re:new

MAGAZINE

Creative Ministry

re:new
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ISSUE 1

Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.

- 1 Timothy 4:12

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Editor's Note

Phoebe Ng

I took another long look at the blank page in front of me. It was getting late, and I had already spent close to an hour trying to find the words to write this Editor's Note. ***How could it be this hard? Just relax. Come on, you can do this. Just tell them why you picked the topic. Why the theme for the magazine is Creative Ministry.*** I started to panic. I could already feel my advisor's cold stare as I turned in my assignment a week past the deadline. I cupped my face in my hands and breathed a silent prayer. ***God, just make this magazine mean something to the individuals that read this. I mean really mean something.*** I gathered myself together, willing the words to appear on the page in front of me...

Creative Ministry is...
using your everyday life...
your everyday objects...
the skills you've been given...
the stories you can tell...
the people that you know...
and the community you live in...
to touch lives with Christ's unfailing love...

But it sounds so fake! Where's the punch line? Come on! The truth is, there isn't one, no clever slogans. I just want to be real with you guys. You know, I wish that when I was in middle school someone had challenged me to look beyond myself. That someone had really believed in me and even more than that had inspired me to believe that God has a unique purpose for me. I wish someone had told me years ago, that real ministry is always creative, and that creative ministry is really about taking ownership of our mission to reach people wherever we are and with whatever we have. And lastly, I wish someone would have challenged me, to make use of my limitless potential, to make a difference.

So today that's what I want to do. I want to be that someone for you. Today, I want to challenge you to take ownership of your identity in Christ and your purpose for living. The time to act is now! Remember, Jesus promised that you can do all things through Him who gives you strength. So take the risk! What are you waiting for? There's a world of people out there, just waiting for that small act of kindness that will lead them back to Jesus Christ.

So how about it? Will you take up the challenge? Will you dare to make a difference? The nations are waiting.

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Illustration: Christine Hwang

Gaming and the Gospel

By Phoebe Ng

Can God really use anyone or anything to further His kingdom? I could not be sure, but after my experiences in the world and culture of computer and video gaming, I believe that I have found the answer.

My professional experience with Christian gaming as an avenue of ministry first began in college, but my passion for the ministry began back in high school when my mom challenged me to use my ambition for God's glory. Then, in 2009, when a sequence of seemingly coincidental events led to an invitation to work with Lamplight Media, a Christian entertainment company, I knew that God was bringing my dream to life. At first, I contributed to the team by editing promotional materials and getting the word out about our company. Soon however, after a few rough drafts and extensive reading and research, I began writing a novel centered around the fantasy world of Soterion, which is what all Lamplight products are based on (similar to how all The Lord of the Rings' products are based around Middle Earth). The story I wrote would be elaborated on and used as a foundation for other stories and future video game elements. As you can guess, I was ecstatic. I thought I had it all, but God was not done with me yet.

In 2010, I applied for and was accepted as a Quest Writer for the Visions Project by Heaven's Blessings Tiny Zoo (HBTZ). Within another few months of my acceptance to HBTZ, God opened a door for me to take a step outside of the Christian gaming community, where I held a brief internship position at Nexon America (the producers of MapleStory, Vindictus, Combat Arms, and etc.). Overall, the last three years of my life spent pursuing opportunities in both the Christian and non-Christian sides of the gaming industry have taught me a lot about gaming as a ministry.

Here are some of the facts:

First of all, as with every hobby or career choice, gaming can become an obsession and an extremely unhealthy habit. Like most others who are passionate about this area of ministry, I used to be addicted to games, playing for countless hours a day and thinking about them all the time no matter whether I was playing or not. However, when I really began to get involved at my church, I was inspired to pursue a deeper relationship with God, and God changed me. Now, I no longer see gaming as a way of just having fun, but as a way to help others to be healed from their past and to come to know Jesus. Yes, gaming can be dangerous, but so can tennis, or eating, or even your friends. Taken to an extreme, our love for anything or anyone can pose a threat to our relationship with God. The key to a healthy life is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30) As long as Jesus Christ is number one in our lives, His saving power will grant us the freedom to enjoy video and computer games the way we were meant to: as part of the gift of life that we were given and without the chains of addiction that are characteristic of the snares of the enemy.

Secondly, when used correctly, video and computer games can be a great tool for evangelism and fellowship! I have noticed that a basic awareness—of hot new trends and recent game releases—has done wonders in expanding the reach of my personal evangelism, allowing me to connect with people from all walks of life that I would otherwise have nothing in common with. After all, nothing seems to draw people together for fellowship like a good round of Super Smash Bros. Brawl, and who knows, perhaps within the course of a match, or two, or three, you might even get a chance to share your testimony to that die-hard Kirby user sitting next to you or invite that Link fan to church.

Lastly, there is a desperate need for this ministry to really take off and hit the mainstream. According to the Entertainment Software Association, 72% of American households play video or computer games and this number is only increasing. I have heard so many testimonies from friends and family and met so many people online that turn to gaming and the gaming community for support, social interaction, stress relief, and even familial interaction. It is sad to see so many hurting and empty people turn to yet another idol that cannot fulfill their desires; however, by utilizing the gaming platform as an innovative way to deliver family values and the gospel message, we are being presented with the grand opportunity to partner with Christ as He begins to redeem the gaming vehicle by transforming it into an avenue that reveals His glory on a global scale.

In the end however, I think the most important lesson that I learned from the past three years is that "God really can use anyone and anything to further His kingdom". He redeemed me from my addiction to gaming and changed it into something that He could use for His glory, and I am confident that God has a plan and a purpose for you as well. So how about it? How is God going to use you?

