

Catalyst

WHAT'S THE CATALYST?



PARENTS IN MISSION TO
THEIR KIDS
AND KIDS IN MISSION TO
THEIR PARENTS



SUMMER 2025



FAMILY

Catalyst

noun

- 1 *Chemistry. A substance that causes or accelerates a chemical reaction without itself being affected.*
- 2 *Something that causes activity between two or more persons or forces without itself being affected*
- 3 *A person or thing that precipitates an event or change*
- 4 *A person whose talk, enthusiasm, or energy causes others to be more friendly, enthusiastic, or energetic.*

It is common as a missionary to consider ourselves and the role we play in metaphorical terms. For example, as a missionary, I could say that I am a mirror that reflects Jesus' light into the lives of people that Jesus calls me to serve. These metaphors are useful for framing our role as redeemed members of the church and what it means to live that role in God's mission each day.

As a cross-cultural missionary, it can be tempting to frame my role with the metaphor that I am an encyclopedia that knows all the answers and the right way to understand God's work. Walking alongside people each day who haven't grown up in the church and in regular Bible study, it is easy to feel like an expert and to start to act like one. I've found this can be magnified in a teaching environment where the people I am walking alongside are just entering their teen years. What God has taught me time and time again this year is that he doesn't need me to be an expert. The entrance to the Gospel for most people is not knowledge, it is relationship.

In addition to realizing that my knowledge is not the key resource, God has also reminded me this year that my own relationship will often be fleeting with the people with whom I share the Gospel. Our family has been overseas long enough to experience the blessing of walking alongside people in an extended journey to faith, but there are far more people with whom we've only connected for a brief time. In a conversation this year, I was reminded of the web of faithful people that God activates in finding his lost sheep.

A mother stopped me to tell me about another mother at the school who shared that she is so grateful for the conversations that her son started at home after being in my class. The son's mother is Christian, but the rest of their immediate family is not, and the mother had been hesitant to invite her son to attend church with her. However, after the conversations she had with her son about the content in my class, she was emboldened to include her son in her own faith practice and worshiping community. This introduces a new understanding of a missionary role. A catalyst, not fueled by my own energy, but by the Holy Spirit to activate the fuel that God has placed in the life of those who don't know Him. In this

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case, God likely used many moments, experiences, and people in addition to me in order to activate this faithful mother in her long-term relationship for nurturing her son's relationship with Jesus.

Last Friday after school, I had another related reminder of this metaphor. As I was wrapping up my grading and prepping my lessons for the next week, there was a hesitant knock as a young girl opened the door of my classroom. She asked if I remembered her. I sheepishly replied truthfully that I didn't. She shared that I had also taught her mother in one of my adult English classes. I never knew she was the student of one of my adult learners! This young girl had been my student in the fall of 2022 to study the life of Jesus. She was a reserved student who did not participate actively in class discussions. However, she was a thoughtful and respectful student. As I visited with her, I began to remember her in my class. Her family moved from Hong Kong to the U.S. after completing my class, so I haven't seen her since 2022. She was not a Christian when she lived in Hong Kong. This young woman went on to tell me that after arriving in the U.S. she joined a Christian club at her secular school. She loves reading the Bible, and after some time she began attending church. This winter her parents began attending church with her. This week she is visiting Hong Kong she wanted to stop by my classroom to find out my favorite Bible verse. We enjoyed a few minutes of discussing meaningful verses, our favorite people in the Bible (apart from Jesus), and favorite books in the Bible. It was a delightful end to a week that had been feeling very long and tiring. And, it was yet another reminder of the unknowable ways that our conversations can be a catalyst that the Holy Spirit uses in growing the faith in the life of people. Thanks be to God for each of you who know the grace and redemption of Jesus and are fuel in the catalyst reaction that the Holy Spirit is working in the lives of those around you!

This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

2 Timothy 1:6-7

Summer Travel

I will be in the United States this summer with a few visits in different places.

June 19th-21st Northwest District Convention, Spokane, WA

June 29th Minneapolis, MN

July 6th Hope Lutheran Church, Austin, TX

July 7th-12th Concordia Mission Institute, Concordia, MO

July 13th Denver, CO

July 19th-23rd National Youth Gathering, New Orleans, LA

July 27th St. Louis, MO

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Prayers

- For the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of my students and their family members. Let their hearts be open and receptive to God's word and the gift of grace.
- That the parents of the student in the U.S. would be marked as a child of God in baptism for eternity.
- For the blessed Easter chapel at my school that proclaimed the message of Jesus' sacrifice and love to the students and faculty at school.
- For new families who are seeking community now that we are 2 years post-COVID and they are realizing that something is missing, that they may find the peace and fellowship they seek in the community of worshipers of Jesus.
- Thanksgiving for Joel's 50th birthday recently!
- Joy for Taran's participation in the school musical this coming weekend.
- Gratitude for a smooth transition to college in MN for Jamie this year.