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GREEN



A TASTE OF INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY

STORIES AND EXPERIENCES

A TASTE OF INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY 1





EXPERIENCES

Here's a small sample of the experiences, options, and open doors that await you after graduation, should you decide to "delay the real world."

SARAH—EAST ASIA TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Before my senior year of college, I never wanted to go on a mission trip. In November of my senior year, I heard a man speak who was a missionary in Central Asia, and God used him to open my eyes to the needs of people around the world. Since then, I knew that the Lord had plans for me to spend time overseas. In the world of campus ministry, taking a year to minister internationally is referred to as a STINT, which stands for a *short-term international* mission. Deciding to take a year and go on STINT wasn't an easy decision for me, but once I decided that I would make my life available to the Lord, He began to make clear what His desires were for my life.

I lived in an unbelievably beautiful city in East Asia. There was an amazing lake in the center of the city that was a perfect place to take walks with students I met, to sit and read, or to take pictures. There were so many cultural and historic places to see and to visit in the city. We took trips to tea fields, museums, and temples. There were some challenging smells, but the food was delicious and cheap! We were language students and went to class on weekday mornings. In our classes were students from all over the world: Korea, Japan, Australia, Yemen, Norway, Canada, and so on. After class, we spent time on campus meeting with students. They wanted to practice English so badly that it was easy to make friends. Some days we held evangelistic meetings, some days we had Bible studies, and some days we just hung out with the students. I made so many memorable friendships—East Asian students are so warm and hospitable.

Doing ministry relationally was a great way to show students that you cared about them and what was going on in their lives. I met one girl whom I nicknamed Star. She was a very bright, hardworking student. So much so that it was difficult to pull her away from her studies to spend time together. She spoke English very well and loved to laugh and talk about differences in our backgrounds and cultures. Star and I got to spend more time together toward the end of my year there. One day we were sitting on a bench outside at the university, and we were talking about some deep issues. I got a chance to share with her how I dealt with these issues by trusting in God and His promises. I felt like it was a good opportunity to share Christ with her. As I went through the gospel, her eyes were big and her expression was one of amazement. She said, "So all of this about Jesus is true? It's not just a story? I never knew that." She was not ready to trust Christ that day, but she promised me that she would think about the decision and she understood it was a very important thing that would change her life.

There will not be many STINTers in our city this next year. It is very unfortunate, because at the end of this year there were over 50 students who accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior, and it will be difficult for the remaining missionaries to disciple all of the people who made decisions. But I am praying that these students will spur one another on, and I am praying that the Lord will raise up more workers to be a part of what He is doing in East Asia right now. I am also praying that in a couple of years the Lord will use these baby Christians to impact all of East Asia for Jesus Christ.

BECCA—FRANCE BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

As a student, I went on a summer mission trip to Jordan. God used that experience to give me a heart for Muslims and the world. While there, I kept thinking that six weeks was not long enough. I wanted to go somewhere for a year to have more time to build relationships and share with those who had never heard the gospel. Last year I went with a pioneering team to France. It's very difficult for "missionaries" to have direct access to some of the North African countries because they are both Muslim and militant. So the place to reach North Africans is in France, where many of them vacation, visit, and live. Since we were one of the first teams in Marseille trying to reach North Africans, we were mostly experimenting with how best to meet them.

We spent our time both on a campus and in the community. We went to a Berber cultural festival, where we met some of our best contacts for the year. Through these new friends, we networked and came into contact with other North Africans.

Hosting picnics and parties, we continued to make new friends and share the gospel. We also traveled into Muslim North Africa to teach English. The students were curious about our faith, so it was easy to get into conversations with them about spiritual things. Our trips into North Africa were definitely the highlight of our year. I can't wait to again meet up with one of my friends who accepted Christ. It will be great to see her grow into a mature woman of God. I also look forward to next year, as I am moving into a teaching position in Marseille.



