

**This Sunday July 29th** soup and rolls after church

**Sunday August 5th, COMBINED CHURCHES OF THE BELLARINE** worship service. 5PM St Peters Ocean Grove, 35/37 Draper St, Ocean Grove

Toto we're not in Kansas now! Or perhaps I would say "*I am not in Vietnam now...*" after 3 weeks of 24-38 degrees with humidity up to 90%, the weather from last few weeks has been a big reminder that Vietnam is far behind me.



One of the great gifts about spending time in Vietnam (or perhaps any other culture) is that it has the ability to “rub the sleep from your eyes” when it comes to your own culture.

Last Wednesday I spent some time writing and journaling about things that stood out to me from the recent trip Josh and I had. I'd like to share some of these with you, because I think God used Vietnam to grab my attention for what He may like us to see back here.

I didn't want to go to Vietnam. I don't like being away from Jules, the boys and my church family. I was also very aware that this trip I was doing lots of things that were out of my comfort zone, however despite my discomfort I “knew” I was to go. Leading up to going God had shown many times over the previous 12 months that this was right.

Despite this “confirmation”, on the first morning in Vietnam I still didn't “feel” like being there and to be honest I was having a bit of a pity party. To add to my “whinge” I had a list of “complaints”; I'd made a rookie error and was ripped off with the transfer from the airport, our hotel room was noisy and filthy, then there was the heat and just how strange everything was. So, my attitude was not good. I knew it, I also knew what I was saying and thinking was destructive and I wanted things to change and hear from God.

The solution wasn't to be “stoic” and just suck it up and deny they challenge (that's what people are often told to do), neither was it to be a martyr about how “*hard it is to follow Jesus, but at least I am obedient.*” As Christians, we are called to not to deny those things that stretch us or to wear difficulty as a badge of honour, either of these responses tantalisingly invite us to be defined by our difficulty or our ability to resist them. Rather were called to respond as Jesus does when we face difficulty- why because we are in union with him, his heart is out heart and his life is ours to live.

On that first day in Vietnam I knew that concern or worry about what lay ahead wasn't something I was made to carry. So, I did a couple of things. I sat and meditated on 2 Timothy 1:7. “*For God has not given us a spirit of fear but of love and power and a sound mind.*” Then I prayed, thanking God that what I was concerned about was not mine to carry. I then sat for a bit thanking God. The bible says a lot about thankfulness. I think its because thankfulness leads us to live out of the belief in God's sovereign goodness. After that I just asked the Father, “*What should I read?*” I began to read 2 Corinthians, until my heart was grabbed by these words.

*Brothers and sisters, you need to know about the severe trials we experienced while we were in western Turkey. All of the hardships we passed through crushed us beyond our ability to endure...It felt like we had a death sentence written upon our hearts, and we still feel it to this day. It has taught us to lose all faith in ourselves and to place all of our trust in the God who raises the dead.* 2 Corinthians 1:8-9

Of course, I didn't feel like “*death was on my heart*”, but I did sense the Father say that the “reason” he had me here on my own (I'd asked many other people to come and they hadn't been able to) was so that I had to “*place all my trust in God who raises the dead.*” After this I spent time “swapping” what my heart isn't made for and what God says this new heart of mine is to carry.

**So, lesson 1 from Vietnam.** Before you ask for God's breakthrough or change in circumstances, ask the Father to show you *His perspective* on the circumstances. Because walking in the belief that the "God who raises the dead" had put the plan together certainly changed how I walked the rest of the trip.

Ask yourself;

Q. What do I need to lay down that's not for me?

Q. What circumstances do I need to praise *you in* (not for)?

Q. What is my heart made for?

Q. Where do you need to ask god for his perspective first?