

Graceland
CBCSD Newsletter #27
Jan. 17, 2021

*"But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of ... is a land of the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it...
(Deuteronomy 11:11-12)*

Words from the Editor:

Happy New Year!

Due to the epidemic in September of last year, God let us start the "Online Happiness Group Chat Room." In addition to continuing to spread His precious gospel, it increased the number of people saved! Thank God, several brothers and sisters who participated in the ministry have witnessed God's wonderful work in this issue. As Pastor Lam emphasized in the following New Year's message, in the face of 2021, we will be able to serve in unity, obey God's guidance, and seize the opportunity to bless more people!

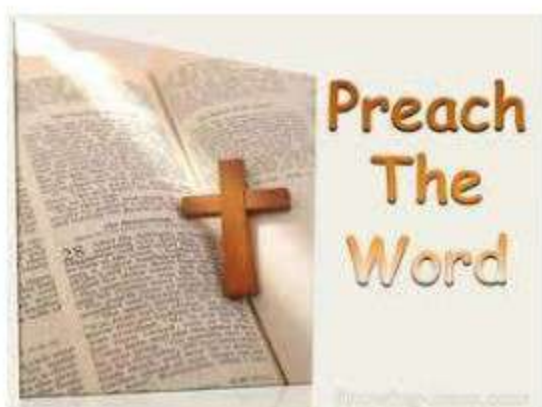
Changes and Opportunities in the Pandemic

Pastor Albert Lam



When I was in the Philippines, our church had a summer retreat every year at a resort town called Baguio. We lived in Manila, where there are only two seasons: the "hot season" and the "hotter season." Baguio is at the mountains of Luzon Island. It is cooler there and the mountain scenery is beautiful. People at Manila never get tired of vacationing there. However, there was one year when a big earthquake shook that area and landslides were a common scene so the path going in and out of Baguio was severely damaged. The roads were all blocked for repairs. The Philippine government was quite famous for its bureaucracy and slow action in construction; they usually worked for two days and rested for three. I thought it would probably be months, even years, before we could visit Baguio again. Unexpectedly, the traffic was cleared out quickly. I thought it was the construction that got sped up, but it was because of another route. This path was just a little bit longer. People wanted to save gas, so many people didn't pick it. Even though I had been to Baguio so many times, we had never heard of that pathway. But because of this earthquake, this pathway was "discovered." One more route meant one more way to get in and out so Baguio wouldn't be a "deadlock;" this ignited the tourist industry at Baguio. Reflecting on this, I realized that while there is only one mountain, there are many paths to get there.

This global pandemic has stricken our society in many aspects. Daily, new cases and death numbers are escalating. Lockdowns put our social lives at an almost complete halt. Our church gatherings and activities are also impacted. Church is a spiritual fellowship. We cherish the interactions, love, and help our members have. However, the “social distancing for safety” policy struck the core functions of church. How can we interact and help one another when we can’t even meet and see one another in person? How can we reach out to community friends and lead them to the Gospel? How can we conduct discipleship and grow together in Christ? We only have two choices. One is doing nothing but wait for the pandemic to pass by, similar to when the pathway to Baguio was blocked by the landslide. You just wait patiently for the people to clear out the mud and sand, although you don’t know how long it will be. The other choice is to seek a different pathway while the original one is blocked so that our vehicles can keep moving on.



Scripture reminds us, **“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.”** (II Timothy 4:2) Thanks be to God, we chose to hold onto that goal and seek a new pathway.

Since the pandemic, CBC pastors, brothers, and sisters have demonstrated incomparable faith and unity. Everyone was determined to face this pandemic with a positive attitude and believe that this is a trial by God. Therefore, we should all be in great joy since through this, God will deepen our spiritual lives and purify and remold us so that we could have characters like kingdom disciples. In the meantime, we strongly believe that our God is the creator, so in Him, there is an abundance of



creativity. He is delighted when we serve to reflect His creativity and image. During the pandemic, when we can’t continue old methods and strategies, we boldly seek for new methods and new technologies to spread the gospel, to train our disciples, to mission, to plant churches, and to establish an online church without borders. In the business world, when we see a new and unsaturated market, we would say it is full of “boundless business opportunities.” In the church, when we see such a huge missionary field made accessible with the help of modern technology, we can proclaim what we face is “boundless mission opportunities.”

The prophet Isaiah reminded us 2700 years ago, **“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I**

am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” (Isaiah 43:19). Now everyone is saying that the world will enter a new norm after the pandemic. People’s lifestyle will be changed dramatically; the interactions we have and the ways we obtain information will be very different from before. We are stepping into a new era and a new epoch. As a result, we should work to have a better understanding of this new wave of culture, discover and grasp its new opportunities, and become a church that can keep up with society’s changes. Then we will continue to be blessings for the people and the country in this new environment. ◆



Online Happiness Group Chat Room



Where do the BESTs Come From?

