rolling hills in Rwanda
Two tribes lived
Neighbors, even friends
Family altogether

A deathly wedge struck
Malevolence like lightning
Tyranny of night unmasked
Hate welcomed terror
Humanity unbridled

Student against teacher
Husband against wife
Chaos unleashed by Pandora
April to July, 1994
Hell took over



by garland cheng

A twin at his mother's breast
Something's gone wrong
Her life drained off
Two brothers left behind
Who would take them home?

In the gutter on the wayside
Some voices murmuring
Scavengers awaken at dawn
Scrounging for grub
Hungry for mercy

Without you I am alone
Is this a nightmare?
I cannot see myself
I do not exist
Without your care

Stick together here
Don't run away
Keep each other warm
Even the rain is tolerable
We can outlast the storm

Be my friend and stay
Close your eyes, hearken not
The sun is gone again
Get ready to hide now
Under the dead leaves

Floating... drifting... afar
Dreaming of a new kingdom
A sacred and safe place
No sadness or despair
My King and Savior reigns

In the city of God, a promise
Salvation will be your wall
Praise will be your gate
Peace your governor
Righteousness your ruler



Violence no longer in your land
Ruins no more within your border
THE LORD WILL BE YOUR EVERLASTING
LIGHT
And you will be crowned with His glory
Your days of sorrow will end

"You are the shoot I have planted.
The work of my hands." He says
"For the display of my splendor"
I am the Lord," says He
"In its time I will do this swiftly." *

avery cheng

Muraho, hello! My name is Avery. Before I went on my first mission trip to Rwanda, I didn't know anything about what the people were like or even how they lived. When I got there, it was like going to a whole new world. I experienced and learned many things that I wouldn't usually experience in my normal life adventures in Hong Kong. Among the countless things that I have learned, God's will and the unity between the Rwandese and the team were the ones that were outstanding. It's quite hard to write all that I have seen and gone through in Rwanda but I hope this summarizes what I got out of this mission trip.

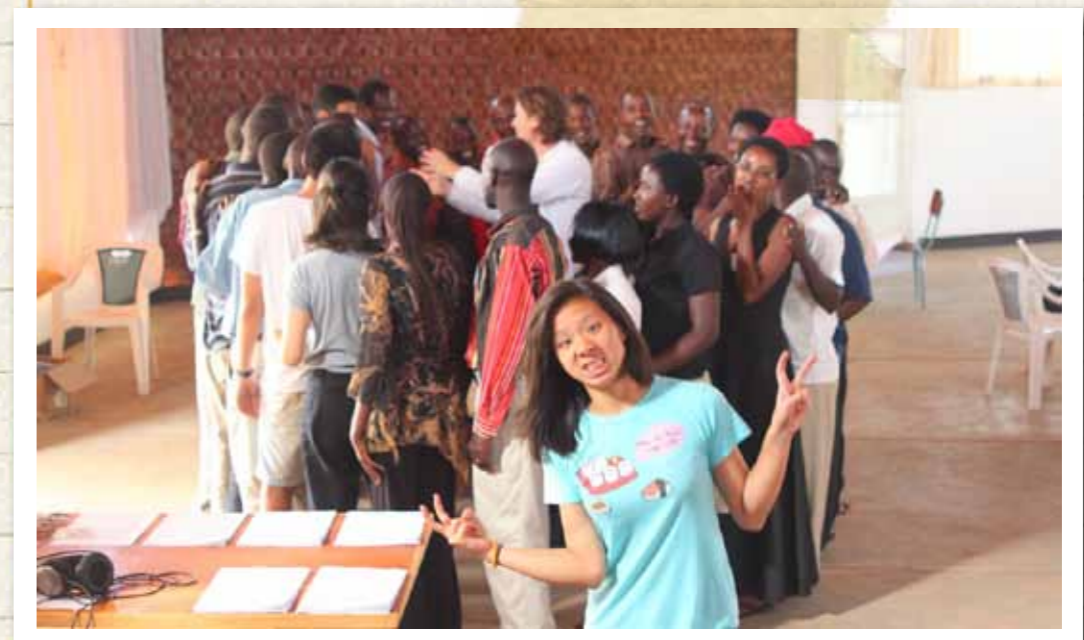


Most people know about what happened in the genocide of 1994. Yet it's a whole other story when you're actually there seeing the people that survived. It's quite mind-boggling to see how much they have endured and not complain about it. When I look back at my life, all the troubles I went through seem like a tiny dot compared to what they went through. Every single one of them survived miraculously and had a great and touching testimony to tell. A lot of the people had testimonies which involved drugs and alcohol. After they got saved, they went all over Rwanda to help the street children who are involved in those kinds of things. When they hear what the adults have gone through, they discover that they too can get out of their struggles. This leads to the street children trusting them and now they call the adults "father" or "mother" because they are so close. From all the wonderful testimonies that Rafiki's church shared with us, I came to a conclusion that if God wanted to let them survive, he would absolutely do it, even though it might seem impossible. It was God's will for them to survive. It was for a reason. That reason is so that God can use them for his glory and that they will greatly impact people such as the children of the next generation.

When I first heard that we were going to pray for sick Rwandans, I doubted that anything was going to happen mainly because of the language barrier and the totally contrasting backgrounds and cultures. However, once we started praying for the sick Rwandans in one of the outreaches, it felt as if we had no differences because we are the people of God, and praying for them brought unity instead of separation. When we prayed for the sick, they were weeping even though they didn't even understand what we were saying. I was awestruck because regardless of our backgrounds and cultures, through God we could become one. Something else that created unity between the Rwandans and us was dancing. In the House of Hope we had a dance session with the wonderfully talented Rwandan youth. Now, before I say anything else, the Rwandese people are shockingly fantastic at dancing and extremely rhythmic. And I am terrible at dancing but still went along dancing with the Rwandans. A Rwandan that was a little bit younger than me got paired up with me and we danced together doing the same moves, (of course him being much better than me) and by the time we were done, we both smiled at each other and a bond was made.

Among my ten days in Rwanda, Youth Alpha Training occupied two days. However, if you asked me three weeks before Rwanda, if Alpha Training was going to happen, I would've stared and not known what you meant. But after my mom and dad went to London and had divine appointments and connections one after the other, they managed to plan and get ready for the Youth Alpha Training that was going to take place in Rwanda two weeks after. Our whole family was both super excited and nervous because we didn't know what to expect. We didn't know what was going to happen or who was going to come. But in the end, God did all the work and everything just fit together. All we had to do was trust God and carry the plan out which was crazy.

Over the past month during which I was back in Hong Kong, I continued to learn about God and grew in what I learned in Rwanda. Even though this isn't all that I learned, saw and felt, I hope it gives you a taste of what my adventure was like! This mission trip has been so amazing and I hope I can go on it again next year! Praise God that I could have a wonderful experience such as this! :) ❁



aidan cheng

Hello dear reader, you have most probably navigated the wide and expansive Rwanda testimony booklet to end up on this page, my page. Hopefully the formatting people have not split the page in two.

Before I go into my time in Rwanda, I should start much earlier, at the second semester of my sophomore year in high school. It was in this time when after much prayer, we launched what could be the very first Youth Alpha in a school in Hong Kong. What started out as a 15 person event soon came to double in number. But the impact became much more than just the attendance number. Soon, when I walked into the school a certain nuance of change could be felt in the deepest part of my body. The start of the school's revival was underway, and more than ever, I believed Alpha could be used as God's tool to bring about great change in people's hearts.



Fast forward a few weeks, and in London, my parents, under miraculous circumstances connected people all over the globe to do a Youth Alpha GAT (Global Alpha Training). When I heard about this, I was extremely excited. I jumped at the opportunity to give a talk to about 30 Rwandan pastors and youth leaders about how we can have faith.

While preparing for my talk, I realized that it was difficult for me to talk about a subject I was not fully confident in. I mean, how do we have faith?

For me, as I looked back on my life. My Christian life has mainly been a roller coaster with high points being conferences like worship central, and lows with everything else. My Christian life has been very fickle, with me pledging to do God's will and follow him all of my days during spiritual highs, and then the next day simply returning to the same old person with the same burdens that I was just a day ago.

I felt frustrated. Why did I have to do this talk? Why couldn't I do the "Why did Jesus die?" talk? I felt like I had been dealt an unfair hand, but as I prayed and pondered about how to do this talk, God showed me why my walk had been so mercurial, and it was because I only really thought he was there when I felt his presence. He was only real to me when I had some kind of spiritual high through worship or maybe ministry time. Only then was my faith strong in Him, and I could feel God telling me this is not the way that I should be living my life. That I should always be soaking in his presence, no matter what comes my way.

All this God has shown me starting with my talk, then continuously revealing more and more of this revelation through the trip through separate instances.

After this trip, God has grown me in many ways, in different facets I am a different person than when I started. God is great, and he is alive. ✨



gary cheng

Once we arrived in Rwanda I was struck by the beautiful weather, land, the friendly people and the orderliness of Kigali. One would never have thought that just 17 years ago unspeakable horrors happened during the 100 days of massacre. Before I went, the question that I had was how can a nation with such a high penetration of Christianity, could perpetrate such depraved crimes against each other. Some of the atrocities were even done by pastors. This troubled me so much. I was going into a land of hopelessness. Indeed, listening to the stories of these HIV widows, street kids, orphans, the maimed; the trauma and the suffering that they went through is unthinkable for me.



