

Friday, August 3, 2007

Home Sweet Home!

Saturday, the 28th of June at around 10:45pm, the pilot tells us to prepare for landing into Gallatin Field Airport. As I looked out onto the scattered lights of Belgrade and Bozeman, I got a bit teary-eyed. I'm sure it was a mixture of being on planes for the past 24 hours, being exhausted and a bit delirious, but I was so happy and thankful to be coming home. Upon my arrival to Belgrade, I indulged in a couple bowls of cereal first thing when I got home--the most craved food while I was in Kenya. It was everything I had imagined and more!

Since being home for about a week, I've been eating all my favorite foods and loving every minute of it that's for sure, maybe a little too much. I can't help it, it has so much flavor! I went to the supermarket with my mom and was in awe of the air conditioning and convenience of everything.

It's fun to see how much more aware and appreciative I am for things like hot showers, or any shower for that matter. Toilets with toilet seats and the ability to flush, food that I know is safe to eat, brushing my teeth with sink water, washing machines, electricity...the list goes on.

Being home has also made me miss aspects of Kenya like the welcoming environment, the hospitality of the Kenyans, the friendliness, all the people walking, the children, the spiritual richness, seeing the joy in people even though they have so little, the fourth grade at Christ Gift Academy (Megan's class) I taught. I'm sure there will be much more I will appreciate about Kenya as I settle more into life here again.

When we touched down in New York we stood in the US custom lines at JFK. I was amazed at how culturally diverse America is. There were blacks, Indians, whites, Muslims, Christians, Hindus, atheists, agnostics. The diversity among the people in line made me realize how much of a mission field our own country is. All too often we view the mission field as places like Africa, Asia, and so on. There is just as much spiritual repairing needing to be done here in the states.

Being in Kenya helped me to see that I truly have a heart for America, and I give all the credit to Kenya. After being in Africa, I haven't developed a heart for missions overseas, and I really struggled with this at first. I am slowly starting to understand that maybe it's okay that I don't feel passionate for being a long term missionary as long as I'm passionate for serving Christ somewhere. All the experiences I underwent gave me insight on how I could improve something back home. I have become much more motivated to invest in relationships with the friends I already have, as well as the incoming freshman next year. I've learned that I want to be more willing to serve people in anyway I can. I've also learned how thankful I am that I have the opportunity to get an education, especially beyond high school, the availability for jobs, and other opportunities all throughout America. So many Africans will never get the experience to go to school, have a choice at what job to have, or where to live. Our choices and opportunities are endless. I feel very blessed.

I still haven't got everything figured out in terms of what I've learned over my time in Kenya for the past two months. As much as I would like what I've experienced to be sorted out into a neat little package where I knew exactly why I went to Kenya and what my experiences meant for my life, I continue to trust in God. I'm not sure what missions look like for me in the future, but I do know that I am so very thankful to have been able to have this experience of a life time at such a young age. I am thankful that I was able to experience other parts of the world that are so vastly different than what I know. It made me open my eyes up wider and see that God is not just in America, but he's working all around us whether it be in Montana or Kenya. That's pretty cool. I have faith that He will sort out all that I have undergone this summer, and reveal to me the lessons and life changes that are most valuable for me to hold on to. I've walked by faith for the last two months, I'm certainly not about to stop now. It's exciting!

Thank you all again for your incredible support while I was away. I cannot express to you all enough, how meaningful it was to get your emails of encouragement. During my low points of the trip, your words always brought me joy, and knowing that people were praying for me was such a wonderful blessing. I cannot thank you enough.

Final prayer requests would be for our team as we submerge ourselves into our busy lives again. I'm already experiencing a bit of spiritual dryness because I have all the comforts back in my life again. Please pray that we see that the God we served in Africa is the SAME God we serve in America, so that certainly doesn't mean we should depend on him less now that we are back in familiar territory. Another request would be that my team and I would remember Africa. In sharing with my team since we've been back home for a bit, many of us are struggling with holding on to Kenya. Our familiar lifestyles are coming full force and it feels as though Kenya is slipping from our grip. Pray that we would find a way to integrate our learning experiences from Kenya into our daily lives now that we are home, and not sweep Africa under the rug and move on. One last and final prayer would be for my sister. She just finished up her time at CGA and is really having a hard time saying goodbye. Pray that she would feel a peace about coming home and that she would have more of a thankfulness in her heart for the amazing friendships that were formed instead of a sadness that she must part ways.

Thanks again for your love and support.

All my best,

Elizabeth