

One Year Later...WOW!

June 2, 2008

I can't believe it has been an entire year since my very first email I sent out before my departure to Kenya. As the next group is preparing to go, Kenya has been on my mind a lot, and I wanted to write an email updating you on my life now that a year has passed.

Where do I begin? My junior year has brought a lot of surprises, twists, and turns. I have undergone feelings of doubt, fear, faith, hope, trust, pain, rejection, love, disbelief, amazement, power, truth--far too many to list. Something I realized especially this past semester is that in the midst of hardships, God will always remain constant and permanent in my life no matter the situation.

As the year progressed, I realized how much of an impact Africa really had on me. Being an accounting major, it really began to bother me that the bulk of my major dealt with money and how to make more of it. Now, I have a year left of school and feel like my opportunities upon graduation are endless. Not only in accounting, but I've thought of doing ministry and going back to Kenya next summer as staff. I have an accounting job this summer in Bozeman to gain some real world experience which I'm hopeful it will give me some clarity in what I want to do. As cliché as this sounds, money truly cannot buy happiness. I wanted to be an accountant because I wanted to live a comfortable life—to play it safe. I've been to Africa and experienced what it was like to live without much, and I was fine. Actually, I was more than fine. That really spoke to me that I do not need to live a life of plenty in order to be happy. If I find something in life that truly brings me joy, I will do it. If I seek to live a life of comfort, success, and safety, I believe I will never truly live. Kenya has awakened me to realize what I live for and what I need to live for. I will forever be changed.

As an independent study, I wrote a lengthy paper about my experiences in Kenya. It was in the midst of finals week and I just wanted to be done with school, so I was dreading writing it especially because it was hanging over my head all semester. It ended up being a blessing for me to recapture my memories and experiences from the summer. In a debriefing letter we were required to write during the final week of our Kenya project, I wrote about feeling at peace with the unknown. At the time, I was still unclear why I had come to Kenya and what my purpose truly was while there, but I described this overwhelming peace I was experiencing that had passed all understanding. After I read that, I put down the letter in amazement. For the majority of this spring semester, I was praying daily for exactly that--peace that passes all understanding because I was in a place that I wanted answers and to understand why certain things were happening in my life that I would rather do without. The circumstances were different for why I was praying for that peace, but it was the SAME peace and I was praying to the SAME God and he is willing and perfectly capable to grant me that same peace again. Eighteen pages later, I finished my paper feeling joyful and a bit relieved I must say. I did not expect God to show up while I was cramming to get my paper handed in, that's why I love serving a God that isn't predictable.

Intervarsity has an end of the year week retreat in Colorado Springs called Chapter Camp. The theme this year was "Run the Race" taken out of Hebrews. I came away with a better understanding that we are all running our own races of faith, but we most certainly do not run it alone. At the end of the week there was a four mile race at over 9000 ft elevation. I forced myself to do it because I was curious to see if the scripture we had studied throughout the week would come alive while I ran and it was thrilling to see how the words of scripture are active and moving.

In the midst of the business of life I can feel weighed down, but Hebrews reminds me and encourages me to keep running. God doesn't promise it won't be hard at times, but he does promise that He will always be with us. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with PERSEVERANCE the race marked out for us." Hebrews 12:1

Chapter 11 of Hebrews discusses all that people accomplished throughout their lives by faith. I thought I would use that example and tell my by faith story from this past year. By faith I came back from Africa with a refreshed, awakened desire to welcome and befriend freshman into our Intervarsity family. By faith, I co-lead my chapter in prayer along with Kim Koepke and Matt Phair. By faith, we led weekly prayer meetings and it has slowly but powerfully made a huge impact on our chapter's heart for prayer. By faith we held a campaign to raise AIDS awareness among our campus and over 700 students wore orange orphan t-shirts to represent the cause. By faith I prayed persistently for my roommate, Kelsey Poore and she became a Christian. By faith, I gave my testimony on the oval of our campus believing God would use my words to impact whoever needed to hear it. By faith, I decided to co-lead all the small group leaders next year for my fourth and final year of school. By faith I continue to live by faith....

Sorry this email is ridiculously long, but I miss having a prayer team to touch base with. One of the richest experiences I had in Kenya was knowing I had a group of people devoted to supporting me while I was away. I cannot thank you all enough.

Love,
Liz