By Mary Liu, North Campus

Before our Happiness Group started, Pastor William asked us, “What do you think the hardest task is in a Happiness Group?” I answered, “Inviting the BESTs.” Because I am not such a social person by nature, ever since the pandemic I have not stepped out of the door for a while. It is just my husband and me facing each other. Inviting the BESTs does not seem to be something in my arena.



However, one day, I was shopping for groceries with my husband and overheard someone speaking in Chinese. I looked towards the voices and found three Chinese people. When I went to the cashier, they were right there. In the spur of the moment, I asked the lady standing closer to me, “I was wondering if you are from mainland China?” She said, “Yes!” and then she suggested, “Let’s add each other on WeChat.” Just like that, we connected that night. As we chatted, my husband reminded me to invite her to join our Happiness Group. When I asked her, her answer was, “Sure!” It quite shocked me because I was expecting a no, but God miraculously helped me to find a BEST while grocery shopping.

The second BEST invitation was also a miracle. A sister I know recently moved to Tennessee. After settling down, she joined an American church and got to know an American couple. The couple has a son who lives in Escondido. Their son met a lady from Guangdong. This lady recently experienced some hardship in her life and needed help. The son was worried but could not speak Chinese and had no means to help. The couple in Tennessee had been praying for a while. When they met this newly relocated sister who can speak Chinese and is from San Diego, they said, "You are the answer God has given us." Soon after, I was "assigned" to care for this lady from Guangdong. All our communications went smoothly. I invited her to the Happiness Group and she replied with "Are you Christians?" When I said yes, she answered, "Sure!" Her answer shocked me again. I truly did not expect that. God gave another miracle.



Inviting the BESTs was not my plan initially, but the Holy Spirit helped me to be part of this miraculous plan, something no words could explain! May the glory be to God! ♦



Happiness Group Ministry Midpoint Reflection and Sharing

**By Alan Cheung,
Temecula Valley Campus**

In the beginning of this year, Pastor Jeff invited my wife and me to serve as coworkers for the third Happiness Group ministry and we willingly obliged. Although neither of us had any experience in evangelism, our faith and love for the Lord urged us on. We first cleaned up our house and made it comfortable and inviting so that when the BESTs came, they would feel right at home. We then took a "crash course" on cooking and baking via YouTube while simultaneously planning face-to-face icebreaker games.

When the news came in March that the Happiness Group might be cancelled due to the pandemic, we were a little disappointed and prayed earnestly for God's guidance. We did not stop our weekly coworker meetings and continued with our prep work. In addition to learning and practicing eight weeks' worth of gospel messages and icebreaker games, each one of us also prepared a touching five-minute personal story with the BESTs as our target audience. Since the meetings would be conducted online,

technical issues would likely occur. We decided to do a rehearsal before each actual Happiness Group meeting so that all possible issues could be dealt with beforehand and the coworkers could conduct the actual meeting with greater confidence. Last but not least, we prayed for each BEST on our invitation list in every single coworker meeting.

Under the leadership of Pastor Jeff and his wife, and our team leaders Yichun and Wendy, we completed all the prep work and were greatly inspired and eager to serve. As Pastor Jeff said, "We should not hold off evangelizing until we are fully equipped; rather, we should start evangelizing now so that we can become better and better equipped." Now, looking back, we have already completed four weeks of Happiness Group meetings. Although I am still not feeling 100% equipped, my heart is deeply touched by each meeting. I become more obedient to God, more loving towards others, and more faithful when I serve. More importantly, brothers and sisters worked in unity as one body in Christ which made our online chat room filled with not only rich content but also godly love. I think I benefited even more than the BESTs and felt God's presence in everything I did. I had a bad fall one week before the start of the Happiness Group. I had a broken bone in one of my legs and had to undergo a surgery where I got three metal pins in my leg.



Thanks to God's watchful eyes and healing hands, I was well taken care of. With the outpouring of love, prayers, and other aid from Pastor Jeff and his wife, brothers and sisters, and friends and neighbors, I was able to continue with my service in the Happiness Group despite my injury. God was with me and I could hear His words of encouragement, "Just do it, son! I will be with you." Praise God! After five weeks of physical therapy and nourishment from well prepared meals, I can now walk without a crutch. I would like to also thank my wife Esther for the tireless care she gave me for the past five weeks. I know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him. All glory be to God! May God bless you all with peace, joy, and health. Amen! ◆



Conviction Chat Room Saturday News

By Wendy Wu, West Campus



Conviction Chat Room's third event was held as expected at 7:30pm, finishing at 9:30pm. There was a total of 20 groups, and among those, 11 groups of coworkers, 14 people; eight groups of guests, nine people along with two of their family members; and one church leader. It was quite fun.