I imagined that hell would feel like this except on an endless replay loop and not just 100 days. But when I listened more to their stories, I realised that these are not narratives of hopelessness, but stories of impossible redemption, forgiveness, reconciliation, love, grace, hope, joy, faith, courage, and generosity that are being resurrected in the wasteland of evil. We heard a story of a husband trying to kill his wife because of ethnicity. She escaped horribly disfigured but she eventually forgave him and they are living together again. If this is not supernatural, I would call it insane.

During the whole time, Isaiah 61 was doing a circuit in my head. It is almost a promise from God for this people. I know that God loves this country and out of the despair comes unquenchable love that comes from Jesus. I see this love in action through the Rwandan team members and the local partners they worked with. These Rwandan partners were victims or refugees themselves. They forsook careers and material things to serve the least, the lost and the last. Seeing our team and the Rwandan pastors cradling the sick, praying for the lost, repairing a mud wall for a widow, teaching street kids God's word, dancing with the orphans, I was reminded that Jesus would be doing just this and indeed by doing this we are at the hands and feet of Jesus. This is one of the most humbling trips for me and I consider myself privileged to have gone with such a loving and fun group of kids and leaders.

17 years ago the Evil One had a field day in Rwanda but he never accepted that God's love is stronger than his hate. I know this Love will conquer Rwanda again. And I am filled with hope because of this promise. ❀

a satisfied heart

I remember the house's muddy smears and peeling white paint. I remember the single fold up couch that sat decaying in the back right corner of the room. I remember Paul Kagame's face on the poster that was pinned into the crevice of her dried mud wall. I remember Lucy with her dark chocolate skin, protruding cheekbones and magnanimous eyes gesturing with her hands as she spoke.

Her story, spoken in Kinyarwanda and translated to English, was not an uncommon one for the millions of genocide survivors. Lucy, a Tutsi, had been married to a Hutu before the fighting between the two ethnic tribes had broken out. Her husband, stimulated by the degrading propaganda against the Tutsis had tried to kill Lucy multiple times in multiple ways. Her skin bared the wounds of a machete and she lost her ability to bend over. For years while her husband paid jail time she waited for an answer.

She called out for God and after hearing Paul Kagame's nation-wide speech on the country's need for revival, was able to forgive her husband. Lucy asked for us to pray for her; she had no job, four kids without any schooling fees and no means of feeding her children. Lucy wanted our words to somehow change her life, just as all the other people we had visited did. However this time it was different; Lucy had something that I wanted. Lucy was able to forgive her husband for attempted murder; something my mother could not do for the man that had broken her heart 10 years ago; something I had wished for my mother for 17 years without resolution.

I was desperate for this woman to be healed, to be taken into the hands of God. But, I didn't know God. If I had stood there praying for this woman, I would have been a liar and a hypocrite. If I had not I would have had a guilt ridden heart - how could I be so selfish as to refuse this woman prayer, the only help she wanted and I could give her to satisfy her heart? Yet, when I left all I could give her was a hug and a look telling her I was sorry.

I came to Rwanda expecting to do community service, but I ended up on a mission trip with no ability to help. I have always grown up with the belief that service is about giving; teaching English to kids, spending time at orphanages, building houses for those without shelter and providing money to people to secure their lives.



vivienne
tsan

However, the people in Rwanda asked me for prayer - the kind of help I couldn't give. They weren't really asking me for my help; they were asking me to help them ask Him for help. In a place where ninety percent of the population identifies themselves as Christians, God is the main pillar of strength for many. For so many years I had overlooked the subtler side to service - satisfying one's heart. Through the simple acts of listening and praying, a sense of hope can grow, even without anything tangible to reinforce it. If anything, providing someone with emotional security is just as or even more important than having material security. ❁



zita hung



*I'm coming back to the heart of worship
And it's all about You
All about You, Jesus*

*It's now or never. It's just time - to go
It's time to crush the "if"
My God is a God who heals
My God wills*

*He is a God who answers in various rhythms
When my perspective is His indifference,
I want to learn to rest in the season of waiting.
Battle to keep praying and having faith*

*Lunch with the ladies
Plucking corn, singing songs, shaking hands
A movie premiere to end the night
Thank you God for bringing me back to Rwanda*

*To pray for healing assured of Your will
To see You whip up a fervent prayer tunnel
To hold this one, and to hug that one, and to dance
To walk closely with You every day*

*Rains, pouring, blessing, storms
Healing, worship, Olympic rings and umbrellas
Torrents of tears told me that you are in the storm
You weep with us, yet You know You are victorious*

*L, you showed me how to run a good race
You were afraid yet you had faith
I don't know why He took you away
But I know that you are in His embrace*

For me, this year's trip was short, compact and concentrated since I only had 5 days on the ground. Not surprisingly, God started speaking even before we had landed in Bangkok and ended with a heart wrenching finish. The month or so before this trip had been a bad month at work in terms of the number of kids we lost in the hospital. My colleagues and I had discussed that for some reason May-June had been a bad month.

This is an excerpt from a memorial written to a friend who is now in heaven.

I kind of stopped believing that praying for sick people/patients made any difference. I was disappointed with God that though He claimed to heal in the bible, I wasn't seeing any manifestation of this in our "real world." And so my heart hardened a little bit each day. But I wanted to believe that as disciples of Christ, we had the authority to pray for healing and believe that it would come. So I prayed that God would teach me about healing, that He would remove doubt. It's funny - this whole short mission trip that I went on was all about healing.

On the plane to Africa, I ended up sitting next to a Ugandan pastor who was reading a book titled "Healing" by John Lake and this pastor shared what the bible said about healing. The next day on an outreach, we just stood on a bare field and prayed for people who came asking to be prayed over for healing. I didn't witness any miraculous healings but internally I think God was changing me. From this trip, I came to realize that it's not about me. It's all about God. All about His glory. All about Jesus. If someone gets healed of an ailment - it's all about God, He has the power. If I pray and nothing happens - it's still not about me. God just asks us to step out and do His will and it's about simply having a heart to hear and obey God.

Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. God asks us to have faith whether we see a miracle or not.

So sister, on my last night in Rwanda, as I was reflecting on God's goodness, He dropped a bombshell when I checked my email. There was news that you my friend were passing away. And suddenly my heart broke. I wept for you, and for the sick kids that I hadn't been able to weep for before and I felt that God was restoring my heart of flesh. But it hurt a lot. But I also knew that Jesus was weeping. Cuz it says in the bible (John 11:35) that Jesus wept. I wasn't disappointed with God.

There was peace. There was peace in the storm and I knew Jesus was in the midst of your storm and that He would quiet the winds for you and C. That He was going to get you to the other side. So friend, thank you for sharing your hard journey with me and allowing me to learn from you.

The most important thing I learnt on this trip was that it is always God's will to heal. I'm not ready to expand on this since I sometimes can't wrap my head around this and all these what-abouts and then-why questions still abound. So I will end by quoting from TL Osborn's book: Healing the Sick which quotes F.F. Bosworth's book: Christ the Healer: "Perhaps no one could be more conservative than the scholars of the Episcopalian church. Yet, the commission appointed to study the subject of spiritual healing for the body, after three years of study and research in both the Bible and in history, reported back to the church: The healing of Jesus was done as a revelation of God's will for humanity. Because they discovered that His will is fully revealed, they reported further: No longer can the church pray for the sick with that faith-destroying phrase, If it be your will." ❄



How do I encompass everything I took away from that country, and everything I left behind, in words that don't detract from the immensity of it all? I guess I can't, but it's worth a shot.

Missions trips are always an amazing vehicle to deliver the blessings and the love of God to others but I am certain that for as much as the missions team teaches and blesses others, God teaches and blesses them. Every trip I've been on I've wondered how much work I've achieved for others because I feel God has worked so much in me at the same time. A little part of me wants to feel good about myself by receiving nothing but giving everything. And sometimes that's the case - that we do good things with no recognition and that people carry out acts with no hope of reward. But God has always given me so much to take away and this Rwanda trip has been no exception. However, so much of what I learned in Rwanda this year was different from last year. It's no surprise - I'm not the same person I was a year ago, before or after that trip.

Last year I learned a lot. About Rwanda, its history, its culture, its people. I also learned about man, the capacity we have for so much evil and the hope that is in Christ for a broken Creation. I took away a lot. This year I feel I have not only learned so much more, and been shown so much about the world inside and outside of myself, but also left so much behind. Relationships. We spent so long at Almond Tree Films that I got so much closer to all the guys down there while working alongside them, singing with them, worshipping with them and just experiencing life with them. The same goes for people at the YWAM base and the team of Rwandans who later came to Hong Kong. There is so much I've left behind, I feel like after last year's trip of acclimatizing to Rwanda and her people, this year I've just been able to dive in and truly be in the place. This was to the point that I truly felt comfortable in Rwanda. To the point that I miss Rwanda so much more than last year. To the point that I miss everyone I left behind. So very much.

