

Bring the Little Children Unto Me By Mary J. Ferrill

*"Train a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not turn from it." Proverbs 22:6*



I first traveled to Taiwan on a medical missions trip with students in 2010. I was so sick that I spent most of my time lying on the floor or in my hotel room. Because of that awful experience, I had no desire to return. But when I was given the opportunity to go again, I felt the Lord's prompting to do so, and I'm so thankful for

being obedient to Him. Had I not responded to His call, I would've missed so many blessings! I have now traveled many times to this beautiful country, and I have enjoyed each trip more than the last. After a trip in 2019, we had to wait a few years for the Taiwan COVID-19 restrictions to be lifted before returning again in May 2022.

The subsequent visits were not medical mission trips, but educational trips as we taught and trained students and faculty. Pharmacy education in Taiwan is trailing the advancements we have here in the US. Until recently, they only offered BS and MS degrees in pharmacy. During our first trip, we developed affiliation agreements with the 5 Pharmacy schools in Taiwan. Taipei Medical University (TMU) fully took advantage of this agreement. They sent a graduate student named Alice to train with my husband Dan, culminating in the writing of a lengthy published manuscript. I assisted with her literature search. She was very interested in drug information and literature evaluation, so she observed those courses. (Update: she now teaches drug information and literature evaluation at TMU, and I'm so proud!) I have unofficially adopted Alice as my daughter, and she calls me her "American mom." From those interactions, one of the administrators in the school of pharmacy asked me and Dan to help in the development of their new PharmD program. Hence, we started to provide instruction to faculty at TMU and their 3 associated teaching hospitals. We presented faculty development sessions on a variety of topics such as developing learning outcomes, writing and validating exam questions, transforming research into manuscripts, developing syllabi for didactic and experiential courses, and converting lectures into team-based learning activities. We also provided topical presentations on pharmacokinetics,

and drug information and literature evaluation. These presentations were video-recorded for use in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to be distributed by the university. MOOCs are similar to our Continuing Education (CE) Programs in the US. I was also able to share my medical missions experiences with my audiences. Students there are familiar with medical missions since the Taiwanese government sends citizens abroad to assist in developing countries, but I was also able to share the Great Commission as presented in Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15,16, and Acts 1:8. Most recently, we also provided a session and small group discussions on team building.

We quickly learned that in Taiwanese culture, it is customary to exchange gifts. We also quickly realized that American chocolate is a showstopper – favorites seem to be Reese's, Snickers, and Hershey kisses. We had to bring an extra suitcase just to hold all of the gifts. We also brought gifts for some of our lectures to help the students remember the concepts. For example: in Dan's pharmacokinetics course, he discussed the concept of the fish tank to explain first order elimination, so he brought small plastic goldfish to distribute to the students. During one of my literature evaluation sessions in which I discussed the ROOTs concept for evaluating articles (*Relevance, Observe validity, Obtain clinically significant results, and Translate results to clinical practice*), I brought small plastic trees to reinforce the concept.

Apart from spending time with my new "daughter" Alice, the favorite part of my Taiwan visits is time spent with young children at a local church. Every time we visit Taipei, we join our trip sponsor at TMU (whose name is Shawn) on Friday evenings to have dinner with the group. The purpose



of our visit is to help them with their English language skills and also to provide a short biblically-based educational session. It has been such an honor to watch the children grow in their faith and to observe how many of them remember us from previous visits. The evening starts with prayer and dinner followed by singing and activities. The children this year ranged in age from 5 to 14, so finding an age-appropriate activity was more challenging than in the past when I would simply read a children's Bible story. This year I decided to bring out my old tried and true "Noah and the Ark" story (Genesis 6-9). I used to do a puppet show during medical missions in Costa Rica to help keep the children busy; but being in Taiwan without puppets and a boat, I had to get creative. As I told the story, I got the children involved by asking them to make animal and storm noises, and to hop like bunnies. I encouraged them to remember 2 things from this story: 1) They must obey their parents just as Noah obeyed God, and 2) Every time they see a rainbow, they should remember how much God loves them. It rains a lot in Taiwan, so there are many opportunities to see a rainbow! After the story, I gave each of them a coloring page and asked them to complete it. I wasn't sure that the older children would do it... so to sweeten the deal, I brought a toy chest and said they could each take 2 items if they completed the coloring page. They all enthusiastically finished their projects (don't you just love children!) and then each one wanted to have their picture taken with me and their masterpieces. We also

brought bookmarks with Scripture verses in English – one for each child to keep, and one to give to their parents. The last thing I requested was that the children use their coloring page to tell the story to one person who was not there that night, then report to Shawn who they told. What a blessing to train little disciples.



When we were asked to return to Taiwan this time, Dan and I assumed this would be our last visit, so we savored every moment. But much to our surprise, at the start of the conference came an announcement that "the next time Dan and Mary visit us, we will work with the science faculty to incorporate team-based learning in their courses." How exciting! That might be a little more challenging since most of the science faculty do not speak English... but if it's in God's plans, then He'll make it happen and we're up for the adventure! I suppose I should start planning the children's activities for the next trip. Anyone have any suggestions?



AVAILABLE NOW
ON AMAZON



\$9.99

