

Student Missions in Action!



Pictured above (top left to right): Zambia
(bottom left to right): Republic of Palau

Poland

Kosrae

Bolivia

Bolivia

Bangladesh

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STUDENT MISSIONS
AT SOUTHERN

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God's timing sometimes brings laughter along with gratitude
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Overcoming Unforeseen Challenges

by Jackson Robison, serving in Egypt

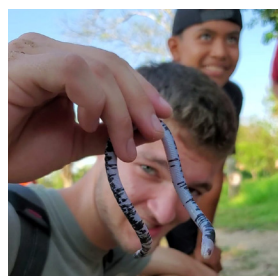
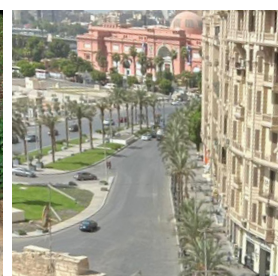


Have you ever had that feeling of "How in the world did I get here?" You know the one; it's the sense you sometimes get while in the middle of class or sitting on the Promenade overlooking Hulsey Wellness Center and Talge Hall. Just yesterday you were a wild-haired, 16-year-old kid, and if you could sit down and have a conversation with that kid, you wonder if he would recognize the person you are today. I think it's those moments that really make a person. I've been thinking about these feelings a lot, and I'd like to share some of my revelations with you.

The missionary life provides ample opportunity to experience total confusion. Almost daily I find myself asking, "Jackson, how in the world did you get yourself into this?" Just last week I was attached to a Bedouin tribe in the heart of the western desert on some harebrained attempt at a vacation. "What am I doing here?" I thought, as I barked for the driver of our Toyota Land Cruiser to attempt yet again to drive out of the white sand. Ahmed was a well-meaning

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FAITH. SURRENDER. JOURNEY. PURPOSE. JOY.

fellows, but I think he had about as much desert-driving experience as I did. We were hopelessly stuck and 50 miles away from civilization.

Ironically, as the hours went by, my ire at our predicament faded. All I was left with was a big ol' grin on my face, because I was right in the thick of life. Then and there, I made the decision to lean into that "How did I get here?" feeling. I found myself pushing harder against the back of the Land Cruiser, my feet digging deeper, and in two shakes of a lamb's tail we were up and out of our sandy predicament. I'd finally remembered that it ain't about where you are now; it's about where you've come from and where you're going.

I remember that when I first walked into the office of Steven Manoukian, Southern's Student Missions director. I told him straight up—no ifs, ands, or buts—that I was never going to teach English and that I was willing to do anything else, just not that. Fast forward to yesterday, where I was standing in front of a class of adults far older than myself, teaching the grammar rules behind the present continuous.

I just had to smile, because God has a sense of humor like no other. If you are thinking about giving your life over to Jesus to use how He sees fit, I cannot promise that it will be easy. In fact, it's quite the opposite; however, I can promise that Jesus will lead through hardship and confusion to the purest and wildest joys you've ever experienced.

Reflections of Current Student Missionaries

What Is God Teaching You Right Now?



Katherine Ashlock, serving in Bangladesh

God is teaching me to rely on His strength and love. I am working at an orphanage this year, and the kids wear me out emotionally. While I try to love the kids as much as I possibly can, I still find myself falling short and getting annoyed with them. However, on several occasions, when I've felt as if I'm about to break, I have experienced God's peace and His love flowing through me. I am learning to look to Him, rather than trying to muscle through on my own.



Chris Barrera, serving in Hawaii

As a student missionary, I have learned so many things: getting adapted to the setting, connecting with new people, and learning what my purpose is here in the field. God has taught me that He can use anyone. It is a true blessing to let God guide you through ministry and service. If you are looking to take a year as a student missionary, I encourage you to pray about it and do it. God can work through you to make an impact in someone's life.



Aimee Beasley, serving in Poland

I will be honest; being a student missionary in a first-world country has made me feel, at times, as if I'm not a missionary at all. I can't talk about religion with my students unless they bring it up ... Whenever I feel as if I should be "roughing it" more, God has reminded me that His work can be done anywhere. I didn't need to leave the United States to be a missionary, and just because I can't always directly talk about God, it doesn't mean that He can't shine through me. Each day I ask God to reveal Himself to me, and without fail He has. He's teaching me to find Him in the little things, as well as showing me that by simply being kind, open, and compassionate to my students, I'm mirroring His love for them.



Rhett Seitz, serving in Michigan

God is teaching me to be more empathetic. He is wanting me to be slow to anger and judgment and quick to listen and be patient (James 1:19-20). I say this as a dean, who may be tempted to assert his authority and be quick to bring "justice" to the student's error, rather than to give a student the benefit of the doubt. However, I feel that God has called me to be a minister, not a police officer. If I am there for the students—not to get them into trouble, but instead to bring them closer to Christ—then it will benefit everyone. It can be difficult, but authority and respect is best given when you listen.



Last Sunday was a particularly long house-parenting day, because of a gas shortage and many other strange factors. I had been all over campus doing random tasks: (ineffectively) chopping wood for the Hardings' kitchen fire, taking the boys to the creek, cooking with Zoro, holding babies, motivating teens to play volleyball, and briefly monitoring the families who had come to visit their children, nieces, or nephews, making sure no one got kidnapped or given cocaine leaves as a present.

By the end of the day, Zoro and I were sweltering in the kitchen, watching the flame of the last of our hoarded stove fuel sputter out under the dinner for the Guerreros, while they watched a movie on my laptop. A cloud of insects was swirling overhead around the light, and my longing for a cold, reviving shower increased with every sweaty slap of my neck. Then God fixed the light-attracting-the-bugs problem by turning off the electricity.



I quickly turned off my computer before insects could completely engulf the screen in exoskeletons. We sat for a moment in slumped silence. The boys scampered off to sit silently in dark corners for a moment of unsupervised silence. I could do little but admire the irony of my desire for a shower throughout the day, only for it to be snatched away right at the end.

I knew selfish disappointment wasn't the answer, but I sure wasn't feeling particularly grateful for the situation. With electronic screens rendered unsafe by the swarms, I realized there was nothing to do but sit outside and hope for a breeze. I found a handful of the boys already outside, admiring the spectacle revealed by the darkness.

It was a beautiful moment to bask under the stars and be grateful for the chance to do something together that we couldn't do any other time. Even though I didn't know any of the words to explain photography, they wanted to participate and enjoy the moment together.

Then the house parents returned, our lights turned back on, and the moment was over. God knew that I'd needed the power outage to force me to slow down and appreciate the moment, and He knew just how long to extend it so that I could still get a shower and avoid a mental breakdown from putting my filthy, unwashed body into bed.