One of the other main things God taught me about, this year, was redemption. Last year I felt a deep pain and hopelessness at seeing the poverty, the scars of the genocide, the widows and everything else. But one year down the line, I've had such an amazing opportunity to see how many lives have been changed. The opportunity to see how God has moved in people's lives in this last year. How that darkness and sorrow which I thought was so unmovable has been shifted or often bowled over entirely. Early in the trip, some of our team members said they had been praying over the story of Hezekiah's Illness (Isaiah 38) to understand its meaning and why it had come up so often when people had sought God for verses. They eventually told us what they had found in that verse and it was a story of redemption. The signs God used for Hezekiah, symbols of forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption. Of God forgetting all the of his sinful past as if it had never happened, as if it had been erased, and giving Hezekiah 15 more years of life after he had just been at death's door. Later, one of the songs that we recorded was based on Psalm 130:5-7 which says:

"I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope,
my soul waits for the Lord
more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.
O Israel, hope in the LORD!
For with the LORD there is steadfast love,
and with him is plentiful redemption"

That phrase "Plentiful Redemption" stood out so strongly in both the verse and the song that one of our team made of it.



We met a widow, very early in the trip, named Teresa. She welcomed us into her home with incredible joy. She told us the story of her long and difficult life before telling us she wanted to Praise God and dance for us. To me, she was the embodiment of redemption and the hope for redemption for an entire people. She was an old woman who had seen many hard times. Yet she was full of hope, energy and a love for the Lord. I can only describe her as beautiful because she shined so bright and beautiful with an awe-inspiring face. It was through meeting her that I began to come up with the lyrics for a song we ended up recording. Maybe one day you'll hear it.

But for me the message of redemption struck a chord. I had been in a low point. I felt far from God, I felt hopeless about the world, and the people, around me after finding out so many issues and problems people I knew were having. I felt hopeless about myself and whether God could (or would) really redeem me for my sins. But He showed me that redemption is plentiful. That His love that redeems "keeps no record of wrongs" (1 Corinthians 13:5) and that, as the story of Hezekiah shows, God simply wants us to want Him and to want His redemption. And if we call out to Him then he can make the sun go backwards. He can see where we've come on our path of darkness and turn it back to where it once was before we fell. He redeems. He makes everything better again and He makes everything beautiful again. *



vincent li

When I heard about Rwanda in a regular Wednesday "bro-time" I felt a calling for me to go. It was mid May (the deadline to sign up for the trip was early April), and so I had about 2 nights to decide as Marcus was about to buy the group tickets. I didn't know why I was going when I went to Rwanda, but I knew God called me there for a purpose. I've never felt such a peace in me when I told my parents of my decision to go to Rwanda.



It wasn't till I was in Rwanda when I found out about the Global Alpha Training (GAT) for Youth Alpha that was about to happen during our trip (Auntie Garland and Uncle Gary have the full story so I won't bore you with redundant details), and as it happens I just went through the Youth Alpha course at school and I was renewed by the Holy Spirit. It became clear that God brought me to Rwanda to share my experiences with the youth pastors there and encourage them. It was nerve wrecking when Auntie Garland approached me about running a mock session in GAT—but I knew God brought me here for this ministry so I stepped out of my comfort zone and did a session. It was great because I knew God was with me the whole time after showing me signs.

Humility in worship is another big lesson I've learned during these two weeks. I was told to clean the bathrooms in the second week. As a Hong Kong kid I've never cleaned my own toilet before, and so cleaning a toilet in Rwanda wasn't something I wanted to do. I remember Marcus telling us to treat everything as an act of worship and so I did. It turned out to be a great time to bond with the boys on the trip. In this trip I've served in different roles for different ministries but my heart's desire was the same—and that is to glorify God. Not an easy task to do I'll admit, and I'll definitely be learning more of it as I grow older, but Rwanda provided me ample opportunities to learn and mature.



Listening to God's voice and discerning if it's from God was one of the bigger challenges I faced in these two weeks. I remember praying for the people there in one of the outreaches and I got a word for this man and it was "dirtiness" and I didn't know if it was from God or if it was just myself. I had a peace in my heart to say it— and I obeyed. As it turns out that man was into witchcraft before, and other prayer partners were able to help him to break through this spiritual barrier.

It was truly a testimony to God's greatness and faithfulness throughout this trip. From the beginning till the end of the trip the verse "here am I, send me" (Isaiah 6:8) was put into action. ✨



amanda fung



It doesn't seem to matter how many times I am asked about Rwanda. Each time I recount the things God showed us, taught us and accomplished through us, I am left amazed all over again. Like most years, we ministered to widows, orphans, street kids, schools, youth groups, local churches, and HIV/AIDS support groups. However, this year, God enabled us to do three additional projects, which materialized only during our two-week trip or in the week leading up to the trip! We taught Rwandan street kids how to tell their stories using iPod touches, put together a Youth Alpha training conference for 30 Rwandan pastors, and recorded an album of original worship music in collaboration with our brothers and sisters in Rwanda. The fact that we got it all done was amazing. But truly, our God is amazing and the unity that we enjoyed with our friends in Rwanda can only be attributed to God.

As we prepared for our time in Rwanda, we had a sense that God was calling us to worship. By worshipping with our Rwandan brothers and sisters, we were meant to demonstrate the unity of the body of Christ. In obedience, we set out with no agenda but to worship. We partnered with our Rwandan friends at Almond Tree Films and decided that we would capture moments of our joint worship sessions as a reminder of the unity we were sure to enjoy. Since we didn't have any original music, we wouldn't be able to distribute our recordings outside of our team, but that didn't bother us, since we were more interested in the process than the product.

Our trip got off to an interesting start. At the airport, we discovered that Rwanda had changed their visa requirements for Canadians and, to make a long story short, four of us found ourselves shipwrecked in Kenya until our visas could be processed. Since we arrived on a Sunday and the immigration department wouldn't open until Monday, we could think of nothing better to do than to worship as we waited. And, as we worshipped, God gave us a new song. And the next day, as we flew from Nairobi to Kigali, God gave us another new song. And then one night after devotions, God gave us another one. The trend continued and, before we knew it, we had six original songs. And, as we shared our songs with our friends from Rwanda, they shared theirs with us. Little did we know that six would become nine and we would enjoy incredible times of fellowship with Rwandan gospel singers and worship leaders who shared in our vision to worship in unity. We discovered that their Kinyarwanda lyrics and Rwandan percussion integrated smoothly into our English songs and that our voices blended perfectly into their Kinyarwanda praises. We worshipped together, joyfully. The sound was heavenly. The unity was almost tangible. And now we have a nine-track album of original worship music as proof.



I don't think I've ever understood the unity of the body of Christ as much as I do now. I don't think I would appreciate it half as much if it weren't for my experience in Rwanda. The Rwandans with whom we serve and worship are not just ministry partners, but family. We are children of the same Father, brothers and sisters in Christ, united in Spirit. And, based on the laughter, tears and hugs shared on this trip, that unity was very evident. Last year, God showed me the beauty of His redemption, the work He was doing to restore peace in the hearts of individual Rwandans who had endured great losses. However, this year I was particularly reminded of God's greater act of redemption, the restoration of all things and the ushering in of His kingdom to earth. I really believe that our times of worship at Almond Tree Films Rwanda were not only a taste of heaven, but a means of ushering His kingdom into Rwanda. This beautiful memory has left me hungry for more of God and more of His kingdom. Let His kingdom come! ❁



andrew wang

A few months ago, setting foot in Africa was just a far off dream for me, but I didn't realize that it was going to be as soon as this summer where I would go with my church to Rwanda. When I first heard about this trip I was still in shock because it was what I had always planned to do. I still remember turning in my registration documents and feeling overexcited about what was about to happen. I was expecting a place of poverty and God was sending me there to help His children. But when I got there it wasn't exactly as I expected.

After an altogether 14-hour flight, landing in the Rwandan airport was an amazing experience itself. Our whole team was filled with readiness in our hearts and big smiles on our faces when we got off the plane. When the first breath of Rwandan air filled my lungs, I knew that it was going to be a wonderful trip.

What was my favorite memory of the trip?

Most people would guess worshipping with Almond Tree, a film production place, but in reality, what I miss most is going to the villages and praying healing over them. I was just awestruck to see God's power work through the people. One of my most vivid memories of this was when Aidan, Vincent, and Jon were praying for this man who was put through witchcraft when he was little. While they were praying for him, he just kept shaking and mumbling stuff.

I didn't expect the praying to affect me the most, but as uncle Gary and I started praying for people, and as I laid hands on their hearts, somehow, I could feel their pain that they've been welling up for so long. I could feel the hurt from their pasts and their desperation for God to set them free. And as we prayed, I just started crying because the bridge of Hosanna just kept coming into my heart. All I could hear was my crying out "break my heart for what break yours" and as I felt the pain in this people, I felt God saying to me the whole time, "These are my people, the pain you feel for them right now is nothing compared to the pain I feel for all of my children." And when I heard this, I just started crying harder and harder as I prayed for the villagers. Aside from the pain though, God showed me their faith and trust.



There was a little boy around 7 years old, who came up to Uncle Gary and me. We asked him what was wrong and he said he had trouble hearing and that he's been having headaches. We asked him if he was Christian yet or not, and he said no but he trusted God to heal him and was willing to offer his life to Him. When we heard this we just started rejoicing that a boy so young could have such a faith. We knew that the new generation was rising up and that God was going to use this boy in the future.

