



SERVING WITH PERSPECTIVE

THE LUO* FAMILY HOPES IN THE LORD WHILE SERVING IN THE ASIAN PACIFIC RIM.

By Sarah Free



IMB PHOTO

In the nearly 15 years that Christopher and Elizabeth Luo and their family have been serving in their area of the Asian Pacific Rim, they have encountered a lot of struggles and challenges related to their work. But they've also experienced times of joy and awe in seeing God work in the lives of the people there. Through it all, they hold tight to the promises in the Word, saying, "The world may be going upside down, but when we put our hope and trust in God and wait on Him, He always does something so beautiful that shows His faithfulness in our lives." For the Luos, it's all about perspective. At times, they relate to Jonah and how he must have felt during the three days he spent in the belly of the great fish. But then they remember the reason Jonah was there in the first place. God loved the people of Nineveh so much that He would send such a creature to get Jonah's attention to help him "see the needs of the people who desperately needed God's grace."

CALLED TO SERVE

Growing up in Hawaii in an Asian American family, Christopher had the opportunity to interact with many tourists, especially with those from Asian Pacific Rim nations. While in college, he served international students and went on many short-term trips to serve workers in the field in other countries. When Elizabeth's parents committed to living and serving abroad, the Luos were especially impacted and decided to take the step to go out in the field themselves. Their area of calling: the Asian Pacific Rim.

When they first arrived in their new home, Christopher, Elizabeth, and their two daughters focused on learning the language, researching the history and culture of their home city, and sharing the good news with anyone they could. They did this by building relationships with those around them. As Christopher

says, relationships are key “in terms of learning how God would want us to reach our city with the good news and in training disciples to be leaders” at home and abroad.

During their years in the Asian Pacific Rim, the Luos’ role has changed many times. They went from serving on an individual level to overseeing strategy coordinators in their area and supervising teams to engage unreached areas in the region, giving the good news to thousands. Later, they oversaw engagement over three different regions and helped create a network that sent over 100 workers to unreached people groups in their country and surrounding countries. Now, they specialize in helping teams in urban areas in their country strategize and equip local workers to go to unreached people groups across the nation.

Christopher and Elizabeth’s daughters, Elea* and Adalyn*, have also gotten involved in their work, translating for volunteers who come to visit, and going on college campuses with them to share the good news. Their youngest, Adalyn, also loves to make crafts and give pieces to visiting volunteers to remind them to pray for their city even after they return to their homes.

FAITH IN TIMES OF CHANGE

In every role they have held, the Luos have seen the faithfulness of God, even when dealing with the stress of so much change. They have had to say goodbye to team members who were like family and hello to new ones. Visitors come and go on a regular basis. Their various shifts in roles have brought new changes again and again. They have also faced persecution and were forced to move to a neighboring country for a time for safety reasons.

All these transitions have been especially difficult on Elea and Adalyn, who have had to say hello and goodbye innumerable times from a young age. To bring some balance and manage the stress that change and moving has put on their family, the Luos have made a point to visit partners in whom they’ve invested, taking family trips to other cities in their country and around the world. Christopher says, “Our hope is that even though we are apart, God’s kingdom work will always allow us to reconnect in one way or another.”

GREAT NEED IN THE MIDST OF BEAUTY

The Luos are based in an area full of diverse cuisine options, natural beauty, and tight-knit communities of kind and hospitable people. From beaches to waterfalls, river walkways, hiking, and biking, the outdoors provide space for rest, relaxation, and enjoyment of creation. In all the tranquility this environment can provide, the Luos cannot forget there is also great need.

Multiple religions and belief systems abound, creating a vital need for the truth of the good news. Giving others

what they most desperately need is made harder by the government, which is opposed to the work the Luos and their partners are doing. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic and related shutdowns have created additional challenges in the Luos’ work due to social distancing and other health measures enforced in their country. As Christopher says, “ministry can only move at the speed of trust,” and persecution, COVID-19, and other hardships have made it even more difficult to create that trust.

In the midst of all this, the Luos are constantly reminded of God’s goodness in their lives.

LIVES IMPACTED

Throughout their years of service, the Luos have seen thousands of lives changed by the good news. Although persecution is always a threat and building trust can be hard, they have had the privilege of seeing the transformative work of God in the people around them. Some of their national partners have started schools where children can hear the good news. Community book clubs have sprung up in some of the large residential complexes in their city where people can come to read books on parenting, family life, and more. Some use these spaces to teach English, cooking, and parenting classes as well. Instructors use these classes as opportunities to share God’s love with everyone who attends.

So many stories demonstrate the incredible way God is moving in the Luos’ area. Two, in particular, have given them great hope and encouragement.

One is of a woman from an abusive background who heard the good news and was transformed. She recognized her true worth in the Lord and gave up her law practice to live a life of service full time. Another is of a former official whose wife was a believer. Despite this, he held a lot of antipathy toward other believers. But by spending time with the Luos, their team members, and their circle of friends, he was introduced to his need for the Lord. One day, he entered one of their gatherings, face transformed by joy, and shouted, “today, I believe!” The room erupted with cheers and his wife began to cry. A week later, he was baptized.