Once the whistle blew, sister Hui began the warmup game, an brainteaser icebreaker, and all the guests answered correctly. With the ice broken and balls passed, people warmed up, and then our center forward brother Bing graciously shared the message "Jesus is the path, truth, and life." He sent a middle pass to sister Shumei, who delivered a beautiful testimony. She sent a long pass to sister Qun, who gave a testimony of God's help and comfort. A seemingly faraway Lord is actually working and walking with us, changing and blessing lives. A worship song "Because He Lives" which echoed the testimonies given shot right into the basket. Yes, our lives are filled with hope because He lives. Sister Sulan led the prayer, thanking God for His grace, opening people's hearts, and filling the lives of people abundantly.



Group discussions of six to seven people were like basketball's overtime. It was getting a little late and some guests had left, while the ones who stayed opened their hearts. Our coworkers patiently listened and answered.

We are thankful for all our coworkers and their passion who serve the ministry with a willing heart. Our ministry is centered on the Lord; these lifetime stories are our testimonies; with a lively atmosphere, caring and blessing follow up communication at the chat room, and every one of us was blessed and built up.

May God's protection and blessings be with our BEST every day! I hope the discussions stay with and refresh our members until the next week. ◆





Happiness Group Without Borders

By Ben Tse, Cantonese Congregation

As a result of the pandemic, our church fellowship and Happiness Group activities had to be conducted in the form of online meetings, which coincidentally echoed our church's theme for 2020: "New Vision. New Mission."

We had some challenges inviting friends to the online meetings as some of them either were not comfortable with the format or simply did not have the technical skills to do it. Each coworker came up with a long list of names of potential BESTs and we prayed together earnestly that they would take up the offer and ultimately receive the Lord's salvation. Unfortunately, no one really committed despite three weeks of praying and bonding activities. Yet our praying did not stop.



One of the activities leading up to the official Happiness Group program was a "warm up" meeting to help everyone to get to know each other better and to feel more

comfortable in our new setting. As I was preparing for the icebreaker game, God answered our prayers and sent us nine BESTs, not just from San Diego, but also from Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Hawaii.

During our icebreaker, we did a virtual tour of each BEST's home. We connected those places on the map from east to west, which reminded us of God's love as described in Psalm 103, "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

God is faithful. The BESTs were led to the Happiness Group by the Holy Spirit. One parable in the book of Luke described God's salvation as a great banquet. God extended His invitation to the whole world and yet some turned it down with various excuses. Now, the banquet is still going on and those who turn it down lose their opportunity for salvation.

One late afternoon, I invited a BEST to take a walk in my neighborhood. As we exchanged our thoughts, we both concluded that our life choices were much like the choices we were faced with when approaching an intersection. Sometimes we would look to the left and then right, yet still not know which way was the right way. We do not know which path is truly right until we know Jesus.

Praise the Lord for the opportunity and honor to serve in the online Happiness Chat Room! ◆



Afterthoughts for Three Happiness Group Ministries

By Jun Cui, Central Campus



On the night of November 14, our Happiness Group (HG) “Witness the Glory” was holding our last class. The meeting was full of joy. When I was clicking on the “End” button on Zoom, I was reminded of how different it was this time compared to the previous two HG ministries. The most significant difference was “Peace and Enjoyment” this third time whereas it was “Disappointment and Weariness” for the first time and “Excitement and Weariness” the second.



Why such a difference? After a couple of days of contemplation, I had an idea. The first session was not so smooth. A lack of experience and coworkers was one of the reasons. Most importantly, as a leader, I felt I had worked very hard. However, it was all about me and I didn't let go to let God. I was not relying on the faith on God, so “Disappointment and Weariness” was inevitable.

The second time was more fun. As the leader, my main task was coordination among different groups and finding ways to work together. We prayed together, divided the work according to people's talents, encouraged one another, and made up for one another, so the group was more efficient. We enjoyed the pro-



cess and the results as well. Thanks to God, although physically tired after eight weeks, it let me taste the victory of reliance on God.

The third time, to be honest, was not easy to start with. This was not only because of a lack of coworkers, but also the pandemic, meaning we could only chat on Zoom. Without the meetings in person, we lost the opportunities of having meals and face-to-face communication. Connections were harder to build so the quality of testimony needed to be higher and it became a “battle.” With the experience of the first two sessions, I completely let go and let God take control. I no longer worried about success; instead of relying on myself, I depended on the entire group. When we had different views and opinions, we didn’t fight but lifted it all in God’s hands. God is faithful. When you put everything in God’s hands, God will send unexpected help to you. We claim victory upon God’s might. Therefore, “Peace and Joy.”