There were many miracles on this trip that I have never encountered before, such as Praise reconnecting with a worship leader Oliver after many years. He himself had many miracles in his life too. One of the miracles that I encountered was the joy among all the Rwandans. The overwhelming happiness that they endured was so inspiring and encouraging to me. Even though there were a lot of donations that we gave and a lot of healing that we prayed, I still think that I gained more than I gave. Rwanda taught me how to enjoy life with God, how to have complete faith in

Christ, how to love my life no matter the circumstance, and how to live in eternal joy. This trip has permanently become a big part of my life and will forever have a place in my heart. If I could, I would definitely go to Rwanda again because not only did I have a great time, but I also made a lot of great friends that I will keep in touch with. Rwanda was amazing and I love it. *



karen lim



I wasn't sure what to expect from this Rwanda mission trip. However, I knew that God had His ways, so I simply tried to stay mentally and emotionally open.

I was first struck by the beauty of the African continent, then by the open-eyed curiosity and warm-heartedness of its people. Day by day, I learnt to interact with individuals vastly different from me in terms of lifestyle, values and perspective. I found a capacity within me to keep changing my viewpoint to understand theirs, and to adapt myself physically to their surroundings.

I was also initially unused to interacting with so many youths over an extended period of time. I thank God that He used the time to remind me of my own youth and how He molded me all those years back.

The mealtimes were tough. Cassava, maize, plantain - these African staple food tasted strange to me. Meat was a bi-weekly luxury. I developed 4 mouth ulcers along the way, so I never truly enjoyed the food. Strangely, the same experience now makes me cry when I see footage of the current Somalia famine where I would imagine, the very same foods would certainly be more than welcomed. But oh, the people! Language was no barrier. I met a 13-year old girl at the village of Busanza. She followed me everywhere, holding my hand or putting her arms around me. I really wanted to know her name. After much guesswork, I finally got it right - Uwingeneye Shatali. My heart was very warmed by her unreserved friendship.

Whenever the Africans start to sing and worship, something magical happens. The energy that they emanate just infects everyone. Pretty soon, the mission team joins in, singing and dancing with abandon. Despite the difficulties that they face, their worship is whole-hearted, joyful and sincere. Everything else simply didn't matter. I try to keep a piece of that African worship style inside me...

The Rwandans have had a hard past. One poignant reminder at the Genocide Memorial demonstrates the great wound that is still slowly healing:

"Sometimes, I get terribly sad because I can't imagine what my life would be like. I'll never see my parents again, and yet I'll see the people who killed them, and those people's children, for the rest of my life. I can't bear the thought of it." - Donata, 11.

Yet I can see their will to move on despite the pain. Their stories of reunion, reconciliation and redemption convince me that, without a doubt, God works when His people cry out to Him for help. Oh dear God, thank You for giving me the opportunity to join in Your great work in Rwanda! ❁

When I left for Rwanda earlier this summer, I did not know what to expect God would teach me. On my last day of the trip, the team went to a small village in order to help rebuild a widow's home. Our backs were sore from the long bus ride on bumpy dirt roads, while clambering down a steep hill towards the house we were to fix, we were faced with a stunning view of a deep valley with rivers snaking through the thick foliage which stretched for miles into the distance. There, we met a woman leaning on a tree branch. Relying heavily on her makeshift walking stick, she approached us and asked for prayer because her foot was bothering her. She swept her dress aside to reveal a cracked and swollen foot. We laid hands on her and prayed to God for healing. As we prepared to continue down the slope, she thanked us, not for our prayer, but for healing her.



shinjae lee



As I watched her limp away, I wondered what she could have meant. I did not realize at the time that I had encountered a woman of such strong faith that despite the fact that she had not been healed on the spot, she was so confident in God that she knew He would restore her foot to health.

I was humbled by the fact that amidst her poverty and lack of medical attention, she was so secure in her faith that she was able to thank God for healing, despite the fact that she was still limping. I was humbled by stories of hurt, which would leave many of us depressed, being told by people who were dancing and rejoicing. I was humbled by the fact that people in circumstances so grim are able to praise and rejoice in the Lord.

In a country still recovering from its recent and truly terrible past, God once again amazed me through the childlike faith of many we met and I pray for God to change my heart so that I may look past worldly things and concentrate solely on Him. ❁

flo chiu

The art and the artist

Rwanda is about many things. For many weeks, I have been unable to write. Unable to put into words the "many things"

Rwanda is about. I was tempted to focus on one thing, but I found that whenever I shared about Rwanda, I talked about something different. I found that whenever I started to write, something else would come up. I would have a memory flashback of an event or a conversation, I would start thinking about a friend there, I would start thinking about what God was teaching me. In the end, I had to admit that Rwanda is like a piece of art.



When you study it, there are many different ways of looking, many different feelings and thoughts that can come out of it. It could be different at different times. You cannot merely use one word, a few words, or one way to describe it. The more you look at it, the more you might be able to see and appreciate.

The more you understand the history and background, the more you will appreciate the artist. Rwanda is like that. The more I think about Rwanda, the more I come away with. The more I go back to Rwanda each time, the more I learn about the work of art and appreciate the artist - God. One thing is different though - the work of art is ongoing. The artist continues to add to a beautiful picture for us to see and be a part of.

It was normal

If you asked me what we did in Rwanda, I would say to you that each day was a "normal" day. We woke up, went to visit people, ministries, walked, shared, danced, sang and generally just hung around with them. We shared in their food, we cooked with them, we sat with them, we prayed with them, we worked with them. We made mud bricks, we went to church together, we played with children, we peeled potatoes. We shared the message of Jesus calming the storm and in turn heard the stories of storm and peace in their lives. We taught street kids how to use iTouches, saw them start making movies, recorded worship songs, and trained leaders how to run Alpha. We would run into people on the street and realise the once prostitute now owns a shop she proudly shows us, and a once kid in the youth ministry became a worship leader. We rejoiced in catching up with old friends and marvelled at their growing family. We thanked God for new jobs, improved English, and their spiritual growth.

To me, all of this seemed "normal". Was it really normal? If I really stopped to think about everything we did, no, it was not really normal. Why does it seem so normal then? Perhaps because it seems that in Rwanda, nothing seems impossible. When you have met people who can come out of a genocide and forgive, when you have seen how giving \$100 can transform a life, when despite seeing poverty and disease, you encounter hope and joy, perhaps that's why I think nothing is impossible and everything is normal. In fact, God was showing me that in Rwanda, God uses the ordinary to do the extraordinary. The extraordinary can happen without lots of money, aid, education and resources. It doesn't always happen, but it can.

I was reminded of the song "Everything" by Tim Hughes. It describes God in our breathing, waking, sleeping, resting, working, thinking, speaking, hoping, dreaming, watching, waiting, hurting, laughing, weeping, healing...He is in our everything. Our "normal" everything. But the song isn't just about God in our everything. The song is a prayer for God to be our everything. Do we choose to see God in everything? And even more so, do we ask God to be our everything?



My classroom

Recently I watched a movie called the Mona Lisa Smile. I would not have thought much about it except that it was another of those movies where the new teacher at a school made such an impact on the young teenagers that their lives would be transformed. She taught them how to think, she taught them how to dream...she taught them about life. I started to realise that Rwanda was my classroom. Through Rwanda, God taught me how to dream, taught me how to hope, taught me about life. He taught me about Himself...how real, how deep His love is, how forgiving, how providing, how compassionate. He used stories, people, history, activities - He used everything that Rwanda is about. This year was my 5th year in Rwanda. Many people have asked me why I keep on going back year after year. I would answer "for the people". But selfishly, I knew that one of the reasons I would go back is because of all the things I have learnt in Rwanda and continue to yearn for.

Is it because I cannot learn it in HK or anywhere else? No. But in Rwanda, I have the freedom, the time and the space to have a classroom where God can teach me so much. So much that He can do in my heart in 2 or 3 weeks that can change me. In 2007, Rwanda gave me the courage to follow Him wholeheartedly. In 2011, I am still learning. Perhaps some of these people would never know how God used them to change someone else's heart. The widows in Gahanga, the streetkids in Kimisagara, the prostitute ministry leader in Samuduha, the soccer coach, the children in the special needs orphanage, the missionary couple, the worship leader, the mother who told us she would be a mother to us in Rwanda. Blessed are those who were used by God to change my life without even them realising they played a part in it.

The crazy others

Finally, Rwanda is about journeying with others. Rwanda would not be Rwanda if it was not about the relationships. Whether it is with those in Rwanda, or with those in Hong Kong, these people have been a part of my journey in Rwanda. I have come to realise that God gave me others who are just as crazy, if not crazier. He gave me 3 other leaders who are just as "blue" on the birkman test - our communication mainly consisted of constant debriefing and processing, dreaming, laughing at each other, and staying up to talk (some with a higher ability than others!). I have come to appreciate how similar we are, and how much of Rwanda is shared with others with the same hearts. He also gave us friends in Rwanda who would allow us to be a part of their lives, who would do anything for us, who would listen to our ideas and run along with it. Doing it together makes it so much more fun, so much more meaningful. It is the body of Christ coming together as one.

