



forever

CHANGED

A Collection of Stories from Pathways Interns
Who Spent a Semester on the Mission Field.

INTRO

Few things will make a lasting, life-changing impact like a semester serving the Kingdom. When a young man or woman goes on a Pathways internship through Team Expansion, they understand the world differently, they evaluate themselves with new insight, and they realize the heart-breaking reality that people are perishing every day without the saving knowledge of the Gospel.

We have seen God using Pathways to call the next generation of workers to the fields. Once they've experienced life on the field, Pathways interns are forever changed. For the rest of their lives, the experience will shape their prayers, influence their choices, and inform their actions.

The following stories are from Pathways interns who served, experienced a life lived for the Kingdom, and came home forever changed.





GROWTH & MATURITY

It's almost impossible to go through the Pathways experience of support-raising, spiritual preparation, training, cross-cultural living, language-learning, and debriefing without experiencing exponential growth and maturity. This semester changes interns emotionally, mentally, and spiritually!



UBER EVANGELISM

During pre-field orientation in Louisville, we learned how to share the Gospel in a short amount of time. You never know how long a conversion will last and if you will ever see that person again. On the field, the workers that we were serving with had us do a project that stretched us and shaped us into better evangelists. They called it "Uber Evangelism." The team sent us to the capital city for the day and gave us a whole list of things to do and explore in the city, while taking Ubers from place to place.

While on these Uber rides, our goal was to share the Gospel and to have a conversation about Jesus with the drivers. Some of our Uber rides were a little longer, like 10-15 minutes, others were quite short, about 5 minutes. My teammate and I took turns sharing the Gospel. Only three of the seven Ubers that we took had drivers who spoke English. Even with the drivers who didn't speak English, we tried to do our best in Arabic. Whenever we shared the Gospel, we pretty much started with the idea that people are sinful and that they need a Savior. Then, we worked our way to the cross and Jesus. This was good practice getting out of my comfort zone and sharing the Gospel with strangers. Most of the times that we shared with people, they rubbed two fingers together and said that Islam and Christianity are the same. We would listen to their point of view and then tell them what we believe.





SPIRIT-LED, NOT TASK-ORIENTED

If I were preparing to go on my internship trip again, I would go with less of a goal in mind. At times, I went to the field with so much of a game plan in mind that I was less open to the nudging of the Holy Spirit. I am very task oriented and when I have a goal in mind, I have trouble focusing on anything other than accomplishing the task at hand.

My narrow-minded tunnel vision cannot compare to the grand plans God has or how God wants to accomplish them. When I'm more open-minded and instead seek the leading of the Holy Spirit, I am able to stop focusing on what I think I should be doing and see more of how God is working.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN'T CONTROL

One thing I learned on my Pathways internship is not to stress the things that I have no control over. There could be so many things that I would want to try to change to make myself comfortable, but that isn't the purpose for being in that place. The host culture has made it this far because they have learned what works best for them, and that is usually different than how we live. I cannot worry about the things that they do in a different manner than I normally would.

I was placed in a certain field because God had prepared a place for me to glorify Him and make an impact there. If I worry about something minuscule, then I am taking away opportunities for God to work. Be adventurous and go with the flow!



THE VALUE OF COMMUNICATION

The most challenging part of my Pathways internship was communicating. I knew beforehand that cross-cultural communication would be difficult, but I underestimated the communication differences within my team! We had to be clear about expectations, over-communicate, and have grace with one another.

The stresses of living in a new and difficult environment meant that everyone was out of their comfort zone. We learned that getting frustrated or being lazy communicators were simply not options. No matter how exhausted or stressed we were, we had to sit down and ask each other how we were truly doing and what our goals would be for the next day.



FAT DISCIPLES

My Pathways experience taught me to be a FAT disciple: faithful, available, and teachable. If you start each day faithfully bringing it to the Lord in prayer and consistently reflecting Him in each moment, opportunities are going to arise. When they come, if you are available, flexible, and willing to set aside your assumptions about how God works and accept the surprise opportunities that He brings about, things start happening! Along the road, if you have a soft, teachable heart that is willing to be humble, bend to what God and others teach you, and adapt, then differences will be made. No doubt about it!



RELATIONSHIPS

Building relationships is a crucial part to every Pathways internship. Interns bond with one another through shared experiences and aligned purpose, and the interactions with the missionaries and local people will lead to lasting connections.



LIKE-MINDED, LIFELONG FRIENDSHIP

When I came for my Pathways internship, I never expected to strike up a friendship with someone who was so passionate and joyful about missions. My new friend had wanted to be a missionary since she was a child, and she was constantly thinking about people she could share the Gospel with.

Our summer began when she gave me a note suggesting we be prayer partners for the summer. And that's exactly what happened as we served on opposite sides of the globe. We checked in with each other, shared pictures of new people we were meeting, and exchanged encouraging verses. Little did I know that we would continue to pray for each other years after that summer. This friendship continues to encourage me and grow my own heart to share and point people to Christ.





SHARING EXPERIENCES

My favorite part of the Pathways internship was the debriefing period after each intern came back from their respective fields. I especially enjoyed getting to hear all of the amazing stories that each person had to share. It was just really neat to see the impact that God could have on so many people in such a short amount of time. I know I personally had lots of stories that I wanted to tell, so it was definitely interesting to see the same thing from the other interns.

COMMON PASSION

The relationships I formed with the other Pathways interns are deeper than other friendships that I have because we are grounded with a common passion for serving Christ. Even three years later, I have a weekly video conference with one of the other interns where we study the Bible and share the joys and challenges of our lives. Some of my truest, closest friendships are with fellow interns who I would have never known if it were not for our summer with Pathways.

