

Youth Church Mission Trip to East Timor (8-15 April 2018)



Shuan Phua, 21, YWA zone, Youth Leader

This was my second mission trip and I had little expectation of what I would see and experience in East Timor. When I arrived and saw first-hand the living conditions of the people and learnt the brief history of the country, I was deeply shaken inside. What broke my heart most was the state of the youth there. Young people, in my opinion, are supposed to grow up well, have hopes and dreams, be able to make plans for the future and develop to be wholesome people. Yet in Timor, many of the youth have lost their fathers in the recent civil conflict and live aimlessly without any plans for the future. Growing children have so little nutrition in their diets and those who get to attend schools receive just basic education.

Furthermore, Christianity is frowned upon in the community. The Timorese LSBC staff have experienced persecution from their own families for believing in Christ and one was even attacked by her brother with a parang for believing in Jesus. Timor and the people seemed so far from the Shalom peace that God desires for His children. It seemed to me that there would be little change in their living conditions and society in the near future. At this point, I began to ask Father God: "Where is your goodness in this land? Do these people even have hope? How are we going to make any difference in their lives in this short time we have with them?"

Our team of 10 had come to East Timor with the aim of supporting our local Timorese LSBC staff team in their many community pastoring efforts. The local team, headed by Pastor Mariani, is currently shepherding 10 cell groups and intend to start a home church soon. Aligned with the LSBC spirit and approach, we did CP and conducted various children and youth programmes with the community to have fun together and hear the gospel through building friendships. The Timor staff had also organised the first Youth Leaders' Conference in the district of Liquicia and we were tasked to helm the worship and teaching sessions for the 2-day Conference (photo on right).

One of the roles I had on the trip was to conduct a teaching on basic Bible study with the youth leaders at this conference. I went through the session as planned, teaching them how to dig deeper into the Word and teach their youths to do the same. At the end

of the session, I shared my testimony with them on how the Word of God has impacted me and transformed my life. I had many insecurities in the past, but the truth of the Word set me free over the years. I was uncertain whether they understood my sharing or the interpretation into the local language, Tetum, because I saw a few blank faces. However, I could tell the sharing spoke to them when I ended my sharing with Matthew 7:24, 'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.' and shared that they too could have a firm foundation in life if they choose to put their hope in the Word of God, regardless of their circumstances.

This was the most impactful moment on the trip for me as well. God ministered deeply to me through my own sharing. I knew that God's word had power in my own circumstances at home, but God opened my eyes to see that even in the dire circumstances of the people of Timor, God's word is not just sufficient, but more than enough for them. This answered the questions I had at the start of the trip.

On hindsight, these words from Apostle Peter in the book of Acts come to mind: 'Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you.' We did not have anything to give to the people there that can solve all their issues and we only had a few days with them. But what we do have is a truth that sets us free, knowledge of a Saviour that gives us hope, of a Spirit that leads us, of a Father who loves us and in whom we can abide. The truths we can give to them through our presence, acts of kindness and simple sharing, by faith we know for sure it is more than enough for them.

Realizing this, I spent the rest of the trip enjoying every moment with the Timorese people, both young and old. What is most memorable was seeing the team chatting and playing with a group of youths we had just conducted activities with. They did not receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour after our time with them, but we acted in love towards them and became their friends through giving our undivided time and attention to befriend them. God was glorified in such a simple yet powerful way. My understanding of our commission as God's children was reshaped that day. It is not to do more work per se, but to simply receive God's love and share that love with others.

To sum up, only on the trip did God reveal the needs of the land and His calling for us to meet those needs. I learnt that having a heart for missions does not necessarily start



with a strong conviction to go, but instead just taking a step of faith and letting the Lord show us His heart for His people and convict us of the needs there.

Many of us intend to return to Timor soon, to provide further support for the team of local staff there and to simply love the people of Timor. It is always inspiring to us younger ones when we see older members serving fervently in church despite their many commitments, setting an example for us to follow. I pray that more of us can serve together not just in church and in the community, but in overseas places in need as well.

Isaac Jieu, 20, Youth Church

This was my first mission trip and I'm so glad that I went for this trip. To be very honest, I was feeling very nervous about this trip from the start, even before we left Singapore. On this trip, I was tasked with organizing icebreaker games for the Youth Conference and youth programmes. Although this might seem like a simple task, I was feeling very uncomfortable and unsure about my role. Truth be told, I'm not a very enthusiastic person. I don't like to take the lead when it comes to these types of activities that required active participation.

I was very afraid that due to the language barrier, the Timorese would not understand what I was saying or the games and the entire session would be very awkward. I was afraid that they wouldn't play along and that I would look like a fool trying to explain myself or be the only "ra-ra" one. But you know what, the exact opposite happened. The Timorese understood my instructions and we had so much fun playing games together. And through these simple games, friendships started to form beyond the language barrier. In just a span of a minute, any shyness disappeared from the room, including mine. God is full of surprises! When we have doubts, God will come through for us and show us how foolish it was of us to not trust in Him. From this experience, I was reminded how important it was to put my trust in God. All we need to do is surrender whatever doubts we have and God will always make a way. I realised I could only have learnt this lesson because I chose to go for a mission trip and serve in any capacity, even in ways outside of my comfort zone. I am thankful for the work God is doing in my life that began on this mission trip.



I really encourage all of us in LSBC to go for a mission trip, especially to Timor. The Timorese need us. With the 10 cell groups LSBC has, we need the man power to support the staff, cell members and serve the community there. Due to the civil war that broke out in the early 2000s, children are growing up without fathers. A generation of youth are at risk of heading down the wrong path and we need to point them towards God. From our presence and simple actions, I believe more Timorese will be saved. The people there really need us as foreigners to show that we care, even from a far off country because Jesus told us to love our neighbours. The people in Timor are so precious. I had no idea how much we mean to them and our simple action of visiting them brings so much joy to their hearts. This became so real to me and if you go, I believe that God will warm your heart too.



Look at this cute little boy happily posing for a photo! When we first arrived at the village, a few hours before the photo was taken, this little boy was hiding behind his mum afraid of talking, interacting with or even looking at us. But as we continued the children's programme, he opened himself up to us. Just before we left, I asked him for a high-five and he ran towards me and hugged me instead. This moment will always stay in my heart forever. He even cried when we were saying our goodbyes. Our presence matters! This reminded me that people may be cautious and appear unfriendly to our presence as foreigners initially. But, if we as Christians take the initiative to go, to befriend, to invest time, then it's possible that just like this little boy, people can respond with open arms to the Father as He calls them.

Timor will reveal the wonder of God's creation, that remind us of how powerful and great our God is. And how awesome it is that we can call him Father. During a blackout, (which happens quite often) I could see a sky peppered with stars. Constellations made themselves known. I understood what it means to see God more in the darkness. Timor although underdeveloped, is a blessed land. They have beautiful natural wonders and such precious people. All we need to do is point the people to God and surely, one will say that this land of Timor is truly blessed. So, I really encourage everyone to visit and serve in Timor on a mission trip. You can be sure that the trip will bring joy to your hearts, but more importantly, it will bring joy to our Father's heart.

