

During my first year at Abilene Christian University, another student and I were invited by Dr. Kilnam Cha to travel with him to China and South Korea for a five week mission trip. My heart had already been growing excited about the possibility about going to China in the future, so I truly felt this was God opening a door for me.

We met with Dr. Cha and other students who had gone to China in the past to talk about cultural expectations and other things to prepare us for our journey across the world. As the semester drew to a close, I grew more excited, as my heart already was in China and donations for the trip fell into place.

The trip itself was unlike anything I had experienced before. For starters, I had never been that far from home and the culture was so strange to me. I dealt with a lot of stress, but through it all, Dr. Cha was there for me.

I have developed a good relationship with Dr. Cha, mostly from this trip and continuing to see him throughout my time at ACU. On the trip, Dr. Cha had made all the contacts ahead of time to make sure we had a place to stay and had people to be with. Unforeseeable events occurred, of course, but I always felt that we would figure it out; even in a foreign land with strange people all around me, I felt very safe.

In Korea, Dr. Cha facilitated many events to help us students get the full experience of the culture as well as to reach out to people. We went to a church and stayed with the youth, telling them about our culture and ourselves, and hearing about theirs. After we had led worship and the lesson was given, we took many pictures, wanting to remember the good times we had in Korea. Dr. Cha also took us to the largest church in the world. This was the beginning of my experience with the global Church, my extended family.

In China, on top of our service, Dr. Cha organized when and where we would go to churches. We experienced everything from the smallest house church to government churches, giving us a full understanding of Christianity in China.

We went to several schools for a “cultural exchange” in which students asked us about life in America and Texas specifically. We also met with several Chinese students to teach English, which provided a good opportunity to talk about Christianity.

All in all, my college career has been shaped dramatically by the great experiences I took away from my trip to China and Korea. My cultural understanding and worldview has been expanded dramatically, allowing me to empathize with people of other nationalities much more. I have developed an interest in the language, studying Mandarin these last three years and intend to continue my studies in the future. I attribute much of my personal and spiritual growth to this time abroad and am very thankful to Dr. Cha for facilitating and always being there for me.

Cannon Spears