These two people have become influential partners in the Luos’ work, serving, supporting, and advising in ways that have helped spread the good news to others in their area.

SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT

The Luos could not do everything they do without support from fellow believers, both through prayer and giving. They are so thankful for the time, sacrifice, and funds others around the world have given to help their work continue. Through Send Relief, they have been able to take part in community transformation training programs,

helping them to run medical clinics and education programs in businesses and villages that have enabled the spread of the good news. The Luos have also been blessed by the Cooperative Program, saying, “The Cooperative Program is the single greatest way of mobilizing gifts offered to the Lord for the harvest.”

PRAYER AND PRAISE

PRAYER

- Pray for believers in the Luos’ Asian Pacific Rim nation. Persecution has made the need for mentors who can walk alongside, encourage, and provide friendship to new believers even more necessary.
- Pray for workers in the Luos’ network who have had to return to their home countries because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and are unsure when they will be able to return.
- Pray for wisdom and discernment in knowing how to grow the kingdom in light of pressure from local governments that make life difficult for believers.
- Pray for Elea, who recently began her college studies. Pray she would find a strong group of friends on campus who would encourage her in her walk with Christ.
- Pray for Adalyn, who recently entered high school. Pray

for her family bonds with her parents and sister, who is away at college, to remain strong and for her to receive encouragement from their strong relationships.

- Pray for believers around the world and in the Luos’ country to be salt and light in a time of great upheaval.

PRAISE

- A local fellowship was under the teaching of false teachers who were leading them astray. After two months of praying for God to intervene, He used some circumstances to help the group wake up to what was happening. They even apologized for how they treated the Luos and their team in the process.
- Christopher’s father was scheduled for surgery to remove a cyst in a sensitive location. Christopher left the field to care for his father prior to his surgery. After several days of praying and singing hymns and praise songs over him, the cyst had disappeared and his father no longer needed surgery.
- Christopher had lost his new phone and was due to fly out the next day. The Luos’ national partners spent the whole day and night combing the city for the phone and finally found it. Christopher was incredibly moved to see the great effort his team would undertake just to help him.

**Names changed.*

SARAH FREE lives in South Florida with her husband and son.



Asian Pacific Rim: Serving with Perspective

By Judith K. Moore



FOR GROUP OR CHURCHWIDE STUDY:

Before the session: Read this month's article, "Serving with Perspective," as well as the Book of Jonah. Locate a whiteboard for use. If one is not available, hang a large piece of paper on a wall instead.

1. Give a brief overview of "Serving with Perspective," focusing on the way the story of Jonah has encouraged the Luo family.
2. Ask one volunteer to give a short summary of the story of Jonah, and another to read Jonah 2.
3. Say: *Often, our perspective is different from God's. We want our way just as Jonah did, because we cannot see the greater plan God has for us.*
4. On the board, write some of the difficulties the Luo family shared in the mission study article. Afterward, ask group members (if they are willing) to write personal challenges they've faced on the board.
5. Share some ways the Luos have seen God working in their lives and in the lives of those around them. Ask group members to share how they've seen God work in the midst of their trials.
6. Say: *In Jonah 2:9, Jonah comes around to God's perspective and desires to please God with sacrifice and thanksgiving.*
7. Ask the group to discuss how shifting our focus off ourselves and onto God changes how we handle hardship. Pray together for the Luo family and for one another to be able to see God's perspective in hard times.



FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDY:

1. Read "Serving with Perspective," and the Book of Jonah, focusing on chapter 2.
2. Create a Jonah journal page by dividing a piece of paper into four sections.
3. In the upper left corner, write Jonah's feelings toward the Ninevites. In the upper right corner, write God's perspective.
4. In the article, reread the sections "Faith in Times of Change," and "Great Need in the Midst of Beauty."
5. Consider the difficulties the Luos have faced and how seeking God's perspective has helped them find peace.
6. Take out your Jonah journal page once more. Write down difficulties you are facing in the lower left corner. In the lower right corner, write what God may be wanting you to see.
7. Pray for the Luos, using their prayer requests and praises as a guide. Ask God to help you see His perspective in every circumstance.



FOR FAMILY STUDY:

1. Place fish- or whale-shaped crackers in a bowl and set out binoculars or an empty paper towel tube cut in half.
2. Take turns looking through the binoculars or tubes. Discuss what each person sees and how his or her vision is limited. Explain how our perspective can affect what we see.
3. Give a brief overview of the story of Jonah or read it from a children's Bible.
4. Ask: *Do you think God was pleased with Jonah's attitude? Is God always pleased with our attitude? Can we see as God sees?*
5. Using the sections "Faith in Times of Change," and "Great Need in the Midst of Beauty," discuss some of the difficulties the Luos have faced and how seeing God's perspective has helped them in difficult times.
6. Ask each person to choose a cracker and share something good God has provided. Try to use all the crackers.
7. Close by praying together, thanking God for His goodness.