



Dear Supporters and Friends,

It is with great gratitude that I write this debrief letter on behalf of our team that went to Philadelphia for a missions trip over spring break last March. We are thankful for all the support we received from you during the trip, whether in prayer or monetary, it went a long way in helping us fulfill God's purpose for our lives and those we ministered to and with during our week in Philadelphia.

The reason we are writing this letter is so that you can hear about the trip through the voices of the 21 people you sent on the trip. There is so much that we experienced during that week both as individuals and as a team that no letter of reasonable length can completely convey, so as a disclaimer, this letter tries only to convey in a collective voice, the main themes that God used this trip to reveal to the team.

If you have read any of the individual debrief letters, you might already know what some of these themes are: dependence on God, surrendering to God, sovereignty of God, unity of the Church, living and loving missionally. Most of what the team members shared would fit into any subset of these themes, and to convey their voices, we have summarized their convictions, rebukes, praises, prayers, into anecdotal quotes that reflect the working of God in our hearts.

Dependence and the Sovereignty of God

"...Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. *The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.*" Exodus 14:13-14

I hope no one has the impression that because we (the team) sacrificed our spring breaks to go on this trip, that we are somehow more spiritual, or 'model Christians.' Many (likely all) of us are very young in our faith, and hence, are quite immature, and one way this showed was our inability to depend on God, and surrender (our lives, and that of others) to Him. Instead, although

many of us know that we shouldn't, we struggled with wanting to be in control of the trip for ourselves, the salvation of others, and so on. Here are some quotes that show our immaturity, and God's revelations to us on the matter.

"Whenever we would go out to do street evangelism in the city or to do VBS with the kids, I would keep telling myself, 'depend on God, you can't do anything on your own.' But when I started to talk to the people or the kids, I forgot this so quickly...I kept hoping that I could do something out of my own power, for example bring someone to salvation through my words. And even though I knew this was the wrong way of thinking, I couldn't help but have this tiny little hope...was trying to do all the work on my own and it was making me tired and very discouraged." [Holly Kim, '16]

"This man I was evangelizing to had a very hardened heart. We talked for almost an hour or so. I tried so hard coming up with ways and reasons to convince him that God was real. In the end, God really humbled me and reminded me that it is God who does the saving and changing of heart, and not me. The sad part was that I knew this and it was knowledge all in my head and heart, but when the moment came, I totally forgot about it. To be honest, I was disappointed and felt useless. Overall, I felt as if there was no point of doing evangelism when we can't do anything." [Eric Lee, '15]

"...God opened my eyes to see[how] my love for control push[ed] my faith in God aside. I wanted to know my purpose in order to feel accomplished when I could check it off. I wanted to serve these people because I wanted to receive the glory. I pushed off faith because I wanted the glory. I wanted to feel useful." [Daniel Kim, '16]

"Ultimately, I think God used this trip to tell me that my role as His creation is to submit to His will, which is ultimately enjoying being in His presence. How great it is that our God is a God who expects nothing but our hearts for Him? I was so caught up in trying to be a good servant and preparing myself to be more pleasing in His eyes that I forgot about loving and enjoying Him. As a sinner who is lacking and so inadequate to bring anything before God, I'm so thankful that all He really wants from me is my heart." [Jen Kang, '16]

God's Love and Faithfulness

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,

*"For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."*

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:35-39

For many of us, we struggle to see and accept the love of Christ, we don't understand the fullness of His love for us. During this trip, we were forced, by God's grace, to face this, and in His mercy, He showed us glimpses (reminders) of His love and faithfulness towards His people.

"While I was washing dishes with one of my team members, she asked me, 'Why are you so hard on yourself?'... I muttered back, 'If I'm not hard on myself, then who will be?'...I began to ask myself, 'What kind of goal are you striving for?'...I considered myself unworthy of his grace and mercy, and I thought I was untouchable, unreachable, and unhealable. I try (strive) to earn his approval (love) through doing Christian things...[and] when I fail, I become extremely upset with myself...I truly believe He hand picked me to go to Philly to remind me that our God is faithful, and nothing I do can make Him love me more or less. The only thing that I contribute to my salvation is my sin. God is a God that doesn't show partiality. He does not love one of His children more than the other, just because one of his children can pray very well or speak flawlessly. I need to stop comparing myself to other Christians because God's love simply doesn't work that way." [Edwandy Kang, '17]

"Since Philly, I have been basking in wonder that God would care for someone like me, and seriously so thankful for helping me to see for the first time how He can be a personal God to me. It's hard to describe, but I simply feel so sure that God is so good, and so worthy of all my life. God has also been so graciously giving me more freedom in prayer, which is something so new for me, and something to be so thankful for." [Danielle Park, '15]

"I was overwhelmed with this joy that there is purpose in suffering, and God will heal me. Understanding this with my heart and mind grew in me a hope for the people of Philly. That God will faithfully save his people. ISN'T GOD SO EPIC?! I'm seriously just shaking out of joy sharing this with you. HE IS GOOD." [Kate Lee, '14]

Loving Others & Team Unity

"For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another...Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor...Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality." Romans 12:4-5,9-10,13

During this trip, many of us realized that we had an incomplete understanding of what it meant to love others, and that we also misunderstood the function of the body of Christ, and our role as members of that body. Through each other and our experiences on the trip, God graciously showed us that true love goes beyond emotion, and is only possible with Him.

