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*Cross Century Ministries
Doing Theology in Taiwan*

Destination: Taiwan

by Sarah Anne Carter



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Last May ten Grace University students left Omaha to study in Taiwan, the Philippines, and Japan with Grace's Intercultural Ministries Program, which offers a six-month cross-cultural internship overseas each year.

SEND International helped Grace arrange the trip. This is the first time Grace has sent its students to study in Taiwan. In previous years, students have spent their time in Mali, Africa. The students had to raise their own support for the trip. The total cost for each student was US\$6,250, which included living and traveling expenses in addition to tuition. Some students raised more than the required amount, which helped cover the cost of those who fell short of the goal.

The team members started preparing for the trip in September of 1999 by participating in teambuilding activities, learning about their personality types, and getting exposed to the oriental culture. Expectations for the trip were developed during this time.

"I was mostly looking forward to returning to Taiwan and seeing the changes and how it has remained the same," said Abigail Lillie, an MK who left Taiwan in 1992. Abigail's parents are Terrie and Kathy Lillie who served in Tainan.

"I was looking forward to being away from home and going to classes in an exciting new environment," Jason Smith said. "I was also excited about meeting the missionaries."

"The thing I dreaded most about Taiwan was the bathrooms," Carissa Jensen said. "I wasn't sure what to expect. I had little to worry about, though, since most homes have toilets similar to those in America, and when you're out and about, squatty pot-ties aren't so bad."

Upon arriving in Taiwan, the team had a week of orientation and a mere four hours of language study. Stephanie Reimer reported, "We haven't learned as much as we would like to have,

but we can buy things at the markets and stores, greet people, and introduce ourselves.”

The team’s time in Taiwan was split between classes, ministry, and cultural exposure. The five classes taught to the team in Taiwan were Cross-Cultural Communications (taught by Jeff Whitaker, SEND’s Taiwan director), Cultural Anthropology (taught by Jared Burkholder of Grace University), Strategies of Evangelism and Church Planting (taught by SEND missionary Ron Adhikari), World Missions Survey (taught by OMF missionary Callum McKinlay), and World’s Living Religions (taught by SEND missionary Will Brown). Jared Burkholder also taught Missionary Relationships to the team before their arrival in Taiwan; the students had a number of papers to complete related to that class while they were in Taiwan.

“In World’s Living Religions class, we used our class time to discuss Islam and Christianity with some Islamic leaders and

believers at the mosque in Taichung,” Stephanie said. “It was really neat to learn more about their faith from them and not just from a textbook.”

For ministry and cultural exposure, the team did evangelism and taught English classes and vacation Bible schools.

“The main thrust of our evangelism has been during our two-week ministry times,” Melissa Brasby said. “The best time I had was when I was able to give my testimony to children living in temporary housing units near the epicenter of the earthquake. I was able to recount how Jesus brought me through the really hard times of my life, including when my mom died and learning how to love my stepmom. It was wonderful to be able to tell them that Jesus could also help them in their hard time and that He is there to talk to at any time. It really was a ‘full circle’ experience for me.”

“We did some evangelism for a class in the park, which resulted in some being saved,” Peggy Burek said. “Stephanie and I talked to a Filipino woman, and she came to know Christ.”

During their time in Taiwan, team members received credit for Field Education which was overseen by their mentors Shelby Adhikari, Will and Suzy Brown, Victor and Joy Lao, Wilma Limjoco, and Jeff and Linda Whitaker.

“Our mentors became temporary moms, as we called them for advice on cooking, boys, culture questions, and teammates,” Melissa said. “I developed a great relationship with my mentor and don’t know what I would have done without her.”

“I consider the mentor program to be one



Stephanie Reimer (left) and Jessica Lillie (right) enjoy barbecue squid.



Peggy Burck and Melissa Brasby enjoy rice cakes wrapped in bamboo leaves. The rice cakes are made specially for the Dragon Boat festival.

of the most valuable things that I have been involved in," Jason Smith said.

Many people experience culture shock when they go to a foreign country. Although the team had to adjust to the differences between American and Taiwanese culture, they also had several advantages. Jessica and Abigail Lillie are missionary kids who grew up in Taiwan. Brian Doriot grew up as a missionary kid in Indonesia. Everyone on the team had previous mission experiences, ranging in destinations from Oklahoma City and Philadelphia to Vietnam and Sao Tome, Africa.

One very noticeable cultural difference was the way the Taiwanese took out their trash.

"The garbage truck comes in the morning playing loud, pretty music, like an ice cream truck, and the people come out and throw their trash into the truck," Brian observed.

Another major difference was driving styles.

"They have no-rules driving," Abigail said. "It was said to me like this once; in America, we have the 'right of way.' In Taiwan, we have the 'right of space' – if there is space, you can drive there."

The team has also noticed a difference in the teaching and thinking styles.

"They are fuzzy thinkers," Lance Moore said. "They have no compulsion to solve a problem."

"They teach memory-style and rote-learning rather than with concepts and putting ideas together," Brian said. "They teach authoritatively."

Most of the members didn't have too much trouble adjusting to the culture.

"I remembered the eighth beatitude," Jason said. "Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape."

"Being in such a different culture with such a different religious view makes you really appreciate your firm base and belief in God," Jessica Lillie said.

Two of the three male members of the team left early (Lance due to medical problems and Brian because he was under the shorter five-week program), leaving Jason to finish the trip in the company of seven female team members. The team departed Taiwan in October and finished their Asia experience in the Philippines and Japan.



Photos courtesy of Jared Burkholder