

**YMSP 2023 Testimony**  
**By Joy Lau**

Hi, I'm Joy. What comes to your mind when you think about missionaries? Perhaps it's people leaving to share the good news of Jesus during a mission trip? Perhaps a tough journey of persecution because of one's faith? Perhaps you think it's just like any fun Christian retreat? Well, let me share with you my first missionary experience. At first, I was hesitant to go; the thought of 120-degree summer heat in Arizona alarmed me. I didn't want to look like burned toast by the end of my trip. God knows how scared I am of skin cancer. The thought of hard, vigorous labor in a heatwave scared me, and my inexperience of mission trips only added to that. The stories of water poisoning, shower lines beyond midnight, the toilets... the story goes on. As a Christian, my response should've been to pray first and ask God for guidance. Whereas, it was my mother who really changed my heart and views about the mission trip. I finally prayed and left my worries to God. I was willing to take on the challenges, though I was fearful of the uncertainties ahead of me. I decided I wanted to get out of my comfort zone and serve the Lord. As I learned to rely on God to overcome my challenges, I grew both in faith and endurance. We are privileged to be used by God to serve others.

The day finally came for us to leave for the mission trip. After we arrived at the first church after hours of fearless teacher Simon's driving, I was overwhelmed with seeing the crowd of adults and kids who were committed to YSMP from all over. Touched by worship, my distress was driven away into faith, and I became confident in making an impact on the American Indians at White River Baptist Church. Later, we were joined by another church, CBCWLA, to form a big missionary family. We all ate together, prayed together, worshiped together, and had one another's back. It was such an intimate relationship, and I watched as we all grew closer to God. This reminded me of the days that Jesus lived with his disciples. As the pastor's wife shared, my heart was moved by immense compassion. I just loved her spirit. I could truly feel the Holy Spirit moving in her. Devotion began early in the morning until the last devotion at night, when the scorpions came out to bite. I learned that scorpions can make everyone really antsy with fear. Thankfully, our leaders quickly bought scorpion traps, bug repellent, and everything else possible to protect us from any and all nasty creatures. In fact, I was more surprised by everyone's courage and dedication, which made YSMP feel truly like a dream team. We sang several worship songs a day, and I could feel God moving in all of us as we gave our hearts and worries to him. I remember crying as we gathered in a circle during one of our prayers because I was so touched by every prayer and the heartbreaking stories of these tribes.

I was blessed to work with Brother DC on planning VBS for the preschoolers. He came from the other church. He was full of energy and his heart was filled with Jesus. Nothing else had moved me as deeply as what I felt at VBS. The Apaches' love and kindness spread throughout my heart. I could cry joyful tears knowing how caring and close each and every one of them were despite the constant and common struggles of abandonment, alcohol abuse, poverty conditions, drug abuse, etc. The kids were so

## Arcadia Chinese Baptist Church

cute and filled with smiles. They looked like any other kids back home. They wore clothes like us; some even wore popular name brands. They spoke like any other kids; some were more quiet, some were more talkative and more outgoing, some loved hugging us, and some loved to show off. Deep down, I could tell what distinguished us from them. I could feel the heavy burdens they carried, the pain they held, the grudges buried in their hearts, the misfortunes of their lives, and even the question of their existence. It pains me to know all I could do would not possibly be enough, but only God could. It makes me realize how privileged we truly are, not only with our living conditions but also with the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

Two kids that stood out to me were Andrea and Aubrey. Aubrey was a lost believer in Christ. She often found herself drifting away, calling herself Christian on some days but not believing on other days. She was a good kid but was often led astray by family members or friends. I asked her if I could pray for her, and through God's grace, she recommitted herself to the Lord. I pray to God that he will open her spiritual eyes to know that you are the only answer to her fear and stress.

Andrea was another kid. She was such an amiable kid. I met her through arts and crafts in the morning. I knelt down, approaching her gently not knowing if she would respond back. I asked her what she was painting, and to my surprise, she quickly opened up to me. She always asked me what my favorite color was, my favorite food, and what I liked to do. She would then make gifts to my liking, such as paper flowers, drawings, paintings, and paper creations that reminded me of myself when I was younger. The memories of art projects from my days come flooding in remembrance, especially handing my mom my art projects triumphantly as she acted amazed. She was such a generous giver. Later on, Andrea let me practice my artistic skills through face painting on her. She patiently sat still as I painted a tiger on her. I told her about Jesus's love and prayed for her to build a deeper relationship with God. Today, I wear Andrea's handmade bracelet, made with love and intricate with my favorite colors, to remember her by. I pray that God will strengthen her faith and deepen her walk with the Lord.

Reflecting back to my first question, I would describe missionaries as devoted Christians touched by God's grace to share the good news.