Head to RENEWtheRESPONSE.org to respond to Phoebe or check out the Developer's Blog to find out how Phoebe moved from the gaming world to RE:NEW!

WOMEN AND FEMINISM

"*Trafficking is any act undertaken for the purpose of exploiting people. In simpler terms: lying, kidnapping, or hurting people in any way to force them to do work they don't want to do. Often women and children are kidnapped and forced to work in factories or hotels, or else forced to work in the sex industry as slaves or prostitutes. At any given time, there are an estimated 2.5 million people around that world that are currently being exploited and forced to do labor against their will.*"

By Claire Hellar

What is Freedom and Fashion?

Freedom and Fashion is a ministry that fights for justice through fashion and the arts. It's part fashion company, and part nonprofit, but the heart is really human rights activism. Through both our own activities and by supporting and raising awareness for other human rights organizations, we fight against oppression, enslavement, poverty and sex trafficking.

What exactly does it do?

Freedom and Fashion does three things. One, we design, create, and sell our own products to raise money to fight injustice. This year, one of our main products is a tote bag that was handmade by Cambodian women who were rescued from poverty. Secondly, we continue the fight against injustice by partnering with other organizations like LiNK (Liberty in North Korea), which fights for freedom in North Korea, and Falling Whistles, which seeks to bring peace to the Congo. And thirdly, we try to teach and educate people about the problem of sex trafficking, where women, kids, and even men are kidnapped from all over the world and forced into slavery.

One of the main ways we do these three things is by holding events. Our largest event is a fashion show and fundraiser that we hold once a year. Thousands of people come to see our models show off our products and our partners' products on the runway and to hear live music, videos, and speeches giving information about sex trafficking. At the end of the night, guests go around to all the booths and buy the jewelry, clothes, bags, and shoes that were shown by our models. All of the money goes toward the causes of our partners or to rescuing people from poverty or trafficking. It takes months to make the event happen, but it's so worth it!

When and why did you join?

I think most good things in life happen through or because of our friends, and this was no exception. In my junior year of college, a friend of mine was in charge of the volunteers for the first Freedom and Fashion show, and she needed help. So I volunteered to help out, and even though it turned out to be way more work than I thought it would, I also saw what an inspiring, exciting thing Freedom and Fashion was trying to do. I've been involved with Freedom and Fashion ever since.

Who are the members?

Freedom and Fashion started out with around 5 people and now has over 30 members. It's split into teams so there's a Fashion Team, a Marketing Team with Public Relations/Social Media and Publishing subgroups, a Design Team, and several others. There's also other positions like Human Resources, Events Coordinator, and even two Spokespersons.

What are they like?

There are two crazy things about Freedom and Fashion members. One is that everyone is a volunteer. To be part of Freedom and Fashion, you have to commit to volunteering for a certain number of hours a week for one year. So there's 30 people coming in to the Freedom and Fashion office every week and working for approximately 8-12 hours with no pay. Yet everyone is so happy to be there, because everyone's passionate about what they're doing. Office hours are generally once a week in the evening, so people can make it after work or classes (the rest of the work is done from home or at other times in the week), and people almost always come in smiling. Everyone has different personalities and there's also a lot of cultural diversity and a range of backgrounds – Korean, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, Indian, white – so it's always a blast hanging out at the office.

The other crazy thing is that most of the members are either still in college or just graduated. So people who are 19-22 are literally designing entire fashion lines, speaking in front of hundreds of people, and holding

events that are attended by thousands. It's a crazy testament of what God can do when you dream big and trust Him. Most of us didn't have that much experience before joining – maybe a few projects in high school, a related class in college, and an internship. Then we joined Freedom and Fashion and had a chance to put all those skills to use and to learn new things, and suddenly we had all this responsibility. It was a bit scary at first, but also really fun – to be able to do such big things while still so young.

What exactly do you do?

I'm in charge of the yearly magazine. It's usually about a hundred pages and we give it out at events throughout the year. The main purpose is to let people know about us, the other organizations we support, and to teach them about the injustice going on in both the U.S. and other countries, and how you can help. It takes about three months to make: my staff and I interview people, write articles, brainstorm ideas, etc. Once we've written everything we turn it over to the Design Team who puts it all together, adds artwork, and makes it pretty. This year's magazine has photospreads, interviews, and articles on everything from how children in Africa are forced to make the chocolate we eat to what books and movies you should read/watch to learn about injustice and how to help.

How has God worked through Freedom and Fashion for you?

Doing the magazine is a lot of work, and every year I hesitate. But every year, God takes away other opportunities and makes sure that this is the one I go with. And I've always been happy afterward that He did. I'm always a little bit scared starting out because I worry that someone else could do a better job, but God always reassures me that I'm in the right place at the right time. I've also experienced a lot of frustration and sometimes depression while working at this, but it's made me turn to God and trust in His ways.

What advice would you give to young people still in middle school and high school, who are just starting to think about the future?

I would say first of all just trust God. He has way bigger plans for you than you can even imagine, and he will make them happen. Secondly, go after things that you think are too hard or frightening for you. Whether it's just a job working at a café, or applying to write for the school newspaper, or joining a club that is interesting but where everyone seems smarter than you – just gather up every bit of courage you have and go for it. No matter what, it will be a good experience because you did it. Make it a habit, and as you go, you'll overcome bigger and bigger things, and you'll be able to look back and see all those things that used to scare you, but you're not scared of anymore, because you did it. Also, don't be happy blending in with the crowd and doing what everyone else does. God has an amazing, specific life in mind for you, and you need to go out and find it.

