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Service Learning and the Intelligent Water Project

Andrew Yau
Without exaggeration, it has certainly been a privilege to work on the Intelligent Water Project this semester. Though the challenges seemed insurmountable at times, the outcome was definitely worthwhile. Knowing that our success could potentially save and improve lives and knowing that our failure could possibly deprive people of essential resources added a layer of significance to our work that many students arguably do not encounter. In this project, God has given us the opportunity to serve others as we acquire important professional skills and experience. Truthfully, this project has shown me how little I know with respect to software development. Many of the technologies I was required to use were completely foreign to me when the semester started. For example, I had not written a single line of code in JavaScript before this project. Many nights, I spent long hours searching the web for solutions to problems that more experienced programmers might find trivial. However, I believe that God can use the most inept person to accomplish his will (More than half the time, I thought that was me.) In his hands, a class of relatively inexperienced college students successfully built a web application that helps to ensure that the poor and needy have uninterrupted access to clean water. Therefore, it is only right to attribute the success of the project to the Lord our God. It was his providence that opened the door for us to serve others in this way. It was his guidance and wisdom that empowered us to complete the work. And it was his blessing that gave us good success. As we consider the enormous effort that all of us poured into this project, it is tempting to think that we have done God a favor. Actually, he has blessed us in allowing us to participate in work that glorifies him. So, let us remember that no endeavor ultimately succeeds without his blessing.

Amazingly, the work that we did this semester is only a small part of what God is doing through Christian non-profit organizations like our client World Vision. Although our interaction with World Vision was extremely limited, it was still a privilege to cooperate with this
organization in their mission to serve the poor in the name of Jesus. Generally speaking, I support the goals of World Vision and rejoice because of the positive impact such organizations have in the world. However, the lack of extensive communication with our client made the project seem less important than it actually was sometimes. Though my connection with World Vision was rather indirect, I appreciated the opportunity to cooperate with this organization in the context of the Intelligent Water Project. In the future, I will definitely consider working for a Christian non-profit organization. Doing so would be an excellent opportunity for me to use the skills and experiences God has given me to do his will. When Christians do good in the world, the unbelievers notice. Providing food, water, clothing, shelter, and relief to those in need opens the door for us to share the gospel of salvation with everyone. Our willingness to obey the word of God and the positive results that follow demonstrate to the world that our beliefs are true. Jesus Christ really is the Son of God. He really did lay down his life for us. And God really did raise him from the dead. Whatever we do, we can be sure that the world will notice. As it is written, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Whether by word or deed, I must bear witness to what God has done through his Son Jesus Christ.

Much of what I have said so far sounds very lofty. One might get the impression that I had a cheerful song in my heart and a heavenly smile on my face as I frantically scoured the web for information that might help me meet my deadlines. This was not the case. At the beginning of the semester, I realized that this project would affect the lives of real people. God had given us the opportunity to build something that could possibly save and improve lives. I envisioned what would happen if we did not take this responsibility seriously. Colossians 3:23-25 came into my mind. “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men; Knowing that of the
Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons."

In some ways, I wish I had worked more diligently on this project throughout the semester and there are things that I would have liked to accomplish that remain incomplete at the end of the semester. Sometimes, it was very difficult to juggle my work for other courses with my work for this project. Furthermore, it was difficult to learn several new technologies simultaneously while also being required to use them in order to complete my work. I hope and pray that the Lord is pleased with what I have done this semester. It is only by his grace that someone as unskillful and inexperienced as myself was able to get as far as I did. Now that the semester is over, I can remember the spiritual foundation for this project and reflect on the impact that our work may have. But between the opening and closing of the semester, there was much frustration and heartache. During this time, self-preservation often usurped the more noble motives with which I had first set out. To shirk my responsibilities was to fail my team and secure my public humiliation at the next standup meeting. Though I regret this lapse in focus, I also realize that the initial motives stayed with me throughout the semester regardless of whether I was conscious of them or not. Sometimes, I worked much harder to complete my work than I would have if this project were merely an academic exercise. In my heart, I knew that my choices would affect people for good or for evil and that I was ultimately accountable to God for those choices. While my focus was not always correct, he was faithful to carry me through every circumstance.

In addition to thanking the Lord, I must also express my gratitude to my teammates. It was honestly a pleasure to work with such talented young men, and I am thankful for the chance to know each of them. On more than one occasion, other members of my team helped me to overcome difficulties with my work. They were generally very friendly and willing to assist me
when I could not proceed on my own. In addition, Avery deGruchy frequently assisted me to complete my work. Without his guidance and help, I would not have accomplished what I did within the time that I did. I thank God for him, and I greatly value him as a friend and a brother in Christ. Truthfully, this project has stretched and challenged me. I am only beginning to reflect on what this project means (and to recover from this semester). In time, I expect to see more clearly how the Intelligent Water Project has shaped me as a person and determined the direction of my life as a Christian.