



Welcoming new international students to Sydney.

Planting Seeds, Seeing Growth

At our Winter Conference in July, I met Xin, an international student at the University of Sydney, who looked very familiar. However, I couldn't figure out how or even if we had met before. He shared with me that he trusted Christ a few weeks before the conference and that his life has radically changed. Fast forward to August, and the start of the second semester where Xin volunteered at the welcome booth alongside other Christian students at the University of Sydney. From the thousands of newly arrived international students, nearly 500 signed up at our booth wanting more information about getting connected to our community! Throughout August we have been working hard to followup with each student, especially those who checked they are interested in learning about Jesus.

When interacting with so many students at once, it can be very challenging to remember who I meet. Every week I pull out my phone and go through my list of contacts. To remember each student, I try to write notes describing when I first meet them and anything that will help jog my memory. As I was looking through my contacts a couple of weeks ago, I was surprised to notice that I had Xin's number with a little note saying that I had met him randomly on campus last semester and had shared the gospel with him. Immediately, I reached out to Xin and asked

if he remembered meeting someone (me) randomly on campus who shared the gospel with him. He said that shortly after he heard the gospel from me this past May, he started going to a Bible study with another group on campus where he placed his trust in Christ! That's why he looked so familiar when I met him at Winter Conference! Xin is now sharing his story with his friends and he even sometimes goes out on campus to share about how Jesus has changed his life.

The same week I re-connected with Xin, another Chinese student named Johnny who was involved in one of my Bible studies last semester, approached me during a social event and shared that he had started going to church over the break. In his words: *"I now believe in God. He gives me peace about my future. After our talks last semester, I made a decision to trust Him in my heart."* As a law student, Johnny had been drawn to the biblical



Johnny and I during ferry ride across the incredible Sydney Harbor.

teachings on justice even though he had considered himself an atheist. As we talked about Jesus last semester, I could see an interest in him that grew over time. When I asked about his spiritual journey, I learned that when he was young someone gave him a children's Bible which sparked curiosity early on. It's incredible how a gospel seed can take root and grow over time, all along knowing the Lord is providing the growth. It's such an honor to be able to spread the gospel among the nations here in Sydney.

Seed Snatcher

While seeing fruit has been encouraging, the work of discipleship that prepares international students to walk with Jesus for a life time is of great concern, especially as they return home to what is often a hostile environment for their faith. In our last newsletter, we reported about a Middle Eastern student named Mohammad who trusted Christ. Because he knew it might be difficult to publicly follow Jesus back home, he wanted to get baptized before he left Australia. Providentially, our church has a staff member from his country so we organized a small private gathering at a nearby beach. To experience this memorable moment in Mohammad's heart language, we were able to officiate it in Arabic as well as English. Mohammad shared his story and all of us were amazed at God's work. It was a great honor to help officiate along with the pastor from his country. When Mohammad came out of the cold pacific waters, with tears and hugs, we all expressed how grateful we were for Jesus' sacrifice. It was a holy moment, and maybe one of my highlights of ministry that I will always remember.

Before he left Australia, we met as frequently as possible to look at God's Word together to prepare him for what he might face when he returns. We were able to connect him to a believer back home who is connected to a local church so he can continue growing. But, after he returned and as weeks went by I heard very little from Mohammad. When he did return my texts, he shared that his parents who are strict

Muslims, might have found out about his trust in Jesus after finding some Christian books he had taken back with him. He seemed nervous and afraid. I would try to reach out to give my support, but Mohammad finally wrote in a text that he needed to cut off communication and that he had a change of heart. While we trust that God's work in Mohammad's life will continue and that He is sovereign, it's heartbreaking. Please pray for Mohammad, and that God will miraculously provide for him.



Celebrating Mohammad's baptism!

As we experience different seasons in ministry and in our lives, we are grateful that you are there with us through prayer and partnership. All of this is only possible by the grace of God and through people like you who desire to see the light of Christ spread to all people. Thank you!

Blake & Emily Ackerson

Praise & Prayer Requests

- Praise God for Xin's love for Jesus. Pray for him as he grows in the Lord that God would develop in him a strong love for His Word, the Church, and to express Jesus to others.
- Praise God for Johnny's new faith. Pray for him as he continues his journey and pray for protection. Pray for my team member (who knows Mandarin) to be able to meet with Johnny and walk through the foundations of our faith.
- Praise God for Mohammad who took such an incredible step to make his faith public. We trust that his journey isn't over. Pray for protection from the enemy, and that God would draw him back and give him strength to follow Jesus. Pray that the Lord would provide other believers to walk with him.