

Surrounding and during this trip to Taiwan, I've danced but also traveled, seen, heard, and tasted a lot. We spent our 9 days on six "official" appointments in four cities and a village: Taipei, Gao Xiong, Tai Nan, Hua Lien, and Guan Fu. On this trip, I've traveled by plane, bus, taxi, train, NRT (subway), legs, bike, and moped, so almost everything except a ship- but we got near a ship at the Harbor the night we ate at the former British Consulate at Takao. We saw the harbor after sunset but what we saw of the city lights and the ocean were still gorgeous. We saw monumental structures like the Taipei 101, the world's tallest at some time. We also saw other structures from the Presidential Palace to the oldest University's buildings to the Sun Yat-Sen Memorial to a Dutch Armament and more. We saw things from Buddha's dating back to the B.C. eras to a full rainbow to bridal photography businesses to thousands of Santa's marching down the street to palm trees and fish hotels. We've even crawled through series of 18 by 24 inch dungeon holes and gotten Christine newly acquainted with the squat-style bathroom.

We heard all kinds of sounds among the busy people there. There was cheering at the crack of dawn from the school children across the street, bustling of night market shoppers, haggling of street vendors, clanging of the cook's metal shovels preparing our fried dinners on the metal counter where we were sitting and sizzling of smoke. We've heard numerous "Ha-low! How aw yoo?!" and laughs as our group with Caucasians passed by.

Our buds were treated to the fancy, delicate and occasionally weird tastes of the island. We ate breakfast sandwiches with sweet mayonnaise, tasted delicately ornate crème coffee cakes sweetened and whipped to perfection, green tea, strawberry, red bean and other flavors of gummy snacks filled with sweet bean paste. Those were all wonderful and then there would be a rectangle of something called pigs' blood to make things really interesting. These things were such fun or funny and wonderful things we were surrounded by but these were only the surface to what I experienced and learned.

I saw women light up as they related how much of their life's story they saw told in our dance. I saw women, including an 86-year old grandmother delighting in their each step down the runway as they were given a stage to express their beauty. I heard worshipful voices on Saturday mornings in a house church; I've heard testimony of forgiveness and healing from a woman who was cursed and imprisoned; I've heard proclamations of desire for change: more self confidence, more courage, more ability to express.

First, if you haven't already gathered from above, I had a fantastic time experiencing, learning, and growing in Taiwan! There have been so many a few things that have been outstanding in my mind during and surrounding this trip.

First, I've been around inspirational women. From these women, I've seen firsthand live examples of the Proverbs 31 woman. I saw giving hearts, minds and actions. One evening, before catching the bus, six of us ate dinner at a small restaurant in Tainan. We heard the story of the owner, a friend of Jingle's who is a single mother, and we prayed for her. She was working hard at her small business 8 in the morning until 2 at night day after day to put her two kids through school and they were living with her parents to conserve resources. When we were leaving, she refused to give the six of us a bill or accept our money. We knew and she knew that she could've used that money but still she would not accept what we owed her. Before any of us could recover from the

lady-owner's act of blessing toward us, Joy took off a recent gift she received, a new cameo necklace and put it on the other lady. She made the gesture so naturally and immediately that it touched me deeply. I've learned a great lesson on the meaning of giving, the beauty of giving, and the beauty of a giver: to give what's given to you and what you have to give. I saw similar things happen again and again. When Jingle wanted to do something to help a widow, the widow would not accept monetary aid so Jingle found another way, by helping her clothing business and buying all sorts of clothes from her. By buying, Jingle was giving and she kept giving when on Christmas morning, she asked Elizabeth, Christine, and I to choose what we liked out of what she had bought. We also found ourselves on the receiving end of things when Esther, a lady we had met and prayed with during our first meeting, gave the three of us each a piece of jewelry she was wearing at Jingle's house our last Saturday when she saw us again. She gave us a ring, a pin and a watch explaining that they were not worth much money but were special to her and wanted to bless us. I've seen some truly beautiful "Christmas gifts" this year- the way God intended gifts and blessings to be- that they're passed from giving to getting and giving it again. Even though we went to Taiwan to "give" a message of beauty, expression, and finding oneself, I feel I have gained more. I have been blessed to witness that in these gifts of things, of time to listen, of relationships, there is beauty and behind it are ordinary women doing the extraordinary.

One of these extraordinary women is Jingle, leader of the Taiwanese branch of "You Are Beautiful," Mary Kay director, topping in sales for Taiwan in 2005, hostess and guide to us, mother of a 15 year old, and wife of Uncle Bell. She demonstrates beauty the way it was meant for- to be revealed. We met her in the same mindset that we arrived at many other places and people on this trip- unknowing. I had no idea who she was when I answered her call while still at the airport. I had no idea who she was, what she did, or how we were connected to her when we sat down to have our first meal together at midnight that night. I only knew that sitting down with her, there was an ease about making this new acquaintance. Slowly, day after day, place after place, and person after person that we encountered under her leadership, I saw how successful she is at beauty and at life. At her relationship with God, I knew she was successful because of the women's lives touched around her, including an assistant, who told us stories of how Jingle lives what she preaches Saturday mornings at House church. I see the fruit of her closeness with God from the roomful of believers who are forming new or deeper relationships with their creator under her discipleship. At her family, I knew she is successful when I went downstairs at midnight to find her daughter just hanging out with her. I knew when I saw her and her husband so likeminded and coordinated that they got up from different locations and hugged each other and at the same instant kicked one leg back as a joking response in front of a crowd. At her work, I knew she was successful because I saw her in gown and crown on the wall at Mary Kay Headquarters in Taipei. At her other relationships, I knew she's successful because she had a network she could draw on everywhere we went. She formed friendships on streets with seemingly random restaurant owners but met their needs by following up and if she couldn't, she would network and get someone she knew in the area who could. That is how you really help people. She sets an awesome example of being a woman. She lives out the natural beauty women can have when they know themselves fully and live to the fullest. And to think of the power as she's training more women to reach out.

I have also enjoyed the company of good friends and sisters in Christ. We've laughed until our stomachs hurt, shopped and then dropped, cried, danced, prayed, shared and shared a sweet part of life and shared standing beside those who are battling in theirs. It's been so fun and so uplifting to be a part of a team of three, then four then seven and fourteen, going places with a mission, a message of beauty and encouragement. I've been encouraged and I've seen that every woman has a story and a beauty to share and I am blessed to have been near so many.

Another great blessing is that my faith has grown in seeing that my God provides abundantly. At the beginning of this project, \$1500 seemed like a high and scary figure but we put in our shares and our prayers and it's been really cool to expect of God and see Him come through! I am deeply touched by the responses and encouraging words I received from friends and family whom we shared our vision with. Thank you again for all your prayers and financial support!