TASHA — GERMANY INDIANA UNIVERSITY

I had always been interested in internationals. But then, in college, I learned more about God's heart for the world and for the lost, and it fueled my interest and desire to go overseas. I had been on three spring break trips to Freiburg, Germany, while I was in college, then in my senior year I started to pray about where God would have me go. Sure enough, I was in Freiburg the next fall!

I've decided to go back for a second year, and I'm looking forward to being a part of a new ministry team. I'm really excited to continue some of the relationships I made last year, to learn more about the culture, and to just continue to be in Freiburg. I'm looking forward to seeing what God does!



TOM — SOUTH ASIA VIRGINIA TECH

During my sophomore year of college, a traveling team of missionaries came to speak at our campus, and for the first time I thought about doing international missions for longer than just a summer. Inspired by reading biographies about missionaries like Jim Elliot, I started to pray about doing something long term after graduation.

My senior year, I went to a job fair and was offered a few jobs, but I turned them down because I didn't feel excited about working. I did, however, feel excited about experiencing another culture and living overseas.

In high school I had gone on a few short-term mission trips with an organization called Mission to the World. I liked the ministry because it was church based—it is the sending agency of the Presbyterian Church of America. I was drawn to the challenge of planting a church in another country.

So when I graduated, I went to South Asia for an 11-month church internship. I worked alongside a national pastor and took over leading the youth ministry, reaching out to street kids and college students in the area. The tsunami hit Asia while I was there, and so I coordinated all the American teams that came over to help with the relief effort. We did construction work and helped to build several hundred homes.

A story that I always like to tell about my time in South Asia is about one of the street kids I met named Nagesha. I met him by a railroad station where a lot of runaway children spent their time. A lot of the kids came from troubled homes and had run away or were abandoned by their families to live on the streets. The street culture is really hard on them and many of them turn to sniffing glue or using other drugs.

Nagesha was a runaway about the age of ten. I spent a few months just getting to know him and visiting him at the railroads. One day I went out looking for him and found him lying on the ground, holding his arm like he was hurt. An older man had tried to steal the empty bottles he was collecting, and when he resisted, the man broke his arm.

I, and a few others from the church, took Nagesha to the local hospital and paid for his arm to be seen by a doctor. The doctor told us that if Nagesha hadn't received medical attention for his arm, he would have lost it. While he was at the hospital, someone notified his mother and she came and got him. He had originally left home because of a terrible relationship with his dad, but his father was now dead, so he went back to live with his mother.

After that, Nagesha would call me on the phone multiple times a day and we would have the same conversation over and over: "Hi, how are you?" "Good" "Did you eat yet?" "Yes." Since I knew so little of his language, that was the extent of our conversation. It was kinda funny but really touching.

I work a normal job now, I have a career, but I have never regretted spending that year overseas and I hope to keep my connection with that ministry over the years to come.



NATHAN—EAST ASIA
TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

I went on a short-term mission (STINT) overseas for a number of reasons. I have a heart to see God glorified in every nation. I wanted to get away from my home country and experience life with God elsewhere, as He is the God of all nations. I wanted to see the world and thus learn more about how my life fits into it. And I love to travel.

There is no such thing as an average day in East Asia. There are many things that I do on a daily basis, and each day is made up of a balance of many of the following: taking language classes at the university, doing any creative form of ministry with my friends, having prayer/business meetings with my ministry team, having personal time to grow in my relationship with the Lord, buying groceries and doing other errands, communicating with folks back home, being discipled by the older staff on my ministry team, traveling during holidays, getting good sleep, exercising, and enjoying life—a must.

This year I had a friend whom I was able to disciple. His name was Hawaii, and he was a very young believer, who had come to Christ through the missions team that was here last summer. When I first met with him, he already had a firm understanding of the reality of sin and the price that Jesus paid for him on the cross. But throughout the year, I was able to see his knowledge of the gospel turn into a passion for it. He and I met to study the Scripture, and through this we developed a great friendship. He started attending a Bible study regularly, and the evidence of his new life was obvious. By the end of the year, he was sharing his faith with others and leading a Bible study of his own. He graduated and is now a high school teacher in a different city.