Claire Hellar recently graduated from UCLA with a degree in English. She has been part of Freedom and Fashion for three years as the Magazine Editor-in-Chief. She grew up in Papua New Guinea as the daughter of missionary parents and loves Nutella, Korean dramas, and the color red.

From Disney and Star Wars to Kendu Films

By Joyce Huang

What are some of your achievements in the art world?

I was an intern at Disney at 1988. They were looking at eight kids from the country. I didn't give up and just gave it a shot. I was there for a while and I went to Warner Brothers, then another company and I worked at Star Wars. My dream came true and I did it with all my heart.

Tell me a little about Kendu Films.

My job was being a production designer. What we do is that when we are done with one film, agents help us scout out for another job. The idea for Kendu Films came in San Francisco. One day, I bought this bag of cookies. It was so bad that I tossed it in the trash. The next time I came out, I saw all these ants picking up the cookies. I said, "Wow, these ants are such hard workers." So I thought Mr. Ant must have gotten an Academy Award or the Lifelong Achievement Award. What a great resume he would have for his life. But this Mr. Ant has no idea that in my eyes this bag of cookies is like trash. For him, it's the best thing ever. Yet in my home I have this refrigerator that has more food than the cookies. This is like a parable for me of the treasure in heaven. God is showing me that heaven, like the refrigerator heaven has far more abundant treasures there. My life is worth more than many Academy Awards. It's worth more than Academy Awards to bring one soul to Christ. My value of success is different than how God values success. I began to look at what I could do to serve Him

with my gift. And so I started this company called Kendu Films. It's all about the animals' perspectives of the stories in the Bible.

How are having Asian parents like?

I grew up in Taiwan, and my grades have always been the last or second to the last. My parents tried to make my grades improve, but it was completely hopeless. My mom even wanted me to play piano, trying to have me fit the perfect tag of Chinese kid growing up in Taiwan. So I never quite fit. I've always liked drawing, but it was not an option. But I came to America in 1982 when I was 13 years old. I couldn't speak English, but I continued to like art and one of the my teachers submitted my drawing for a competition, and it won major awards. I don't have a knack for math or history, but I realized my calling. So I pursued art.

Even though you struggled academically, what are your thoughts on education?

Education is important. Every kid needs to do the best they can to find their calling and their passion. But it would be unfortunate if every kid has to be a doctor or lawyer, because each person has a unique gift. As a teenager going through school, you need to ask yourself, "Who am I? What will I do for the rest of my life?" I realized that I was a B- kid. But I knew who I was. I told myself, "Even if I starve to death, I'm going to be the best artist there is". Find your voice in this world and use your gift to contribute to society. Live as who you are. I always say that in Taiwan they manufacture straight A's. I felt like I was a cricket in Taiwan, but in America, I was a firefly. I have a very unique gift. When I am a firefly, I don't need to be a butterfly or a bee, but just to stay true to being a firefly.

Interesting!
Seems like you like nature!

Yeah! As a kid I grew up with monkeys, dogs, cats, and birds. As a kid, I observed nature carefully. Nature is the greatest teacher. Animals tell great stories to old and young people. Just look at Lion King. It's a story about a lion. But it's not really. It's a story about a father and a son. We just took it from the lion's perspective and it's multi-cultural. Telling stories from animals' perspectives is more interesting and creative.

I know that coming to America was quite tough for you. You even got bullied! Can you tell us some experiences about bullying?

I went to a school in Florida, and it was a school of all African American kids. I've never seen a black kid ever in Taiwan. It was major culture shock. I was expecting blond hair, blue eyes. I thought I was in Africa. They never asked me "Hi, what's your name?" They just asked me if I knew kung fu and if I knew Bruce Lee. So the first two words I learned in America was kung fu. They always challenged me to see what a Chinese kid can do. Unfortunately, I don't know kung fu and Bruce Lee. But I like to draw and drawing became a tool where I made friends. It was a tough time. My parents bought boxers for my Physical Education shorts.

What's your perspective on bullying?

Every teenager is trying to find their voice, manhood or womanhood. Bullies are looking for approval, and victims get really wounded. But I got stronger because of being a victim to bullying. I became strong because I realized that I am not someone that society presses me to be. God created me and I'm not to be pushed around. God doesn't tolerate anyone being bullied. Look at King David. He was bullied by the giant Goliath. I realized that I needed to stand up. Bullying sharpened me to recognize who I am and helped me later working in society.

How did you come to know God?

I was a miracle child. I was dead in my

mother's womb and the doctors were about to do a C-section on my mom. But my heartbeat came back. Growing up God was like a genie, I wasn't very close to God. I knew all the scripture and my dad made me read the Bible. But I had a problem of stealing money because I wanted to buy things. I had a mix of different kinds of influences. In America, as a teenager I was rebellious. In my third year in art school, I went to the beach during summer. As I was out in the water, all of a sudden, I was under the water and faced death. I was out on the ocean for nearly an hour. I was completely exhausted. When you are completely at the end of your rope you think about what matters. It was my first time crying out to God: God save me! Then God saved me, and I came back. I realized that it was not by chance that God had saved me, He has a design and perfect plan. God is real. Boy, you can't see Him with your naked eye, but certainly with your heart. I started to speak to Him, to surrender to Him. I was 19 years-old when I turned my life around.

How can teenagers focus on God through social media and technology?