My journey has not stopped and neither has my reflections after writing this. Perhaps this is because Rwanda continues on. Relationships continue on despite the distance. In some ways, the trip never ends because there is always a part of our hearts that is called "Rwanda" and has become a part of who we are, even in Hong Kong. ❁



cynthia chan

Rocky start

Rwanda and I had a rocky start. I must confess that I am a germaphobe so when I arrived at the camp site and realised that my bathroom for the next two weeks was an out house and that my shower facilities consisted of a bucket of cold water in a changing room with insects and spider webs all over the walls, my natural instinct was to send God an SOS, tell Him how much I regretted my decision to go to Rwanda, and that I want out ASAP. Christians often say that God has a funny sense of humour and the Bible says that God will never give us anything more than we can bear.

I don't know if God had a good chuckle at how pathetic I was but He definitely heard my pleas for help. After enduring the out house for two days, someone kindly offered their private bathroom for me to use so that I could have cold showers indoors and in a much cleaner environment. I was so grateful that I kept saying "thank you, God" every time I had a shower during those two weeks. With the bathroom and shower situation under control, I became open to the idea that perhaps my time in Rwanda would not be so bad. Little did I know that my time there would become one of the most amazing experiences I have had in my life.



God in the midst of pain and suffering

One of the reasons why I had wanted to go to Rwanda was to meet Christians, who after going through the genocide, could still believe in God and not be angry at Him or give up their faith. I was blown away by how many of these Christians I met and I will share with you the story of two of them who really encouraged my faith.

The first person is a man who lost his family because of the genocide and as a result, lived as a street kid. If he had not told me, I would not have guessed that he went through so much pain in his life. Compared to the other faces I saw on the streets of Rwanda, it was difficult to detect any feelings of sorrow or bitterness in his heart. I was curious as to how he got through the pain of his past and so I asked him. He told me that no counselling or anything else works other than God himself healing him of his pain. I remember probing further and asking him if he ever got flashbacks and if he did, what he would do with them. He told me that he would go to his room, go to God, and "cry and cry out to God" until God meets him there and heals his broken heart. Having lived in a society where psychiatry and counselling is so prevalent and so trusted, hearing that someone can be healed simply by the power of God was just so refreshing and so encouraging for my faith.

The second person is an elderly lady who became a widow because of the genocide. She looked just like any other elderly woman but she was so beautiful and so captivating. She also had this glow that appeared to radiate from the depths of her soul. Our team sang worship songs and danced together with her and as she danced harder than anyone of the youths danced, and as she sang louder than anyone of us sang, I could not help but think, this is the complete healing and joy that God promises us.

The Bible says that we will seek God and find Him when we seek Him with all our heart. I saw the reality of that promise in all the people I met in Rwanda. Their reaction to the genocide was not to be angry at God but rather, they searched for God and they found Him in the midst of their suffering and when they found God, He was faithful to His promise that He will:

"bind up the brokenhearted...bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair."
(Extracted from Isaiah 61:1-3)



Answered prayers

Another reason why I had wanted to go to Rwanda was to pray for people and see God touch people's lives through the power of prayer. Whilst we had many answered prayers, for me, the most memorable answered prayers are those related to physical healing.

The first answered prayer is nicely summarised in an email that Marcus sent from Rwanda. He wrote, "that night at devotional time, I felt that those who were sick needed to be prayed for. Those of us who were sick gathered in the middle and were prayed over by the whole team. In almost every case, by the next morning everyone was healed with only residual symptoms remaining. Praise God."

The second answered prayer is for a lady who asked us to pray for her back pain. She said that her back pain used to be so bad that she would not be able to clean her office and her office mate would do all the cleaning. A few days after we prayed for her, she told me that all the pain was gone and she was so excited that she told her office mate she will clean the office from now on.

The third answered prayer is for a lady who was not feeling well in the stomach after a long car ride and as soon as she got out of the car, she just laid down on a brick ledge in pain. We began to pray for her and before we were done, she sat up to say thank you and told us that all the pain had miraculously gone and she felt much better.

Even before Rwanda, I knew that God is a healer. I have seen a leg grow before my very eyes, I have had a friend who was suddenly healed and discharged from hospital with the doctors still confused as to what had happened, and I have heard good news of cancer cells being contained in the people my friends and I have prayed for.

However, I do not understand how healing happens, why God heals some people and not others, and why sometimes, God heals instantaneously and yet sometimes, God takes His time. All I know is that as a Christian, it is a privilege to be able to pray for the sick and to ask God to heal them and that God, in His sovereignty, can decide what to do with my prayer. Seeing people get healed through our prayers in Rwanda has encouraged me to continue to pray for the sick, even if I do not fully understand how it all works.

The challenge going forward

Whilst in Rwanda, we visited a number of Christian organisations. For me, the most memorable one was an organisation that rescues street kids and provides shelter for them. Whilst visiting this organisation, we met a young boy who used to live on the streets with his brother and struggled with drug and alcohol addictions (yes, even at such a young age). Through the love and support of those who work at this organisation, this young boy now knows that there is hope and a future for him. It was amazing to see people experience God's love and compassion for them through the work of these organisations and as a result, they know they are worthy and precious in God's sight.

Participating in the work of these organisations in Rwanda was a timely reminder that God has called Christians to have love and compassion for others and to be the "hands" that God use to make a difference in someone's life. The Bible says that we have been blessed so that we can bless others. It tells us to feed the poor and to clothe the naked. How have I responded to that? Will I make a difference, even if it is just for one person? Will I make a difference everywhere I go and not just in Rwanda? ❁



louise king

Many times I have been asked about the similarities and differences about this years trip in comparison to the previous year. Yes, there are similarities. We stay at the same base, work with similar ministries and have the same language barrier. But honestly, this year was not even remotely comparable to last years.

The theme of the 2010 Rwanda trip was "No Separation from Love (Ndagutandukana N'urukundo)." I saw the way that God loved these people. I got to learn the culture, the ways of the Rwandans, their lifestyles and experiences. That year I learnt a lot and took a lot back with me. This years theme was "Peace, Be Still (Amahoro Ahoreho)." I feel that we find peace through faith and with peace reigns joy. This year not only did I take away a part of Rwanda with me but I left something behind, relationships that were built on the trip. Working with people, getting to know individuals on a personal level, finding out more about their history, what they seek and long for.

I have to say the most eye-opening experience this year was when we worked on the itouch project with children from 'House Of Hope' (an orphanage) situated in Kabeza. Apple had lent us five itouch's to teach street kids how to make movies. Our soul purpose for this project was not to teach them how to make a movie but to make them aware of the skills that they have. Separating the children into groups we first started with drawing pictures of things that they like. This was to find out interests of each individual. As their creative juices started flowing we noticed common interests between them. Things like cars, cats, football, helping the family, were a reoccurring drawings these kids portrayed. We're these just things that they were taught in school? Or were they their honest interests? Nonetheless this is the type of background that these children grew up in, things that have made them who they are today. We then moved onto storyboarding for the movie where they really had to start inventing the storyline.



Each storyline was different; each child had a different highlight skill. It was beautiful to see how passionate they were into creating the movie. Just the thought of it alone was enticing to them. I was blown away at how quickly they all adapted to learning certain things about making a movie.

These kids were ready to learn, ready to receive what we had to offer, it was evident from the first moment that I stepped into 'House Of Hope' and they showered us all in hugs. Yet all we were to them were Muzungu's (foreigners). I adored the new chapter in their life that God had given them. From drinking alcohol, stealing, getting hooked on drugs to children of God, by the grace of God they have been redeemed.



They praise and worship him wonderfully in the form of dance. The way that God has changed them taught me a lesson to myself. No matter how low a place you are in life God will always be there by your side and the only way is going up.

To think that this is only one of the aspects of the trip it just shows how much God is really working all around, all the time.

- Romans 5:5, And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. ❁

marcus kroese

For our last day in Rwanda we, the leadership, wanted to surprise the team with a safari. I love surprises, or at least surprising others (I try to keep being surprised to a minimum in my life). Africa offers little in terms of surprise destinations. You can't just take everyone to Disneyland, nor are there movie theatres, nor are there bowling alleys...nor would you want to go to any of those places--after all, you're in Africa! We also wanted to invite on our trip our Rwandan brothers and sisters, those we had been working with in the previous weeks. We wanted to celebrate what God had done in our midst and we wanted to celebrate with our friends and family. Rwanda has three national parks, the closest one being a couple of hours drive from the YWAM base where we were staying. Therefore, to see the animals at sunrise, we planned to leave the YWAM base at 5:00am. You can probably imagine how thrilled teens would be at the news of such an early morning affair (especially when they don't what they're in for), but we thought the surprise would far outweigh the cost of an early rise. Getting the boys out of bed was a small challenge, but we were awake and ready before the girls (which was a common theme this trip). Unfortunately, we were also ready before the bus. However, we remembered we were in Rwanda and that time is a more relative concept there. We eventually left the base an hour later than we wished. Once everyone had loaded the bus, we announced our destination.

As a sidenote, it has become a tradition during our visits to celebrate the birthdays of our adopted Rwandan brothers in some special way. These Rwandan brothers of ours may not know their real birth dates and may not have people in their lives, such as parents or other relatives, to celebrate with them, so this trip served as this year's birthday celebration. Our brother Fils was so excited about the safari that during the trip he would randomly burst into an exclamatory remark about it being his birthday or spotting a giraffe while pounding his fists in the air and, on a few occasions, would sing the "Happy Birthday" song to himself.



