

Jon and Gina Murrell Missionary Report #40 from Cebu, Philippines (April 2024)

Howdy from the Philippines!

We hope this finds you well. We are excited to share some updates on our ministry activities at the Bible Study Center (BSC) and with the Mountain Ministry. Your continued support and prayers have been instrumental in the success of these programs, and we are grateful for your partnership in spreading the love of Christ. We have a lot to talk about. But first, Family Stuff.

Family Stuff: The family has been great recently. Everyone is healthy, the kids are growing up fast, and there is no stopping it. I have come to grips with the reality that one day, our kids will no longer be living in our house and will start families of their own. While I know that is still a ways off, it is not as far away as it once was. In a few months, Sean will move on to the 10th grade. Then, in two or three years, he will finish high school, then its off to college he goes. Man, that is a scary thought.

Jasmin has recently found joy in crocheting and makes these little stuffed dolls in her spare time. She spends a lot of her time doing schoolwork. However, if you give her a chance, you will find her either reading a book or crocheting. She even keeps a small ball of yarn and some crocheting needles in her bag when she goes places.

Liam is learning to draw just like his brother. He is pretty good for his age. Sean has been coaching him, and he has also been watching YouTube videos on how to draw. Sometimes, the kids will sit down together and choose an image to draw and compete with each other for fun. They call on either Mom or Dad to judge the results. Good times!

Gina and I are doing well. I am blessed to have her to keep me grounded and on the straight and narrow. Life has been a rollercoaster. Some days are better than others. While life throws us curve balls here and there, we do our best and adapt to the rest.

Bible Study Center (BSC) Updates: Classes at the BSC are continuing to go well. All of us on the team have several classes throughout the weeks. Some are tailored to Church members, while others deal with the Gospels for new students who are not yet Christians. I recently completed our Family Guidelines class, which was well-received by participants. It was a class that ran once a week for 24 weeks and covered a range of topics such as, The

Model God established for the family, Child Raising, Discipline, How to work through problems within the family, and How to budget and manage finances properly. I personally feel like it was a big success, and I had a blast throughout the weeks of classes.

I am now preparing to begin a six-lesson, in-depth book study on the book of Philippians. This study is meaningful to me, as I worked on the material around 11 years ago. Revisiting the material has shown me how much growth has occurred in my understanding of the Bible, thanks in part to the context provided by other books in the Bible I have studied over the years. The goal of this class is to begin by getting into the background of the book, the authors, as well as the city itself, then dive into the text of the book, chapter by chapter, to see what Paul was trying to get its recipients to understand and how that applies to us today. We reference Philippians many times in the lessons we teach at the BSC. However, I think having a clearer understanding of where the author is coming from when he wrote the letter is essential. I am excited about this study as I believe it will give a better understanding to everyone who participates about what God expects from us based on the information in its pages.

I am thrilled to report that several church members have stepped up to teach classes at the BSC. Their willingness to share their knowledge with others is truly an inspiring thing. However, they are not just teaching at the BSC. Some members are having classes with friends and relatives in their own homes. It is great to see our members becoming more active in the work and actively contributing to the conversion and spiritual growth of others.



In the first quarter of this year, The BSC hosted two seminars. The first, led by my father, Barry Murrell, spanned three nights and covered a range of topics, from exploring the guidance of the Holy Spirit to delving into the subjects of the antichrist, miracles, and spiritual gifts. The second seminar, conducted by RJ, a member of our team, focused on the topic, How to Study the Bible. RJ discussed effective study habits, and introduced participants to invaluable resources to aid with Bible study, and instructed them how to use them, such as concordances, lexicons, Bible dictionaries, and a variety of online tools. These seminars were well attended and resulted in new students eager to join our classes.



We are also excited to share that we have recently celebrated two baptisms. The first baptism was a meaningful moment for a woman named Ethel. She began studying with us through correspondence classes. After a few months of that she realized her need for Christ and sought us out. Following thorough discussions to confirm her understanding of the gospel, we immersed her in the waters of baptism. Since then, Ethel regularly joins our Sunday gatherings alongside her husband, Max, who is still not a Christian but has shown interest in studying. The second baptism was of my nephew, Andrew. After studying with his parents and a few of us at the BSC, he decided to become part of the family. Now, he is not only my nephew but also my new brother in Christ. We are excited to see the first of the next generation of our family begin their walk of faith. These baptisms are a source of great joy and encouragement to us all.



Kids Classes in the Mountains: Our Children's Ministry has also seen some exciting progress. In December, we held a year-end party for the kids, which was a great success and enjoyed by all. Our ongoing math, reading, and writing lessons on Tuesdays and Thursdays are still well attended. Our Saturday children's Bible class, which has been enthusiastically received by the children in the surrounding area, continues to garner fruit. One of the things we have decided recently is, due to the age differences in the group of kids, we plan to implement a new youth group activity for the older kids (5th grade and up), providing them with an opportunity for deeper engagement in the Bible with their peers. Bible classes with the adults are also still going strong. While Gina is in class with the children, my brother-in-law Gabriel is in class with the parents and other adults in the community.



In addition to these programs, we have also renovated the fence surrounding our building. It was constructed out of bamboo following a recent typhoon but has since deteriorated due to moisture and termite damage, necessitating its replacement. We have since replaced it with a sturdy chain-link fence, enhancing both security and aesthetics of the area. Additionally, we have conducted minor repairs and applied a fresh coat of paint to the building itself. A highlight of this endeavor was the involvement of the children, who eagerly participated and lent a hand wherever possible, making it a fun experience for them.



Looking ahead, we are excited about the future of our mountain ministry and have several plans to further our outreach efforts. One of our goals is to create a small library inside the building we use for the kid's classes. This library will house books for the children to use and practice their reading skills, furthering their education and fostering a love for learning. Additionally, we plan to build a small baptism area, providing a dedicated space for immersions. This will be better than using a 55 gallon drum or something similar as we have in the past. These plans align with our mission to not only minister to the spiritual needs of the community but also to support their educational and personal growth.



We look forward to seeing what the future holds in these efforts and are glad you are with us. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your willingness to partner with us in our efforts to reach out to the people around us here in Cebu. May the Lord continually bless you in everything you do.

Thank you once again.

In Him,

Jon, Gina, Sean, Jasmin and Liam Murrell

"For this is the love for God, that we might keep his commands, and his commands are not difficult." - I John 5:3