Media and Internet are so big nowadays. We don't do snail mail, but email. Some kids watch seven movies a week. There is a lot of information in the entertainment industry - it's the future and it's going to be digital. You should try to find your gift and serve through media. Media is a good and evil tool. We need to be careful of the windows to our souls, the eyes. We can hear uplifting sermons online or see the worse garbage online. This can also be a great temptation for teenagers, and so they need to guard their eyes and hearts. Proverbs 4:23: "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Satan is busy trying to deceive so it's important to guard your heart.

What would you like to say to this generation?

Live your life to the fullest. Remember that Jesus came to give you abundant life. No one should live a life of an underachiever. Most of us think that mediocre is okay. Living life fully, finding your place, and discovering your gift are important. Once you discover that gift, the most difficult thing is to follow your voice. Have that courage to follow that dream. It's something that God has put in your DNA. Teenagers usually follow what everyone else is doing, following the leaders. I think it's hard for young kids to pursue what they believe in. Even Steve Jobs said, "Find what you love, and do it with all your heart." I would continue to encourage every young person who is trying to figure out their career, to ask yourself, "What would you do if you had only one more month to live?" Do it with all of your heart. Really find your place and purpose. "What is your purpose in life?" God has a purpose for everyone in His grand design. Unfortunately teenagers nowadays, they just want to find a career, mate, and marry. At age 19, God told me that you are not a marble but a diamond, that you are so precious and that you have no idea that you can change the world. Not you, but God can use you to change the world. You can say, "God here I am, can you show me who I am?" and I believe that God does that everyday to those who humble themselves.

Davy Liu's artistic talent has contributed to Disney Animation on classic films such as "Beauty and the Beast," "Aladdin," "Mulan," and "The Lion King." He also worked for Warner Bros. and later for George Lucas, contributing to "Star Wars". His experience in Hollywood makes him a major influence in the film industry. However, in 2000, he decided to leave Hollywood and started Kendu Films with the vision to win souls through creative story telling and cutting edge visuals. The first of many, The Giant Leaf (planned for release in 2013 as an animated feature film) is the first in the Invisible Tails series and will tell biblical stories through the unique perspective of animals. Liu currently runs Kendu Films, located in Orange County, California, and speaks often at local churches, schools, and conferences.

Acrylic paint on 11"x14" canvas board with light adjustments made in Photoshop.

Lion and Lamb

By Christine Hwang

My inspiration for this piece was a vision of what Heaven will be like that is shown in Isaiah 11:6:

> *The wolf will live with the lamb,*
> *the leopard will lie down with the goat,*
> *the calf and the lion and the yearling*
> *together; and a little child will lead them.*

Animals that would normally not live peacefully among each other are lying next to each other. It is by the grace of God, without any sin in His kingdom that these animals can lie beside each other and not harm one another or be afraid of each other. Sin has been conquered, the victory won, and death is no more in His future Kingdom.

I chose to draw using a traditional drawing method because I know that it is so much easier to fix and manipulate aesthetics in a digital drawing environment. However, with traditional drawing, your hand is not encumbered by the computer trying to figure out what you are drawing. Yes, there are ways in which you can be spontaneous in digital drawing, but I feel that this is even more the case with traditional drawing. Sometimes 'accidents' that come out of spontaneous drawing can be good accidents that I think is even better than what I had planned out before. I used to see art as a form of worship to God before I was a believer, and it is more so the case now that I have come to Christ. This piece is no different.

Before I start a piece, I give it up to God, knowing that He has the outcome already determined, all I have to do is plan and paint. Sometimes, I do not even have to plan certain strokes, and I find myself able to rest at ease instead of worrying about how bad the painting might end up. Also, I know that even if I do mess up, God's grace allows me to paint over it or even start over. That's what happened a lot with this painting. I originally had a different interpretation for this piece, but eventually, I came back to the Lion and the Lamb; and while it may seem a overused subject to the average viewer, I believe that it captures our hope in Christ. So I hope that this painting brings glory to Him and allows you to see even a small glimpse of that same glory.

Christine graduated from UCLA with a BA in Art History. She loves art and wants to glorify God with the gifts that He's given her. She is currently pursuing further education at an art school and hopes to build a career in either illustration or animation. Currently, her time is spent in Northern California, where she is building her art portfolio and developing her skills in animation.

ComePassion

By Philip Cheung

Photography: Dennis Zhang

ComePassion is a ministry that holds events with powerful worship and Christ-centered themes portrayed in creative ways. We hardly ever, in fact, we've never, paid a speaker to come and preach to us. Instead we try to think outside the box to share our event's theme or topic to our audience. Up to this point, we've tackled the issue of what it means to be satisfied by interviewing people close to us. Through drama, we've asked why a good God allows bad things to happen. We've asked ourselves what happens when we are confronted with peer pressure, both good and bad. And most recently, we had a unique prayer meeting with artists praying for people through photography, art, fashion, and song.

ComePassion is a group of people just like you. We come from different churches, different denominations, different cultures and different upbringings. But our most common denominator is that we come together without bias, longing to accomplish one goal only: worship Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Currently, we are graciously hosted by the First Chinese Baptist Church of Los Angeles (FCBC, LA), however we are unaffiliated with this church. The ComePassion leadership team is made up of six people. Our team ranges from people who attend one of the smallest churches in Southern California (i.e. a house church) to one of the largest churches (for example, Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles). So you see, we are definitely without judgment in what we look for in a church, instead we stress to each other the importance of maintaining and growing a passion to praise God in every part of our lives.