Our brother Janvier was so looking forward to his birthday celebration that he showed up dressed in his best clothes, wearing a full (but obviously second hand) suit and tie. People kept asking him why he was so dressed up and Fils would respond for Janvier, telling everyone that he was about to get married...which eventually evolved into a story about him marrying a zebra on the safari. The bus ride was anything but comfortable. One of the buses felt like you were inside the engine. Dust would come up off the floor. Random parts of the bus would fall off, like our headlight, and the driver would simply stop, pick up the discarded device and store it on the dashboard. You have to realise that in Africa the vehicles you ride in are not air tight, nor would you want them to be as neither of our buses had air-con. And the roads are not usually paved and, even when they are paved, most of the surrounding area has little vegetation to keep the dirt in place. If you wore white, you would get out of the vehicle wearing brown. When we finally arrived at the national park, it took about 30 minutes to register and pay for everyone to enter. And only after much waiting did we realise that there were no animals in the area near us. We would have to take a further three-hour ride to the north side of the park to actually see any animals.



So we set off, thinking that we'd arrive at our destination around noon, just in time to eat lunch. Noon came and left and, as we peered out of the windows, we could see no sign of animals, as we were still on the road outside of the park. We soon realised that what we were seeing was familiar and for the last three hours we had only been backtracking the distance we travelled to get to the south side of the park. From there, we turned north. A few hours later, our team members were almost ready to turn against us because of their hunger. "Fortunately" for us, we had a flat tire and had to stop for lunch. The flat tire took around an hour to fix, allowing us time to eat our bread/avocado/peanut butter/banana sandwiches. I got a much needed laugh when, during our break, one of our concerned and perhaps more gullible students asked me if we were going to be late for the wedding. Eventually, the flat tire was fixed, but it still took us a couple more hours to reach our destination. By the time we actually got to the national park it was around 5:30pm, which left us about a half an hour to spend in the park before we headed back in order to avoid being on the road in the dark. Because of our limited amount of time in the park, we saw very few animals. Because of the sketchy repair to our flat tire, the bus driver didn't feel comfortable driving across the grass to get us a closer view. By worldly standards, the trip was a bust.

On the way back, I kept on asking why. God, why would you allow this? Why would this be the last thing we do on the trip? I would hate for a great trip to be scarred by such an awful last day. God, don't let that happen. It was only later that He answered and told me that in a way the whole day was a metaphor for our entire trip. When we arrived in Rwanda we didn't really know what God was going to do. We just knew that we wanted to follow Him. When we follow Christ, it doesn't really matter if how long it takes to get to the destination. The destination doesn't really matter. It's more important that we take every step with Jesus. It does no good to run ahead, make a wrong turn, or get lost. In that sense our human understanding of success and failure is limited. You can achieve all your worldly plans and still be a failure. On the other hand you can be a failure in the world's eyes but a Son of the King. To some degree, it doesn't matter how well you plan because God has a greater story in wrap you up in. It doesn't matter if your plan doesn't go as you expected, because God is in control. We need to trust Him, not our plans. By worldly standards we planned the day quite well, but things just didn't seem to work, and our plans were unsuccessful.

Quite understandably, we heard a lot of complaining while missing out on the opportunity to minister to the person sitting right next to them. It wasn't til the trip back that I realised that this was probably the last opportunity I'd be able to sit with my Rwandan brothers. I thank God that He is in control and gave us the opportunity to be with our Rwandan family. He wanted us to spend time with our family not with animals. In reflection, when you look at Jesus' life, most of His ministry was in the midst of travel. The disciples would worry about the destination, and not see the opportunity along the way. It's not about about the destination but the journey.



Since our return I've had a hard time explaining what we actually did. In one hand I feel like I don't have sufficient time to explain why we did the things we did and in the other I don't know if they would actually understand me. We did some pretty unconventional things for a mission trip: Youth Alpha conference, capturing God's words for a nation in worship, show Apple that their products can be highly useful even for those who cannot normally afford them. Yet, those things didn't seem out of the ordinary. In fact they seemed normal. Our focus wasn't on those things, but rather on the people and I find that difficult to explain.



I feel like we get so wrapped up in where we're going and forget that God wants us in the present. He wants us now. Where are we meant to be now? Maybe I should, 'what now?' instead of 'what next?'.

God help me to not worry about tomorrow but about Today and where I should be right now. I want to be where You are this very moment. I want to be with You now. God forgive us for forgetting about the present and getting so caught up in the future. Thank you God for the joy it is to be with You! ❁



hugo lo

I am really thankful that I had a chance to go back to Rwanda this summer. I expected to find this trip to be the same as last year's, coming back with memories of visits to various places together with the team. However, this year ended up being very different than last year.

It is taking me a really long time to write this. I know this is not something I can force myself to do because I do not want this to seem as though I'm just trying to sound amazing to get good comments. I want this to be real and to best illustrate my experience in Rwanda. So whatever I tell you here is not meant to impress you. Instead, I wish to accurately describe to you what I experienced in Rwanda.

I love mission trips because they have so far been my only experiences traveling around the world and I love the idea of traveling to help people instead of just having a vacation. At the start of the trip, I was not very happy, simply because I found myself too focused on the relationships within our team. Until that moment, I had never realized that going on a mission trip was about building relationships with the local people. I set out to build relationships with Rwandans and, by the end of the trip, I made some pretty good friends and they are the main reason I intend to go back one day.

Another thing that touched my heart was working with House of Hope. House of Hope is a place that provides shelter and a chance to go to school for young street kids. We worked with them for a few days and, frankly, they reminded me of myself when I was their age. I lived in Po Leung Kuk for six years when I was young. I am thankful that God gave me a place to stay all those years to raise me in the right way.

Rwanda is a really nice place. I like the people there and I like how God uses people there. I like the stories of how God does amazing things in their lives. I hope I will get the chance to go back next year. *

jon chen

Before I even begin my testimony, I must confess that I have tried as hard as possible to push back writing this. The honest truth is that I don't really know what to say, because what we've been blessed to experience in Rwanda...nothing I say would do our time there any justice. I guess we're supposed to talk about the lives we've changed, trumpet about our great works and sing aloud what we've done for God. At least that seems to be what people have expected of me every time they raise the subject, been this way since I've gotten home. And I must confess, that's the hardest part for me. It's not because we didn't do anything in our time there, in fact, I couldn't be prouder and more honoured to have had the opportunity to serve with everyone; truth is, they're all aces in my book. But maybe because it's a private matter, and cliché much but, it was all God. Because for these two years, there's one thing that I've learnt. It's not about doing, but about being.

Rwanda has changed my life. God changed my life through Rwanda. And I can't thank anyone enough for it. It's funny thinking back that two years ago, I went with only the purpose of the thrill of adventure, having previously heard of the genocide, one of my hopes was to get shot at and feel the rush of danger. My whole goal was to go to Africa, help out as a missionary, survive and come back for hero worship. Hero worship... so stupid.

The Genocide memorial shook me up, I began to re-evaluate the reasons why I had gone. But I had no answer for myself, weeping like a half mad fool, I could only feel the deepest sorrow that welled out of this inexplicable place in my heart. I was convicted, I would help, even though I had no idea what my purpose was, nor my function. I was soon to find out. *





And naturally it was by being an absolute idiot. When waiting for the kimisagara boys for football I just had to wander off on my own to play with the kids do magic tricks, and have my bag stolen and my wallet taken. It was at that point I was made to learn how to receive love. Because despite my insistence that it didn't matter, I was sat down and told that I would have it back no matter what it cost them [the Rwandans/Serieux].

Ms. Ma made me understand that this was because "we love you". I couldn't comprehend what that meant. The team was made of strangers that I neither knew of nor really had that much care for, sure they were great people, but at the time, I had no understanding of why they would wait for as long as it took when there were so much more important matters at hand. And even more the Rwandans. I understood why that child would have run with my money, they probably needed it. But here were these people, and they would sacrifice the little they had instead of sharing profits? Nuts, it made no sense to me.

I continued to struggle, I could drop a water truck in the middle of the field but that wouldn't make a difference, I could love, but there was too much hurt. I couldn't end it, it was too much for it.

Of course, Ms ma came to the rescue again. It wasn't my duty to save the world, no human was made to be alas. Jesus was. And how do we change the world? By loving people one at a time.

And then came young chuti. Learning what I learned proved not to be enough, God somehow knew that I kinda got it in my head, but I didn't get it in my heart. I guess why he came along. Chuti is a small boy, around 4-5, he's small weak and kinda sick. When we were playing games with the children, there he was, always at the end of the group. It never fails to amaze me at the warmth of children hands lifted and asking how he was, that boy, with guile-less eyes placed his hands in mine replied shyly in the affirmative and eventually joined in. There are so many more examples.

This year was no different, in many ways more amazing, what with alpha, the CD or the movie premier and the safari. But I figure that I'm running out of steam, and it's getting tedious to read. I will end here but in fact there is so much more I'd like to say, about alpha, about this year, the children, the miracles, the old man, the healing. ✨

lead me to where there is peace

praise ma

PEACE: He's awake, there's nothing to fear.

Mark 4:37 A huge storm came up. Waves poured into the boat, threatening to sink it.

As I prayed for God to show me what message to bring to the Rwandans this year, a boat ride in Malaysia stirred my senses. Traveling from one island to another, the boat was going against the strong ocean current. Riding the wave, the boat would crash down on the surface of the water causing water to splash up onto the windshield of the boat, blurring the vision of the driver. Not being able to see clearly where we were going and needing to trust the driver, I prayed we would not capsize, that we would get to our destination. I looked out the back of the boat and I could see where we had come from, the waves were calm and the skies were clear. If God could take us this far, He would surely take us all the way. If I have faith, peace will come. 17 years after the Genocide in Rwanda, faith is building and there is peace in God.