“As to fight, it is about courage. The very first drumming cheers the fighters up; the second weakens them; and the third absolutely devitalizes them.” This is our ancestors’ wisdom when it comes to battles. It is quite reasonable given that it’s based on human nature. But in God’s realm, we only need to rely on God. With God’s power, the more we serve the more strength we have, the easier it gets, and the sweeter the work becomes.

Thanks to God for letting me participate in these three phases of Happiness Group service, through which I learned to let God take control.

P.S. A week after the eight-week session, on the day of submitting this testimony, we have one BEST who told us that she decided to make her conviction! Another one of God’s miraculous and wonderful works! ◆



Karen Cheng, Main Campus



Praise the Lord! I was invited to the first Happiness Group Ministry in the beginning of 2019. I accepted Jesus as my personal savior and was baptized during the following Easter weekend. I

also became a coworker for the second and third Happiness Group Ministries. I was transformed from my old self — from a sheep who went astray, from someone who had a tough outer appearance yet was full of negative thoughts and doubts, to a brand new person who discovered the source of life and beauty, the light of truth and the hope of eternity. How wonderful it is to be able to serve in the Happiness Group alongside brothers and sisters and bear witness to the saving grace of our Lord Jesus so that more people can benefit from the Gospel! What a holy and critical mission! Just as Acts 3:16 says, **"By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see."**

Praise the Lord! I have witnessed firsthand in the Happiness Group the power of God to call on and find His sheep. One BEST was awestruck by God's amazing creations, another was comforted by God's soothing and healing words, and the third came to realize the fleeting nature of earthly life and God's eternity. I also learned to pray and proclaim with brothers and sisters that God would remove the bondage from His seekers and that His will be done. God would lead us to victory in this spiritual war!

I was constantly reminded of the verse which says, "Put on the armor of Christ and walk with God." These words inspired me to continue in the Happiness Group. As we live in Christ, He will protect us from all temptations and evils. We should glorify Jesus with what we do and what we say so that others can see Him in us. When we are obedient and really seek Him, God will come seek us too so that we "will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2) All glory be to God! ♦

Walking With God

“Tactics” for Happiness Group

By Bill Lei, our Missionary in Yuma



Because of the pandemic, in-person evangelism had to temporarily stop, yet our passion for Christ and our determination to spread the gospel despite the circumstances would never be stopped. Thanks to the Lord, through the internet I was able to return to the CBCSD church family and

also attend the Discipleship III training program—lifetime service. The 11 weeks of learning was thought-provoking and rewarding. I thought long and hard about the BEST ways to apply what I learned to help brothers and sisters in our restaurant workers’ ministries.

I remembered the tactical terminologies I learned as a boy while listening to my father’s conversations on war. One of the terms is called “one point, two sides and threesome system.” “One point” refers to the need to focus on the main target. “Two sides” means to attack from at least two sides or even three or four if the resources are sufficient. A “threesome system” is dividing the soldiers into groups of three with veteran soldiers leading the rookies by example in battle.

THE LORD WILL
FIGHT FOR YOU,
YOU NEED ONLY
TO BE STILL.

EXODUS 14:14



I experimented on applying such tactics to the Happiness Group ministry, with “one point” being the most important goal of evangelism, and “two sides” being the daily prayers for the BESTs and weekly check-ins and follow-ups with them. The weekly follow-up

was a great way to learn about the questions or challenges the BESTs were facing, which in turn could be incorporated into daily prayers. This tactic was very effective in the removal of spiritual roadblocks and paving the way for the gospel

message in the subsequent meeting. In addition, other members of the hosting fellowship could also form groups of three with each group adopting a specific BEST to reinforce and strengthening the support of the ministry all together. The same tactic could be applied in the training of Happiness Group leaders.



I had the opportunity to serve in one of the Happiness Groups this time. We used an extension of the tactic mentioned above which could be described as “the first person fights, the second person observes and the third goes round and round.” Specifically, when one of the coworkers conducted the program (e.g. ice breakers, personal story sharing or gospel message delivery), another coworker would observe the reaction or reception from each BEST and pray for them in silence. The other coworkers would go in circles praying earnestly for each BEST. A rehearsal before the actual meeting was very helpful, as all the coworkers got to practice their parts and in turn felt more confident about themselves when the time came. Debriefing after the meeting would also be very meaningful as we could all encourage each other and help each other grow by acknowledging what went well and identifying areas for improvement.

The tactics above are my suggestions for Happiness Group. I pray that God will bless the ministry abundantly! I also hope that such tactics can be applied soon to help seekers from the service sector! ◆

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