Together, we are an actor, a videographer, a writer, a musician, a graphic designer, and a pastor. It is with these special gifts that we're able to push ourselves to demand more than

what is expected and hopefully, motivate others to do the same.

Assembling together for the first time, we asked each other, has the American church cornered our faith into believing that praise and worship of God is limited to preaching, teaching, singing, and giving money? We unanimously believed, that while all is well with these forms of worship, our minds should not be demarcated in the ways we can praise our Lord Jesus Christ, instead we should be liberated in the infinite possibility given to us. The underlying force driving us to start ComePassion was the fear of being complacent and the urgency to offer God glory.

Our vision is that praising God becomes a way of life that goes beyond what we see with our eyes. In the same way that we work and study, and to do this to see our parents proud of what we've accomplished, we should carry

that same determination to make our Heavenly Father proud of what we've done. If that means worshiping with your guitar, working the cashier at Old Navy, studying for your biology test, or even taking the trash out, do it; and do it with praise in your heart so that the love of Christ shines through you like a ray of light bursting through the cracks. For this is where the notion of our name, ComePassion, comes from. It's an invitation to everyone to use your talents and your passions to glorify God.

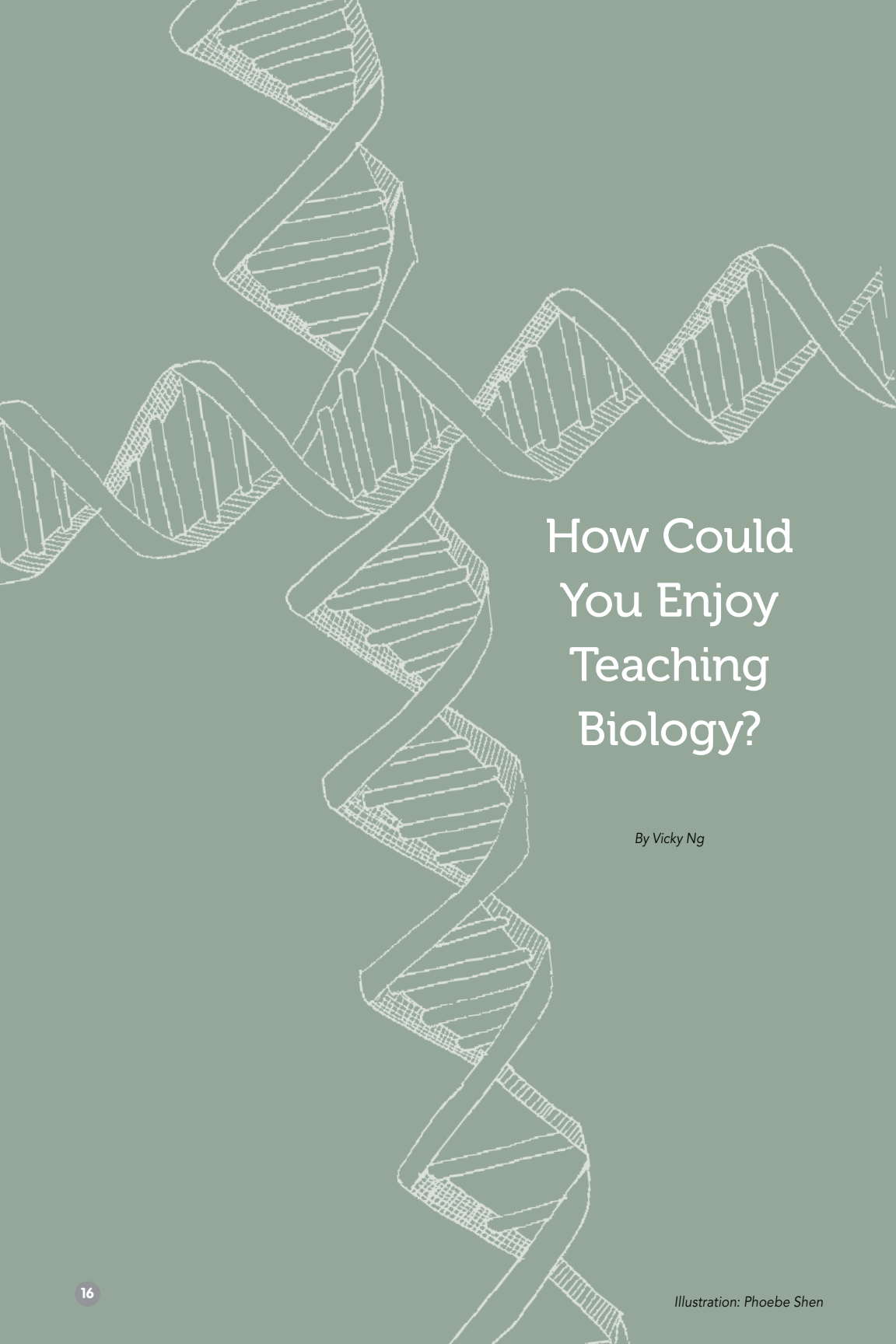
Especially with the technology available and the ever-evolving methods of media around us, ComePassion yearns for the day we can all praise God in our own ~~little~~ gigantic niches.

There's a verse in 1 Timothy that reads, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young…" Our prayer is that people will understand what we are trying to accomplish and that we aren't being judged by our age or by our lavish dreams. We know that it's not only okay, but it's a glorious thought that we aren't confined to worshiping like everyone else but that our uniqueness defines us.

Our hope is that we can become a type of ministry that allows all who wish to honor the Lord to have the access and resources to do so. We hope to provide the direction they lack and the inspiration they thirst for. ComePassion wants to be a venue where neither taboo nor judgment is present, instead purpose and ambition is lifted as the glory of our God!

