

OUR OBSERVATIONS IN URBANA

I AM HERE

EKATA MA

The biggest thing I've learned by attending Urbana in Phoenix is relearning submission. Before leaving, I always believed that God's calling is clear and dramatic, and to the point that He will directly point to me the mission direction. However, through different sessions during the conference, I slowly realized that there is no formula to God's calling, but the one thing that remains constant is in the core, the submission of man to God.

In a particular seminar, the speaker compared calling to a soccer team; every one is placed at a different position. While roles may be different, the goal is the same, which is to spread the gospel to the world. It made me realize that God is the coach who fully knows our potential, and requires us to submit continuously and to allow him to mold us anew. This allows us to faithfully serve in wherever He puts us.

In addition, by studying the calling experience of Paul and David, I realized that God's calling also comes with waiting and uncertainty and direction is only revealed when we submit. Therefore, while I may not fully know how God plan to use me, I believe that when I offer my limited "5 loaves and 2 fish" to Him, He will multiply and use them.

All in all, God values our submissive heart. Instead of yearning to know what God wants us to do, what's more important is to let go of our own desires, align ourselves with God and simply say to Him, "I am here."



LEARNING TO BE COMMISSIONED IN SILENCE

ENGEL WONG

Attending Urbana allowed me to reflect on my faith journey and direction. The different messages in the conference reminded me that God is proactively searching for the lost. I was especially touched when I heard the story of Jonah. Jonah's choice to flee from his calling is a reflection of the fear and struggle when we are face with uncertainty and difficulty. However, the story told us that God did not give up on Jonah, but actively sought him out and brought him back on his mission. This determination of God got me thinking; God's calling to man is not a one-time thing, but a continuous relationship.

Another deep impact I experienced was learning the difference between loneliness and solitude. Our world today technology and social media allowed us to have constant connections to the world, but deep inside, we are met with loneliness and anxiety. Messages we receive tend to point out the loneliness and make us feel abandoned. However, solitude can be a space where we can experience God. This allowed me to understand the importance of rest and quietness. We live in a quick-paced world and we seldom make time for us to be quiet, but it is often in this quietness that we can build our relationship with God.

I was touched by one particular scripture. Jesus invited his disciples to quietly go to the wilderness to rest. This happened when the disciples finished serving, a period between facing pressures and needs. This reminded me that whether after success or failure, we need to return to God for Him to renew our strength. Spiritual life cannot be sustained by passion and ability, but through continuous renewal from God.

From this experience, I learned that mission is not about accomplishing goals, but is a respond to God's invitation. God promised us that He will walk with us in His mission and will be there for us during our times of need. This promise allowed me to rethink my future direction and reminded me the importance of slowing down in my busy life. This is to allow space for God. May my reflection also be an encouragement for others. May we all be attentive to God's lead in our lives and experience His presence in our quiet times.