"I always thought that God has given me a heart that breaks for His people, but God showed me through this trip that this was more emotion and not true brokenness. I readily sympathized with

those who were homeless, physically broken, hungry and without family and mistook that as a broken heart for God's people. In his grace, God opened my eyes and showed me that true brokenness means to also see those lacking in spirit and who have hardened hearts towards God. This has also taught me to always examine my faith and to be cautious of false growth." [Jen Kang, '16]

"The enemy wants us to believe that people do not need the gospel, but only physical things to sustain their physical bodies. But if we believe this and act on this, then we will only be helping people to sustain what is merely temporary while their souls wither and die." [Hyesoo Rho, '14]

"One of the things I had really hoped to learn through this trip was how to love others. I failed miserably at loving others, but I think God really did answer this prayer request! I struggled to love my team members...I was painfully and constantly aware that I have no love within me that I can give to others apart from the love I receive from God, so to continually ask for His help was a humbling process." [Danielle Park, '15]

"it says in Ephesians 4:14, we need each other so that we may stand strong and not be 'blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming,' like I almost was. Furthermore, I was so humbled through these lessons as God showed me that the church is not just about what it can do for ME. As I saw God work through and use my teammates, I felt so stupid and selfish always thinking about why I need the church, when in fact the church exists for His glory, not mine." [Justin Park, '14]

"a man at ICM shared his testimony with us during [one of the daily] debrief. What spoke to me during the testimony was how Satan seeks to isolate God's people so that we marinate in our sinfulness and self-pity. For me, it was very easy to do exactly that – isolate and marinate. As a result, I felt I was the only person that struggled with showing compassion for the people's spiritual needs. Had this brother not opened himself up to us and reminded us of our inability to run the race on our own, I don't know if I would've opened myself up to the team that night and made myself vulnerable. Yet when I let go of the 'safe' feeling in isolating myself, God taught me that brothers and sisters do not struggle alone. I was encouraged by the words and truth spoken to me that night as well as the struggles we shared with each other during and after the trip. It wasn't because we were all struggling but because amidst these struggles, we continued to encourage and remind each other that these struggles are temporary and nothing compared to the joys awaiting those who, as Paul says, fight the good fight and run the good race." [Daniel Kim, '16]

Missional Living

"...All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."" Matthew 28:18-20

One thing that is a resounding echo among the team is how much more difficult it is to live like we did during the week in Philly everyday and everywhere. Although we understand that we are called to live with the same intention and intensity as the norm, we see that really in our lives it is really more the exception than it is the rule. Many of us are still weak in faith, but this trip has shown us that with God it is possible, that as we grow more in love for Him and learn to surrender, He will enable us to live more and more selflessly for His kingdom. He has given us a taste for what we ought to strive for and reminded us why it is so urgent and necessary. We must seek to intentionally make disciples as we go about our regular lives, and He really is with us in and through all of that!

“God has shown me so much and allowed me to experience so much joy through and even after the trip, and I don’t want to just keep it to myself. I really want EVERYONE to experience the inexpressible joy I experienced from knowing God and hoping in Him.” [Sara Kim, ‘15]

“He has given me a greater desire to share the good news...initially, I was sad thinking, ‘I need to be at Philly in order to evangelize,’ [or] ‘I have to be with the Philly team members in order to evangelize ([since philly] Our team started to EV at one of the dining halls during the week day!).’...I realized God is really showing me that EV is not dependent on a specific time and place. To make this so clear, God really allowed me to talk to some of my friends about Christ at such random times. For example, I was staying up late with a friend to study and at 2am I just asked ‘do you go to church?’ only to find out that she is struggling and desiring to be a Christian (when all this time I thought she was not a Christian at all) and only to end the night by praying together.” [Anna Jeon, ‘16]

“I can’t help but to notice the difference between how God’s been meeting me during the trip and here back in school. It’s only natural because in Kensington, our team was God-centered with everything we did 24 hours a day for the entire week. This has emphasized the importance of being wise with my faith – being intentional with how I spend my time here back on campus. Because I have responsibilities as a student, which may serve as distractions and temptations to my spiritual life, God taught me the importance of equipping myself with Him, whether through reading his Word or prayer, in order to fight through the daily struggles of this world.” [Jen Kang, ‘16]

“I think He has shown me that right now, He simply wants me to focus on [Him] each day. Since I’ve been back, it has honestly been very hard to adjust. Going right back into the “student life” has slowly but surely allowed complacency to take over. Little daily tasks that must get done have preoccupied my mind more than God himself...it is just such a strong reminder of my natural sinfulness and INABILITY to love God on my own!!! I can’t love God on my own. That is so hard for me to say, but I also know it is one of the most freeing things I can say. God will help me to love Him if I just ask.” [Erika Park, ‘15]

In summary, we are extremely grateful to have had this opportunity to serve with you on this missions trip to Philadelphia last March. God has been so gracious to grow us in ways we could not have expected. We know that this trip was merely a part of God's redemptive plan, not just for those who don't yet know Him, but for us who are learning to trust in Him for our very salvations. We pray that God will continue to do the work He has begun in your lives and ours, and I hope you will continue to grow in your desire to see the Good News of the Kingdom of God spread and lived out in all the nations.

“How beautiful on the mountains
are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace,
who bring good tidings,
who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion,
“Your God reigns!”

Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices;
together they shout for joy.
When the LORD returns to Zion,
they will see it with their own eyes.
Burst into songs of joy together,
you ruins of Jerusalem,
for the LORD has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.
The LORD will lay bare his holy arm
in the sight of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth will see
the salvation of our God.”
Isaiah 52:7-10.

In Christ,
Bethany Philly Missions Team '14.