Imagine your faith with purpose.
Come, passion.

Philip Cheung is the worship leader at San Gabriel Valley Alliance Church and the founder of ComePassion. He has been serving on a worship team since he was 14. He has led worship for youth camps, leadership and pastoral conferences, revivals, and college fellowship retreats. After studying biology at California State University Long Beach, he has been working at a compounding pharmacy for the past three years. He currently lives in Temple City with his wife, Candice and one-year-old daughter, Paige.



How Could You Enjoy Teaching Biology?

By Vicky Ng

Illustration: Phoebe Shen

People always think science and faith cannot intertwine. When people find out that I am a pastor's wife as well as a college professor teaching science, they look at me with bewilderment. The truth is: I love science; nothing reveals God's wisdom to me more than science does. The Bible says "I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your work is wonderful. I know that full well." (Ps. 139:14) Whenever I read a textbook on Biology, Anatomy, or Physiology, I feel as if I am reading a devotional book that helps me to see and appreciate the wonderful work of God. It strengthens my faith and draws me closer to God, and I would love to share how you can also integrate your faith with science or with other academic disciplines.

First, you have to firmly believe that God is the creator. There is no real controversy between science and faith as far as the scientific facts are concerned. The differences come from your worldview and thus how you interpret the facts. Both Christian and non-Christian scientists have long regarded "observation" as the first step of the scientific method. But the latter do not hold God, the Father of Jesus Christ, as the one who created this world. Without that belief, observation, and all the steps that follow (hypothesis, experiments, and interpretation), could lead you away from the truth. For example, in Genesis 2:19, Adam is commanded by God to name all the animals and birds. If at any point during the naming process, Adam denied that God is the Creator of all things, then Adam could have been led to spend countless hours wondering which animal came first and how much time has passed in between their appearance, which is exactly what some biologists are doing nowadays when they erase God from the picture.

Did you know that Adam is the first taxonomist? Biological taxonomy is the science of classification based on structural comparison. No doubt it takes a lot of observation. Since Adam accepted God as the Creator of all things, he did not waste his time on guessing which being evolved into which other being, instead, he focused his energy on admiring the creative works of God by coming up with many suitable and funny names. What Adam did was express his creativity. Isn't that fascinating? We the created beings have the ability to create just like the Creator! When we express our creativity with gratefulness, we are fulfilling our purpose and bringing glory to Him. Such fulfillment in Christ, whether through the fine arts, dance, music, speech, writing, sports, and etc,. is exactly what Paul meant when he told us "to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship (Rom. 12:1b) .

Next we need to know our Bible, believe it, and memorize key verses. Some of us may know our Biology books much more than the Bible, but it should be the other way around! While science reveals to us how God created the world, the Bible tells us why He did it. Though the two are not mutually exclusive, it is so much more important to know the reason than the method. The Bible is written using the inside-out approach (starts from internal conviction or the unseen realm), while science books are written using the outside-in approach (starts from the external world or the things detectable by our five senses). There is a wise sentence from the book A Little Prince: "What is essential is invisible to the eyes." The inside-out approach starts out from the essential. When you start out from the essential, you are assured of the promise of an eternal life and a rich purposeful life here on Earth; the details from science simply help you to appreciate more of His handiwork and to come up with ways to improve this world. Whereas, if you start out from the details, you may be drowned by a vast sea of knowledge

and miss catching a hold of the Hands of the Savior.

Once you know the Bible, it becomes your foundation, allowing you to filter through the scientific facts to find details which further strengthen your understanding and application of Biblical truth. Since science reveals to us how God created this world, studying science could reveal to us His creative principles. Let me give you an example: Many scientists do not believe that we have a non-materialistic spirit. Instead, they believe that every part of us is made of matter and when we die, all the elements will decompose, gradually be recycled in the environment, and that is the end of our existence. But the Bible tells us we do have a soul and it is our duty "above all else, [to] guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life." (Prov. 4:23) Scientists do not believe in this "heart" or innermost essence of our being because they simply cannot "see", "smell", "hear", "taste" or "touch" the spirit. Again, they miss the essence of life. What God created to be the innermost has often turned out to be the most important, and we can see another example of this principle in our body. Our genetic makeup or DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) has been arranged into chromosomes hidden within the nucleus or the innermost area of the cell, so it is very inconspicuous and cannot easily be detected by the naked eye. Yet in each individual human cell there is a total length of 2 meters of DNA! If you isolate all DNA from a human body and put them from end to end, the entire length could go from the Earth to the Sun and back for 70 trips!

The question is: why did God make such an essential material to be so tiny? Isn't it obvious that God wants to protect DNA so the genetic information would not be easily accessible and thus changed (or mutated) by many environmental factors? Any change of the DNA sequence could result in the creation of an incorrect protein that may be lethal to the body. Therefore, when scientists realized that DNA sequences determine protein structure and thus function, they began to take a more inside-out approach and shifted their focus from protein to DNA.

In a similar way, God created our spirit or heart to be invisible because as the key regulator of our attitude, motives, emotions, and behavior, it is something that needs to be protected. No wonder Paul also advises us in Romans 12:2 (the theme verse of RE:NEW) to take the inside-out approach, "do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." This world keeps changing and our body keeps perishing, instead of trying to keep up with so many unpredictable and uncontrollable factors in the environment, we should channel all our energy on a very small area: our own heart. By positioning ourselves in Christ and in His words, the inner transformation of our heart will bring about a renewal of our thoughts and behavior.

