

The Cullers Family

2nd Generation Missionaries

Taiwan



09-12/23 Prayer Letter Update

Hello dear friends! I hope your Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons were wonderful. Ours was great! Between ministry events and our own kids being old enough to really get into the Christmas spirit, it was a bit like being a kid all over again. A lot has happened in the past few months, especially since we did not send out a letter in October, for which I must apologize! It was brought to our attention by a supporting church that the last letter they had from us was from August. After checking our records I realized that, while I thought for sure we had sent a letter update in October, we in fact had not! I am so sorry. I guess this will be an extra in-depth update then!

I believe I mentioned previously that we had to move yet again because our landlord wanted to sell the house we were renting. Thankfully, we found another house in the southernmost outskirts of Chaozhou, in October. We actually like the house and area better, so having to move turned out to be a blessing in disguise. We got moved in in time to get everything sorted and for my wife to get up the Thanksgiving/Fall decorations we had brought over with us. They do not celebrate Thanksgiving here, but I always like to emphasize the importance of the spirit of thanksgiving and thankfulness for the believers in church. We also got together with a group of other missionary families for a time of food and fellowship. I have a lot to share, but limited space, so I will give a few prayer requests in the next paragraph and then focus on one or two items in more length.

I will be speaking twice during the upcoming Winter Camp, challenging young people to live for Christ. We will be renewing our visas in a few days, so we would appreciate prayers for that to go smoothly. We are praying about enrolling Logan in a tribal elementary school. The individuals we are actively seeking to win to Christ are Brady, Wendy, Maichos, Black, Dennis, Dario, Maka, and Brian. A praise is that my parent's Neipu Church that I preach at weekly had their first baptism last Sunday! Frank, who my parents had been working on, trusted Christ as his Savior and made the decision to take the first step as a Christian.

In October, I had the privilege of preaching at a tribal church up north during their Missions Emphasis Month. I was also able to share about our burden to reach the Paiwan tribe located in the south of Taiwan. Speaking of tribal ministry, I have a new contact I am working to see saved. His English name is Black. He and his brother seem like the typical high octane tribal guys. He is a national level heavy-weight boxer, with previous Special Forces training, and his brother is currently an airborne commando sniper. As a kid, he was a brawling trouble-maker headed down a bad path, but a wise boxing coach found him and taught him discipline and gave him an outlet through boxing. My hope is he would find Christ, who is ultimately the One who can change us and give us purpose.

*"Crowded modern cities, or in the mountains wild,
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Lord, oh help me love the ones You love!"*

Victory Baptist Church

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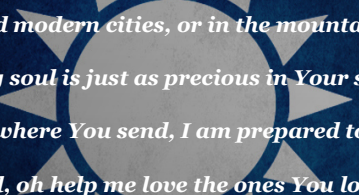


In the meantime, he has been teaching me boxing and we have been doing regular sparring. I am hoping that, like with Brady and others, the regular “non-religious” contact will continue to provide opportunities to “soften them up” and work them closer to understanding and making the decision to trust Christ. Around Christmastime, I had the chance to lay out the significance of Christ’s birth and why he came. Black, Dennis, and Dario were all listening intently and had numerous questions. Praise the Lord! It is difficult to get opportunities like this where they are listening and interested in hearing of beliefs so different from their own.

The Paiwan are a very prideful people, which is both humorous and frustrating at times. Black was explaining to me how not terribly long ago it was understood where one village’s turf ended and another’s began. It didn’t matter who you were or why you were trespassing, you just didn’t cross these lines or you were hunted and beheaded. Boys became men by venturing into the gray zone of hunting territory to take an enemy head, thus becoming a man. Failure meant death, and apparently you didn’t have what it took to be a man. To safely enter a village as a guest, one had to be invited and come completely disarmed with gifts in hand. The guest would come to the entrance/gate of the village and wait until the host/friend came out to receive them. After exchanging gifts, the host escorted the visitor inside the village proper and they were left alone in peace as opposed to mobbed and killed for sport. That’s exactly how Maichos brought me into Piuma for the ceremonies I got to attend in the past, I just didn’t know this is how it worked at the time. Fortunately, I erred on the side of caution and brought a gift!