HEATHER — SPAIN UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

During my senior year in college, I was faced with the decision of what to do after graduation. I was planning to work and then go to grad school, but my heart was really captured with the idea of ministry. Living and serving the Lord in another country for a year sounded like an incredible opportunity. The spiritual growth that had occurred in my life during my college years radically changed me, so I wanted to take a year of my life to help other students know and love Christ the way someone had done for me. I have always wanted to go to Spain, so when I heard about the need for volunteers, I was definitely interested. In December of my senior year, after praying and seeking God, I decided to go.

Because Spanish students are generally skeptical of any non-Catholic “religious group,” and because relationships are highly valued in Spain, we spent a large amount of time building relationships of trust—always with the aim of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. On a typical day, we would go to campus to meet students, by eating in the cafeteria, by talking in the hallways, or

through conducting a spiritual survey with them. After time on campus we’d head off to language class, and then later we might meet with a Spanish student over coffee, take a walk, or get ice cream. At night we would either have a Bible study with Spanish students or some kind of activity such as our *Tertulia*. This was a weekly gathering in an Arabic tea room where students came to practice their English and talk about different topics or issues, including spiritual ones. On weekends we would hang out with students—go out for *tapas* (free appetizers when you ordered a drink) and maybe dancing. We would often go on excursions such as hiking, camping, or whatever. It was a lot of fun!

I’m planning on staying another year. I am most looking forward to continuing the amazing friendships that I made last year. I hope to see a core group of Spanish students take charge of the ministry with a desire to reach their campus with the gospel. I am also looking forward to hiking and skiing in the Sierra Nevadas, learning Spanish dances, and drinking *café con leche*.





DAVID—ITALY UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

My life turned around 180 degrees. At 25, I decided to leave my sinful lifestyle and pursue God with my whole heart. As a result, I joined a Bible study and ended up helping some of my new friends start a singles class at a local church. However, because I was working a lot of hours for an investment bank at the time, I didn't feel like I could participate fully. I had a prior commitment to the workplace that was taking up most of my time. Soon after the inception of the class, I met a friend whose fiancé was taking a year off to do ministry in Russia. It was at that point that I began to investigate ministry options. After much prayer, I chose to go to Florence, Italy. I had a personal leaning toward Italy because I had actually investigated a job outside of Milan several years prior. So on July 31 I quit my job, and a month later I left for Florence.

TIFFANY – CENTRAL ASIA NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

I decided to take a year and go overseas because at a conference I had made a decision to dedicate a year of my life to service for the Lord. My initial reaction was “No way! That’s not why I’m working so hard for my M.E. degree,” but the Lord convicted me, so I committed myself to go after graduation. I then asked where He wanted me to go, and His immediate response was “The Muslim World” (the closest thing I’ve ever experienced to hearing God’s audible voice). Again, my initial response was doubt and disbelief because I didn’t think I could impact that part of the world as a woman; the men surely wouldn’t listen to me. The Lord continued to work on my heart over the next few years and showed me that I could impact the women there (they’re desperate to hear), and so I went.

Life here is very busy. The average schedule can be exhausting, but it is also exciting and rewarding, and it allows for time that is used by the Lord in so many ways. Discipling students and new believers, as well as seeing the sparkle and interest in the eyes of someone as she first begins to understand the gospel, is a great privilege. God uses our time here to work in and through us to bring people to know Him and to remind us of our deep need for Him.

As I return for a second year, I’m looking forward to working with the people and continuing to learn the lessons God is teaching me. The seekers and believers are all amazing people, and I’m excited to see them again. I’m also looking forward to getting to know, live with, and work with another group of Americans eager to serve the Lord.