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." (Rom. 1:20) If you have seen God's invisible qualities in science, I congratulate you and encourage you to strengthen your insights with biblical truths. As you can see, science and faith are not mutually exclusive, in fact, science lends a louder voice to our faith.

Vicky Ng earned her doctoral degree in Physiology at Virginia Commonwealth University and was formerly an Assistant Professor in the Neurology department of the University of Southern California. She is now an adjunct faculty at multiple community colleges, where she teaches Biology, Anatomy, and Physiology. She also assists her husband, Lester in serving at Cantonese Baptist Church of Los Angeles, and has two beautiful children, Phoebe and Philemon. She has contributed to multiple Christian journals and has published a book in Chinese entitled Heart Hatching: Self-Actualization in Christ (Tien Dao Publisher, Hong Kong, 2005).

Illustration: Amy Lin and Katherine Yao

Art for His Glory

By Amy Lin

I believe God has given me talent and skill in the arts, with a mind bent toward creativity, eyes that appreciate beauty and hands that I love to use to create new things. One of the ways that I love to worship God most is when I revel at the beauty of His creation and just how complex it is. I often see details that other people don't see and think of solutions or ideas that are different and unconventional.

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Art for His Glory

It wasn't until college that I learned that creating and enjoying art can be a very intimate way to experience and worship God. I never deliberately tried to separate the two but the two never really seemed to come together very naturally. Some of the reasons might have to do with the fact that I didn't know many Christians who were interested in art, and though art was never discouraged at church, it also was never really encouraged or talked about as a form of worship expression. The only kind of Christian art I knew was art that was either old or literal and that was some sort of depiction of a Bible story. Christianity also has a very interesting history with art, which may be a large reason why art as a form of worship is just now slowly being understood. Before college, I thought art was just an extra hobby, an irrelevant piece of my life as a Christian.

What I have learned, to my great joy, is that this conclusion is far from the truth. And this truth has opened up for me the knowledge of who God is, my passions and desires, and how they coincide with His glory and the furthering of His Kingdom.

I want to share two truths that have greatly impacted my life, not just as a Christian artist, but also overall as a follower of Jesus:

The first is Christian Hedonism. Hedonism itself refers to the idea that pleasure is the highest good. Stick with me here! Christian hedonism, however, defined by Pastor John Piper (Pastor for Preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota) is "the truth that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. Therefore, if we are going to glorify God as we ought, the pursuit of joy is not optional—it is essential. We not only may, but ought to pursue our maximum pleasure—in God."

What does this mean and doesn't that sound wrong?

Some people believe that Christians are supposed to look for God's will and that seeking His will is different from going after something they love. What makes what the Bible says different than worldly pleasure-seeking is not that what the Bible says is boring and duty-driven, but that it is interested in greater and purer things. Christian Hedonism is biblical because it recognizes that obeying God is the only route to final and lasting happiness (adapted from Piper's message on Christian Hedonism).

If creating art or experiencing art gives me pleasure, it can and does go back to the source of ultimate joy, which is God. This frees the Christian artist to know that the gifts they have are not for temporary purposes! Art is not superficial and does not stop at its physical form. Art can be a vessel and a means to give thanks to the Lord, rejoice in His creation and experience a glimpse of His beauty. God created the very desires you have within your heart and He longs to use them for His glory!
When I look at a beautiful sunset and watch the colors of red, orange and yellow melt together and wait for streaks of blue and turquoise to settle in I can delight at the vastness of God's beauty and creativity. When I pick up some clay and shape it with

a potter's wheel I can rejoice at God's gift of touch as I enjoy the sensations of wet, slippery grains slip between my fingers. When I admire a building, a tree or the ocean I can marvel at God's hand in giving us the gift of architecture, of life and ponder the thoughts of eternity. My dear artist, you have been given a unique gift! Use it to worship Him.

Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 10:31 states "Whether, then, you eat or drink, whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

This verse takes center stage in an article by Piper titled 'How to Drink Orange Juice to the Glory of God.' In this article, he beautifully illustrates how Christians can do seemingly mundane or irrelevant every day things to do the glory of God. Apart from God's saving grace, everything we do that is not for the glory of God is sin because everything we do is morally ruined. However, because we are saved, "we have escaped by his grace from the total ruin of all our deeds" and can do everything to the glory of God. How? According to scripture, "everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer (1 Tim. 4:4-5)." We can do it when we do things with a heartfelt gratitude to God, from a heart of faith.

To the Christian artist, the thought that art is separate or disconnected from God can be a very painful thing. By His grace our Father gives us good gifts, and every good and perfect gift comes from Him (James 1:17). The Lord is found where there is joy— let us paint, cut, sew, shape, draw, carve, create to the glory of God!

Amy Lin is a follower of Jesus who loves to read books and create with her hands. She was the editor-in-chief's apartment mate in college and shares many fond memories with her, including the time she flooded their kitchen with soap bubbles. She is currently working in online marketing at a startup in Santa Monica and hopes to own a bakery or coffee shop one day where she will serve the Gospel with a side of delicious goodies.

Mexico Missions!

by Joanna Wu

One of the most life-changing, mind-blowing, heart-exploding experiences in your spiritual life is when you encounter God working in other parts of the world, or outside the community you're familiar with. In Matthew 28, Jesus gave his disciples an important command, and what is now widely known as the Great Commission; he said, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). The summer before his senior year of high school, Alden Chu decided to attend a one-week short-term mission trip with members of his church at Livingstone Alliance Church in Hacienda Heights.

