

Two Students Who Grew Up in Same Chinese Orphanage Meet at Liberty University: 'God Orchestrated This'

An unassuming bus ride across Liberty University's campus last Wednesday became a perfect example of how God can miraculously connect people across continents and make the world seem small. Two students—sophomore Ally Cole and freshman Ruby Wierzbicki—started their ride as strangers but soon uncovered a shared past that goes back to an orphanage in China 15 years ago.

Boarding a crowded bus across campus to her class in Marie F. Green Hall, Cole sat in an open seat next to Wierzbicki and struck up some small talk. Wierzbicki said she was from New Jersey but was adopted from China, and Cole said she was also adopted from China and grew up in Maryland. At first, they thought it was just a coincidence. But then they noted that they came from the same city of Jinan and both pulled up a photo from the orphanage they were adopted from as young children (the Jinan Social Welfare Institute) on their phones. A photo of Wierzbicki on a red and blue slide that looked familiar to Cole proved to be the moment of realization.

"We held the photos side by side on our phones and we realized that everything matched, and we knew that it had to be the same place," Wierzbicki said.

Their bus dropped them off, and the girls stepped off to the side of the crowd to continue sharing photos and uncover just how much their paths had crossed back in Jinan. As it turns out, they were adopted one week apart (Cole was 6 and Wierzbicki was 4) and could even identify themselves standing

side-by-side in certain photos.

"We started scrolling through our photos on our phones, and I realized that Ruby had a lot of photos of me that I'd never seen before and photos where we were together," Cole said. "We even had a mutual friend from the orphanage, Emma, that we each had photos with."

"One of the photos was one that we both had, with us standing next to each other, and I hadn't known who the girl next to me was, but now I know," Cole laughed.

They both took a similar path in choosing to attend Liberty. Both said it wasn't their first choice, but after they visited during a College For A Weekend, they knew Liberty was the place for them.

"I came to CFAW and I just fell in love with the school and the community here," Wierzbicki said. "It was definitely different than any of the other schools I looked into, and now we've realized these little details that God has orchestrated in all of this. God really does have our lives according to His plan and in His control."

As they retraced each of their journeys from China to the United States, from their individual home states to Virginia, and even from the different places they frequent on a campus swarming with more than 15,000 students to how they landed in neighboring seats on the same bus, Wierzbicki (an exercise science student) and Cole (studying graphic design) acknowledge that their meeting was no accident.

"There are people I've talked to about this and they've said, 'What a coincidence.' But we think that this is 100% God," Wierzbicki said. "There's no way that two people who were in the same orphanage in a different country can somehow end up at the same school at the same time and have it not be God."

Cole said that this experience has helped her develop a better

idea of what her past in China was like, which is something that she has had an interest in for a while, and that she has enjoyed digging through it all with Wierzbicki.

“I don’t know much about my past, which is something I’ve always been OK with, but at the same time a part of me has always wondered about it,” Cole said. “I think God is so amazing for doing all of this. I think of it as a blessing because not a lot of people who are adopted get to know a whole lot about their past, but [we] got to do that by sharing our photos and talking about it.” {eo}

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