Our trip began with a shaky start. There were speculative reports of a small earthquake in Kigali just as we were leaving. As well, Amanda, Mel, Nancy and I, the Canadians were told at the airport that we could not get on the plane as Canadians now were required a visa to enter Rwanda.

A recent development that caught us by surprise as in all the previous years a visa was not needed (unbeknownst to us, a recent incident that had caused this change in policy towards Canadians). God was with us and gave us peace to proceed in the steps of getting the visa. Thankfully we flew to Nairobi with the team, then they continued on to Rwanda.

I wrote in my journal on the plane to Africa, "So as of now, we go along this journey with peace that God is watching over us. He gave me peace when a wave appeared out of nowhere and it was something we could not see coming. Fixing our eyes on Jesus."

Despite being "shipwrecked" in Nairobi, it really was a time for rest for us. We knew there was a reason two of our worship leaders were being prevented from entering Rwanda and yet we knew we were meant to wait. Our time in Nairobi was meant to be for rest, restoring our souls to prepare us for what we were to do in Rwanda. We wanted to "lay down in green pastures" and we did. God started to pour down new songs into Amanda and Mel's hearts.

Despite waiting for the Rwanda embassy to open on Monday morning and trusting the rest of the team was settling into Rwanda well, God provided everything we needed. He guided us through the visa process and we had faith to go to the airport to fly to Rwanda without having our visa approved yet, having faith that it will be approved once we got to the other side. We knew prayer warriors were interceding and He was with us, it had been approved by the time we stepped foot in the country.

Having learned more about the peace God wanted us to share with the Rwandans, we were encouraged. We faced thunderstorms that caused rain to pour down severely the first few nights. Rain was unusual for this time of the year. The powerful clapping of thunder and flashes of lightning were disturbing and yet we felt like this is the exact example God was giving us to use to share the scripture of 'Jesus Calming the Storm' to the villagers at our outreach. As Rwanda is a land-locked country, we were figuring out how we could relate to the villagers what a storm on a lake would be like. When we did share the message to the villagers, they could connect instantly to being fearful in the storms and under the rain.



Many live under roofs that leak water in and felt the power of the storm. In one of those storms, a few of us out were at a home visiting Eric and Henry, teenaged orphaned twins I watched grow up. Above the booming thunder and sounds of pelting rain, one of them was sharing a Bible passage that he wanted us to pray over him. I shook at the shock of the thunder. Suddenly, the lights went off and there was darkness. It would have been pitch black if it weren't for the glow of Gary's iPhone screen as he looked down at that scripture. I looked up at the other light in the room. It was a glow-in-the-dark Jesus crucified to a cross hanging high on the wall which I had not noticed before. It was a powerful reminder to me to know that Christ is there with us, what He has done on the cross for us to live in this stormy world. Also, that the Word is a lamp unto our feet. In the darkness He will help us find our way. As we prayed for the twins and their role in God's plan for Rwanda, the light came back on and the storm subsided. There is peace.



FOLLOW: The Lord is my Shepherd

Mark 4:35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."

As our team prayed, we wanted to follow God to where He wanted us to be and who He wanted us to be with. We did not know how it would all come to be, though in faith we followed and offered all we had. Our hearts, our time, and our gifts. Discipleship was something that was on our hearts. Jesus called fisherman to follow him to be disciples. How were we going to encourage people to have a personal relationship with God and be discipled, when so many people have lost personal and familial relationships in their life? God opened creative ways for us to be in the lives of the Rwandans and walk with them in knowing God more closely.

We were led to go to and walk on village roads and gather inside mud homes and pray for widows of the Genocide. To hold those who have no parents, to dance freely in worship with the Rwandans, to listen to what is on their hearts, and to pray for healing for those who have diseases. One night at a village outreach, the electric generator was not powerful enough to power a projector for the movie that was to be shown. With the crowd anticipating a movie, the Spirit moved us to pray for healing over the villagers. Individuals came up for prayer and God was with us and taught us how to pray for His beloved people. This was better than any movie. We also did crazy things like learn a hip hop dance from our team member Vivienne to "Walking on Water" by LeCrae. As we danced by cornfields, in front of streetkids or even a flashmob in the basketball courts of a slum area, it really brought smiles and a sense of connection to the people around us. By faith we danced, so we hope they will remember mzungus (foreigners) moving to the beats and be reminded of putting their faith in Christ.

A few weeks before leaving to Rwanda, Gary and Garland met a Rwandan pastor in the UK at a Global Alpha conference who wanted to see Youth Alpha in Rwanda.

They also met the international Alpha youth director from Netherlands who happened to grow up as a missionary kid in Rwanda. He left because of the Genocide and hadn't been back since and he returned to Rwanda because of Alpha youth training for the local Rwandan youth pastors. We are humbled by how God was preparing for Alpha youth training before we even knew it. Stepping in faith, Gary and Garland mobilized people on our team and a very short amount of time a two-day training was organized. Praise God, the Rwandan youth pastors were able to be equipped to reach their youth and engage them in deeper conversations about God's personal relationship with them. Many youth are leaving church because they don't see the relevance of God in their life. Please continue to pray for discipleship and revival of the young generation of Rwanda.

As intercessors prayed, the word "gate" came up and the connection between Hong Kong and Rwanda was like a bridge for revival and unity. Both places are gateways into ancient cultures. Since I began going to Rwanda in 2004, I hoped HK people could one day experience Rwandan worship. In 2006, God had placed the connection between China and Africa on my heart and as I prayed over the years, God is really bringing it to life. This year, not only could we partner with Rwandans in their land, a small team was able to come to Hong Kong and partner with us in HK and to see how to intercede for HK and China. A hopeful desire became an answered prayer, and the Rwandans could dance, sing, pray and preach God's redemption in our land.

Psalm 24:9-10

Lift up your heads, you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is he, this King of glory?
The LORD Almighty— he is the King of glory.



UNITY: River of living water.

Mark 4:38-39 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!"

Even in a land divided by unspeakable sins and horror, God can melt divisions with His unending love. We prayed that streams of abundant life would flow from Rwanda and revive that land. It is amazing to know that living water is so rich, the lives can be fertile again.

With our Rwandan brothers and sisters, we could see their hearts for those who have AIDS, who are lost, who are in spiritual and material poverty, we could be with them to know that God cares. God is in all the smallest cracks and lifts people out. Yet, there are challenges on the battlefield and every moment we are all vulnerable. These are the bold staff at YWAM, as well as, other missionaries and pastors we know. We thank God for their perseverance and pray that the Spirit of God be with them and for continued blessing and protection over them.

There are so many needs, so many things that we cannot offer, but only God can. Yes, God cares if they drown. He is the one with power to command the waves to be still. God reminded me that I can't do it alone, no one can. I am thankful for the prayer warriors who faithfully stand with us every year when the team goes to Rwanda. What a huge part they have. He brought all of us together to let His glory fall down there. He brought people who loved the people He loved. I was touched to see my team embrace my Rwandan family. In awe I watched how God was using all the gifts of each person on our team. Some spent time to make village women know they're beautiful. Some interceded for the team and ministries everywhere we went. Some played musical instruments and let the songs of praise flow out. Some melted away barriers with streetkids through playing football. Some trained Rwandan pastors with their experiences and heart. Some danced to the beat God gave them. Some brought their skills of photography and film to the streetkids. I am spurred on to continue my photography and film to reflect His beauty. In one Spirit, we cried out to God, we opened our hearts for God to do His miracles in our lives, we let the tears flow. We are learning what it means to surrender our will to pick up His cross to follow Him. I want to live much with what God gives me.

Streams of life, abundant life. The curse is broken! Flow, river, flow. Revive this land.



BEAUTY: There is beauty in this place

Mark 4:39 The wind ran out of breath; the sea became smooth as glass.



Every year God asks me to trust Him. Trust that He will show me things, bring me to people, and continue to love the people when I am not near them in Rwanda. Over eight years, I am continuing to witness the beautiful things that God is doing in Rwanda. Even when the storms come and the waves topple the boat over, Jesus is with us. He has the power to stop the winds.

The might to give food to those we meet who are hungry, to heal those with AIDS, to provide shelter to those who live in the streets, to bring to school those who could not pay school fees, the love to mend the deep wounds in their hearts. God is faithful and I am thankful that I have experienced His radiant beauty in a wounded place.

When my heart breaks for His people, He shows me beauty. There was Dada was a young girl when I met her eight years ago. A worship leader in Rafiki's youth ministry throughout the years. In 2008, our team prayed for this unwed teenager when she was pregnant with a child. She was ashamed though strengthened to trust the Lord for provision and for raising her son. This year, she was brave enough to testify before their youth group and our team, that God has done great things in her life. She just finished a vocational training for sewing and now her son is three years old. Her jubilant face when leading worship has returned. Then Tiger came to find us. Tiger is in his mid-twenties and a former streetkid. He has been a part of the Kimisigara football team we meet every year. Last year, he could barely speak English with a tough attitude. He had finished driving school but did not have money to get the license. We left him something from a previous team member, and he started to save the rest of the money he needed to get the license. A few months before we arrived, Tiger had sent a picture of his license and asked us to pray that he would get a driving job. When he did not show up at the time we met the football team, they told us he was working. That evening, he surprised us by driving his employer's 4x4 truck all the way to our base and came to proclaim God's goodness and to show us the answer to our prayers. English words miraculously came out of his mouth as he told us all he wanted to say and that his bigger prayer request was that he wanted to walk closer with God. God heard our prayers for Tiger. Disbelief melts again. God you are able. Also, in one year he answered our prayers for our friend who is a football coach to be able to get more training as a coach and go to university. That is precisely what we found him doing this year.