They wouldn’t hurt someone today, yet deep in the DNA of the culture is this idea of the “right way” to be allowed into a village. Our difficulty then is having a reason to KEEP showing up to a village. To get past their guardedness we need daily or weekly non-religious interaction to open the door, earn trust, and have the platform to show them how lost they are and why they desperately need Jesus. Though they are very lost, they pridefully do not think so and bristle at the suggestion that they are. This is what we have been trying to figure that out. On top of that, EVERY village is independent and unique from the others and require their own efforts to open doors and see progress. So which village will we actually end up building a work in first? Hard to say. The good news is the Mormons and other cults haven’t figured it out either. This is why I go on mountain excursions with Maichos, why I am boxing with Black, and why we are praying about enrolling Logan in the Laiyi Paiwan kindergarten 15 minutes from us. If our son attends classes with tribal children, we have a very natural reason to be going to the Laiyi village every day. There is also the added bonus of our son being exposed to their culture from a young age, giving him a leg up when he is older.

I also had a few really good discussions with Brady about Taoism vs. Christianity. He has been noticing a difference between Christian families and Taoist ones, namely in how young people turn out. We had him and his girlfriend Wendy over to our house, and we have noticed they always intently watch how our family interacts. Both because we are Americans and because we are Christians. He told me of the connection between gangs and the temples here. Taiwan is actually in the top ten countries in the world for proliferation of gangs. There is a direct symbiotic relationship between the prosperity of a temple and the success of its supporting gang. Parents here don’t want their kids hanging out with temple kids because they are raucous, immoral, and violent. He said, “I think most parents would rather their children hung out with church kids than temple kids.”



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He also seems to be becoming disenfranchised with Taoism, because he said, “Why would the gods choose such people to represent them? The people the gods pick to possess and to be their voice are always the drop outs, the troubled gang people. There are strict moral requirements to be the god’s pick, but they are so immoral and temple worship has become all about merchandise and making money.”

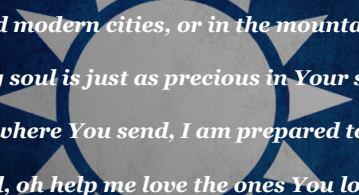
I tried to tactfully draw the connection between rejecting God and His Word and the corruption of human behavior. “In America it is actually the rejection of God and the Bible that brings these behaviors in young people, but what you are saying is that here in Taiwan it is almost the opposite: that these behaviors actually seem to become worse when people *become* more devout in the cultural religion?” Interesting how any choice besides God leads to the same mess because it is same devil behind them all! Pray for Brady; I do believe he continues to get closer and closer to trusting Christ.

Another good witnessing opportunity was with Brian, a college sophomore, after preaching our Christmas event at the Neipu Church. In a nutshell I spoke on why I thought Jesus was unique. Why He stood out from other gods in the world. I was hoping it would be fresh perspective on a Christmas message for the saved, but also be food for thought for lost visitors, which we had quite a few of. After the service concluded Brian came right over and the first thing he said was, “Ok, so how do I do that? Respond to God I mean? You said we were created to know God and please Him, and need to respond to Him.” He said that, like Solomon in the message, he was realizing that everything was empty, and that the shine wears off. Things out in the world are marketed to be the answer to emptiness and to providing joy but they all just come up short in the end. I couldn’t believe my ears when he said, “Maybe I have been looking at this all wrong. Maybe it’s not about what I can get from God for myself, but maybe it’s about knowing this God just for who He is.” EXACTLY! How refreshing to hear. Long story short, after explaining the gospel again and what he needed to do about it, and being a “do it myself” kind of person, he went home to do what we talked about. He said he wanted to come back to church and hear more. So we will see if that happens! I plan to follow up with him at the next available chance. Please pray for Brian!

I will sign off here, since we are already at three pages. Thank you for bearing with me during this lengthy report! Thank you for your continued prayer and support! We appreciate you. We are praying for you in return. God bless!

Expecting Great Things,

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