Alden was part of a 29-member team made up of students from middle school to working adults. His church joined with other sister churches in an effort called The Ensenada Project, based in Ensenada, Mexico, which is about 200 miles south of Los Angeles. The team partnered and worked alongside pastors and local churches in Ensenada to build homes for church members and coordinate Vacation Bible Schools for local residents.
Alden shares about how he obeyed Jesus' command to go and saw firsthand how Jesus truly has "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:20).

Ensenada Testimony

by Alden Chu

Before leaving for Mexico, I thought I wasn't ready. The week before, I was in Oregon and still in vacation-mode. Fresh off a flight from Portland, Oregon, I arrived in L.A. just in time for dinner. The night before departing for Mexico, I was out until midnight with my friend when I should have been packing. I knew I wasn't ready for this trip and I was anxious about how prepared I was for this mission trip.

The morning arrived and I was exhausted from the night before. On the way to San Diego, the mission trip became a reality. The surroundings became less and less familiar and while we were at the car rental, I started to leave behind the world I knew and had been accustomed to. After lunch, it was only a matter of time before we reached the border between the United States and Mexico. There, I said my last goodbyes to my friends and family with the uncertainty of ever returning back given the dangers there. Just a few seconds after we crossed the border, I could see the difference between the U.S. and Mexico. It was as if we were in downtown L.A. but worse. The only guide I could count on now would be God. There were no authorities to help us like in the U.S. and the military checkpoints with armed soldiers were more frightening than helpful. I could not fathom living here without God's protection and his grace and mercy.

We safely arrived at the mission center, where we lived for the next week. Over that time, I saw God work in many ways. One of the highlights of my trip was on the first Sunday we were there. Half the group, including me, had the awesome opportunity to join a church service at a local Mexican church. Being an American, I expected something similar to my own church service back in Hacienda Heights, but I was in for a surprise. Their time of worship consisted of blasting their guitars louder than any other worship time I had experienced in my church back at home, and as the worship leaders led, the group of missionaries including myself were lost because they didn't have lyrics projected on a screen or printed on a piece of paper. The Mexican congregation sang alongside from the bottom of their hearts. I looked at all of them and they had their eyes closed and one of their hands in the air or clapped with the beat. Of the songs played, I recognized "Here I Am to Worship," and it touched my heart that the same songs we worship with in the U.S. are universal. During that church service, it didn't matter that we were Chinese and they were Mexican. With the help of our translator, the language barrier did not prevent either side from hearing Pastor Wayne, our Chinese pastor, speak.

The most memorable highlight I had on this trip was a home visitation at one of the church member's home. A group of us, which included Daniel, Ryan, Garrick, our intern Rachel, Pastor Reynario and I visited the church member. The woman's name was Adella, and she was troubled by many things. As she gave her testimony, I could not help but feel the pain that she had gone through and when she first shed tears, I did the same. She explained how she was always worried about her husband who would be gone days at a time because of work. They do not see each other often and she would lose faith in him because he wasn't close to God. After she was done talking, I shared my testimony with her. This was a time I felt my testimony was told at its best. Somehow, I said all the right things and it touched Adella's heart. When I was done, Pastor Reynario explained how before, my heart was not clean, but after receiving God into my heart, he cleansed me from the inside out.

All in all, God taught me some important lessons during my time in Mexico. He taught me how to appreciate the little things in life and to be thankful for what he has given me and to use everything he's given me to further his kingdom. God's love extends further than we, as humans, can even imagine. He brings the darkest places into light through his glory and he will have us make disciples in all nations.

Facts About Mexico

* *Latin America's third largest country; almost three times the size of Texas.*
* *The capital is Mexico City, with more than 20 million people; total population is more than 111 million.*
* *World's largest Spanish-speaking nation.*
* *The majority are Mestizo (Amerindian-Spanish) with 60%; Amerindian – 30%; White – 9%; and Other – 1%.*
* *Nearly 90% are Roman Catholic, 6% Protestant, and 5% other.*
* *A large gap exists between the rich and the poor, with nearly half the population living below the poverty line.*

How you can pray for Mexico

* *Pray that the Mexican people will find their ultimate identity and destiny in the love of Christ and purposes of God.*
* *Pray for people's most basic needs and that evil acts will be thwarted. Pray for the poor, the marginalized native Amerindians, corrupt politics and police forces, and the massive drug trade.*
* *Pray for young people like you! About one-third of Mexicans are aged 15 or younger. Pray that missionaries and leaders will be able to reach university students, young people, street children and child laborers.*

Source: Operation World, by Jason Mandryk; and the 2011 Official Directory and Prayer Guide of The Christian and Missionary Alliance.

Alden Chu, 17, is a senior at Glen A. Wilson High School in Hacienda Heights. He enjoys playing video games, sports, playing piano, hanging out with friends and spending time with his family playing Wii games.

For more information on short-term mission trips and how you or your church can participate in God's work throughout the nations with The Christian & Missionary Alliance, visit www.cmalliance.org/serve/envision.

Introducing re:NEW

By Katy Lee

Imagine a community of teenagers...
belonging to different churches...
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helping each other...answering questions, sharing the Word,
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That's what we're about.

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compassion, depth, relationship, commitment...

That's what we're aiming for.

RE:NEW is about responding to the gift of new life in Jesus Christ
by sharing with the community through stories, music, art, dance,
or any other medium, so that together we can make a difference
as we continue to discover the relevance of
Christ and His living word, the Bible.

Illustration: Christine Hwang

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