A former national team member as a teenager, he now is coaching the future talent of Rwanda and sharing His deep faith in the Lord. Our prayers with the streetkids and youth football teams we meet of Rwanda being in the World Cup one day is not impossible. This year, six boys our friend coached traveled to Mexico as the first Rwanda team to go the U-17 World Cup. Stunning. Truly God you are raising up Rwandan youth to rebuild the society.



Since Almond Tree Films Rwanda was established by my friend Isaac and budding Rwandan filmmakers in 2008, God has opened this group to more training, productions and recognition. This year, three of these filmmakers premiered their short films in New York's Tribeca Film Festival. I was able to witness their first time in a movie theatre, sitting among international film critics while their film was shown on the big screen and also as they met notable directors and producers. There are no movie theaters in Rwanda, yet here our friends are sharing powerful messages of hope through film. So we were excited to be in Rwanda when Almond Tree set up their own film premiere evening to let their community to know about their progress and show stories that reflect the struggles and triumphs in lives overcoming the Genocide. Gradually, they are able to have a business that can sustain their living and make their films. God, I am in awe of how these young men took the challenge of learning film to share the stories of their heart that can heal their nation and the world. Now the world even recognizes their talent and are touched by their passion for battling loss and living life.

Our time was laced with wonderful divine appointments that God surprised us with. There was the time when I was praying for the group of streetkids we would be able to train in digital storytelling, something God had put on my heart. We were partnering with Almond Tree and were finding the kids. However, my friend Emmanuel called me one day and asked if I could visit his ministry with the team. House of Hope is a home that houses ten boys from 8-16 that lived in the streets up until January. Last year, Emmanuel walked with me around the nearby market and brought me to the boys he was reaching out too. I prayed that they would have a place to live, food to eat and be able to go to school. I felt that these were the kids were the ones for digital storytelling. Almond Tree came back with the same suggestion. With the confirmation we proceeded to spend a few days with these boys and they were eager to learn how to organize their ideas and film them with an iPod Touch. Our team worked patiently with the boys to build their confidence in using technology. My heart was warmed to see the team, especially the youth that were my former students, be able to share their knowledge with these boys.

For my students who grew up with technology and the best education to whom I have shared stories of Rwanda to. Also, for these boys who were streetkids and whose lives have been transformed by love and now have a hope for a future. As a teacher, one of my greatest joy is to observe the excitement of learning new knowledge and sharing with others what you know. I was amazed that these boys were so motivated that they showed me new storyboards everyday and they wanted to film their movies and act in the movies of their friends. They opened their hearts to share their life of abuse, rejection, addiction to drugs and alcohol, then being rescued from that life into one of love and hope. Going back to the market where they use to steal from was a redemptive moment. Storekeepers shouted at them to go away, yet they were confident to film their scene even when onlookers couldn't fathom that these kids were transformed, they were students now, having abundant life with Christ. They are precious in His sight and their lives are so important. Filming their life became a way of healing, of them recognizing the past and receiving the gift of a future. It was almost too much for me, God blew me away with an inspired idea becoming reality. The extraordinary becoming ordinary. The love He has for the streetkids, my students and I is so tangible.



Tangible is God's love pouring down. It was incredible to hear the sounds that came from heaven. As much as we want to capture the music of heaven, collecting the honey drops only can tell so much. The process really required us to be open to what God wanted us to do, to worship with the Rwandans and see what melodies and words He brings. The words of scripture came along with the melodies and we were in utter awe of the refreshing living water poured over us. Worshiping with the Rwandans is pure joy. God revived my soul and entire being to worship Him in freedom, to let go of my control and give it all to Him. Fingers to instruments, voices to melodies, hearts to God's heart - may it be beautiful new songs to Him.

WHERE IS YOUR FAITH?: He shall reign forever.

Mark 4:40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

Although there is beauty, there is a lot of darkness. We continue to intercede over the needs of the ministries, ministry leaders, vocational training, businesses, and the lives of those we met and have not met. Even with all the beautiful things God allows me to be a part of in Rwanda, it is a battle to face the despair in the lives I encounter. Like the two streetkids I have followed for many years who are struggling to have a future. The time I wanted to visit Emmanuel at his boarding school, I found out he was kicked out because he had stolen some oil from the kitchen to sell for money he wanted. I did not want to see him back outside in the gutters where I first met him, I prayed he would be able to go back because it was his only chance at a shelter, food, and education. Thankfully he could go back and I hope he will be able to persevere through school and know he is loved. Similarly, after a game of football, Mugenzi stood in front of me on the field. We were able to start his schooling a few years ago but stopped because of no home and no family to take care of him. Now 16, he was not able to bring words to tell me what he wanted to say. Tears mingled with his sweat as he looked downwards. My friend translated what Mugenzi mumbled. He is now back on marijuana. I wanted to know more, though all I could do was hug him and tell him that God loves him so much. He asked if I could take him with me, to be somewhere safe. He was thirsting for hope. I had to leave him again in the streets, I couldn't take him anywhere. I need to have faith that God loves him so much, that He will take care of him. God can and will take care of the Rwandan family God has placed in my life. He has been.

I need to have faith for them and for my life. God promises that He will take us to the other side. We will get there. I should keep fixing my eyes on Jesus. Like on my stormy boat ride, I can look back at where He has taken me so far and know He will take me to where He wants me to be. There is already victory and peace because He reigns. Praise His name and let His glory fall down. Imana Ishimwe (Praise God)!

Thank Jesus

Look back where you are coming from

Look where you are now

And praise Jesus

See how you used to be

See how you are now

And Thank Jesus

Always fix your eyes on Jesus

And thank Jesus

Remember how you used to be

Look where you are going

And praise Jesus

Oliver Kavutse

(worship leader - a friend who survived the Genocide and lifted out of the pit into living hope) *



krysta tsan

Even up to two months past the trip to Rwanda there hasn't been a day that has gone by when I haven't thought about the people that we encountered there, the children we played soccer with, the widows we prayed for or the food that we indulged in every night. Before the trip, little did I know God was sending me to Rwanda for a purpose and a purpose that remains a lasting memory.

My initial expectation on this trip was that we would have to do a lot of evangelizing to the Rwandan people. People's first reaction to the word 'Rwanda' always relates to the genocide in 1994 killing over 800,000 people. Of course that's what Rwanda is most well known for to the entire world and what a great way to evangelize through suffering. But I had little faith in God or myself: how could someone like me, someone who continues to struggle with their faith be a blessing to these people who have gone through so much? The past school year leading up to the trip was very difficult for me. I had had a rough time because I put school above everything. My priorities were so shuffled that I slowly stopped attending small group, I hadn't touched my bible in a while and I prayed less and less each day. Most of all I put my full dependence on myself to be successful. Although I studied hard each day, I was still struggling in my classes. And it soon became clear I wasn't doing well because God wasn't my source of strength. So with these past selfish motives I didn't know what to expect from myself going on this trip.



However, even with such little faith that God could use in me, I was pushed out of my comfort zone as soon as I stepped off of the plane. Visiting all the different ministries (soccer, dance, orphans, widows, HIV+), God gave me opportunities to grow in my faith and be a blessing to those around me.

Not only that, but He used me to reach out to these people. He guided my body to walk over to the woman sitting quietly alone at the dining table. Words and wisdom that I didn't even know I had poured out of my mouth to speak to those around me. And before I knew it, I realized that God was using me and gave me the confidence and spoke through me. He saw into my weaknesses and assured me that as long as I have faith, He would guide me in the right direction.

One of my most vivid memories coincided with His reassurance. On one of the days we did house visits we went to the home of a lady in a red dress. She lived with her 3 children in one of the smallest houses I have ever seen, which was equivalent to about the size of my bedroom in Hong Kong. She shared her testimony with us as we all tried to fit into her little home: Her husband was a Hutu and she was Tutsi. Previously during the genocide her husband was pressured into doing something about his wife's identity because he would be killed just from being associated with her, so he tried to kill her with a machete and ran away. Luckily though, she survived. With many physical injuries and even more mental scars she was forced to continue to survive so she could raise her children. She struggled day by day to make money and get food for her children, but one day her husband returned and asked for forgiveness; the kind of forgiveness that isn't known to man. Knowing that she needed God's strength, the woman prayed to Him continuously until one day she was able to forgive her husband and allow him to return home to live with them. I remember being brought to tears from her story because I knew that only through God was this woman able to muster the strength to forgive her husband. So many moments like this occurred when God constantly told me to have faith and trust Him. And therein lay my theme for this trip.

Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."

God loves us all. Unconditionally. Irrevocably. Eternally. ✨





Rwanda in Hk



BLESSINGS IN HK



Rwanda 2011