

July 26 - August 2, 2015 in **Baguio, Philippines**

I realize it is a very well-worn cliché but I truly had a mountain top experience last week. I was honored to be invited back for my fourth time to the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio, Philippines. The seminary sponsors and brings a group of church leaders from mainland China to participate in a two-month long session of training and education. I had the pleasure of being with them for one week. A hearty thanks to the two individuals who sponsored our trip, the two lovely women who spent hours on translating the handouts, and the many individuals who collected and donated toiletry items.



Steve was able to join me this year, as well as Shan Na Ng, a sister-friend from here in Kuala Lumpur. It was her first trip to the Philippines although she went with us on last year's trip to Cambodia. We flew from Kuala Lumpur on Sunday, July 26 to Clark International Airport. We drove from there to Baguio which is at a mile high elevation. In previous years the scenic drive took over seven hours but now with the completion of a new less-than-scenic highway it is less than four hours. The seminary clings to the side of a mountain with beautiful vistas. Although still tropical, the temperatures are much cooler than here in Kuala Lumpur, so it was a delightful time to enjoy mountain air. If it were not for the different foliage I could have imagined being in the Smokey Mountains.



Shan Na's role in this journey was to translate my presentations into Mandarin. She also took over one session on her own, teaching in English and having someone else then do the interpretation. Steve truly enjoyed running up and down the hills and was there to push me up them when needed.

The group, mostly from China this year, consisted of twenty-seven individuals. As you can see in the group photo, there were only four men. This has been an interesting shift from the first years when it was men in the majority. I never know for sure until after the first interactions exactly what will be the most appropriate and useful areas of knowledge to share. I always want to challenge the students but also am sensitive to the depth of understanding among them.



We took them through personality and conflict handling models, assessments, and application examples, looked at introductory issues of conflict resolution, and helped them start their own self exploration of their profiles as leaders. It remains true in my experience, wherever I go, that despite cultural and ethnic differences all of us share more similarities than differences in values and aspirations.

Aug 8: Today, I am packing again. On Tuesday I will be flying to Bangalore, India. I am looking forward to reconnecting with friends and planning for future collaboration. I will return to Malaysia on Saturday, Aug 15. I hope to then have several days to catch up with projects here before heading on September 6 to Hong Kong for five weeks. I will spend my time there with the amazing staff and friends at Watermark Church. This relationship has been a continuing one dealing with a variety of areas. My concentration this time will be to focus on specific needs of their fast-growing children's ministry.

Thank you for being a part of my work here in Asia through your thoughts, prayers, gifts, and caring. I hold each of you close to my heart. There is no greater comfort than that of true friends.

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