One of my favorite moments of the whole summer was returning at the end of the internship to see the other interns and hear about how they saw God working during their experience as well as hearing the funny, sad, and embarrassing stories from the field.



MISSIONARY LIFE

The Pathways internship paints a great picture of what long-term life looks like on the mission field. I got to jump right in and see how a missionary's time is spent. Being there for the summer and not just a week or month was crucial to seeing the joys and struggles that long-term workers face.

The experience that I am most grateful for was the opportunity to live with nationals. I learned so much about their culture as I heard their stories. Most importantly, I was able to share with them about Jesus while we played games, ate dinner, or explored the city!



CONNECTED BY THE GOSPEL

One of the most impactful experiences I had on my internship was time I spent with some women who were believers in a country where the Gospel is illegal. We met in a quiet house in the dark. We did not know the local language yet and the women did not know English, but it would have been considered improper for our male translator to enter the home with us.

Normally, spending time with someone with whom you cannot communicate would be incredibly awkward. It seemed that everything about us was different: language, background, nationality, and culture. However, though we could not speak to one another, we were drawn close because we all had the Holy Spirit and we all had an intense passion for the Gospel. We smiled at one another, compared henna, and laughed at our broken attempts to talk in each other's languages. We basked in the Good News that gave us all hope. We cried happy tears as we rested in knowing that the moment transcended anything that words could have said. It was a very obvious example of how the Holy Spirit can overcome any barrier formed by differences in language, culture, or background.

An aerial photograph of a dense city, likely New York City, viewed through a magnifying glass. The magnifying glass is positioned in the center-left, with its handle extending towards the bottom left. The lens of the magnifying glass focuses on a specific area of the city, making the buildings and streets within that area appear larger and more detailed. The rest of the city is visible in the background, but it is slightly out of focus. The sky is a clear blue with some light clouds.

MISSIONAL WORLDVIEW

As Pathways interns experience new places, unreached people, and the lives of missionaries, their understanding of the world and the need for the Gospel changes dramatically, leading to new thoughts, prayers, and actions.



PRAYING WITH FOCUS

If I could redo my preparation for my summer Pathways internship, I would have prayed differently. I didn't need more words; I needed sharper focus. After my internship, I understood how to pray against the spiritual strongholds that were impacting the lives of people living all around me — people whom I would meet, pray for, share a meal with, and long for them to know Christ.

I think I prayed well for the training process, fundraising, my fellow interns, and the full-time missionaries I would be serving with. But once I arrived on the field, I saw and experienced the darkness of the place God had invited me to. It was then that I realized I did not have the power or ability to change the people or their situation and that I needed Jesus in ways I hadn't realized before. I am thankful to have witnessed the power of prayer since that time. Desperate prayer has given me hope when I am tempted to despair in light of the seemingly impossible remaining task of proclaiming the Gospel to all nations. God has shown me how to pray for people — to see them reconciled back to Himself — and I don't think there's another prayer more worthy to pray than that.





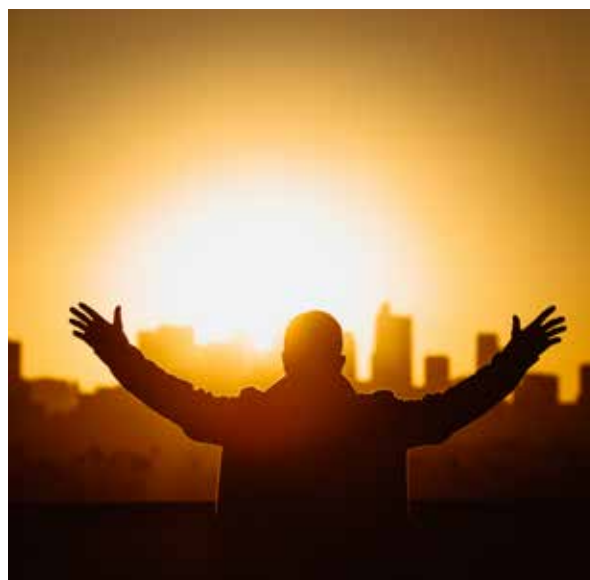
PREPARING FOR A CROSS-CULTURAL LIFE

I think that Pathways is the perfect fit for anybody who is considering moving abroad to become a missionary. Pathways gives a person an idea about what language-learning, adapting to the culture, and serving in a cross-cultural setting look like. Pathways does a fantastic job at preparing you for the field and telling you about all the challenges that you might face and how to overcome them.

Looking back on this internship, one of the biggest things that I learned is how to push myself to the limits. I was exhausted every week. We did so much, including language learning, teaching English, doing small projects, and exploring the country. I realized that moving abroad is not as easy as it seems. Language learning is time-consuming and difficult, but God makes it worth it. The joy that you get from sharing the Gospel and seeing the change in people's lives is priceless.

GOD CAN USE ME

I met a student at a sports camp who had never heard of Jesus before. At the end of the week, he asked me why following Jesus was so important to me. Sharing who Jesus is and what He has done for me with that camper was one of the most significant moments in my life. I learned that God could use me, both here and now and to bring Him glory for eternity. I learned that sharing the Good News of Christ only requires a faith in Jesus and willingness to be a blessing.



MOBILIZING THE CHURCH

One thing that I loved about my internship was how I saw my home church become mobilized for the cause of reaching the unreached. Many of the people from my home church have never had the opportunity to go overseas. Despite this, my church embraced the cause of reaching the unreached with open arms and went above and beyond to help in any way possible. People donated aluminum cans and scrap metal that could be traded for money to buy my plane ticket. People donated old cell phones on which audio Bibles could be downloaded for new believers who could not read.

During every single bump along the road, I rested in knowing that I was completely wrapped in the prayers of my home church. My tiny hometown church was convicted to go above and beyond to bring the Gospel to groups of people that they would likely never meet and to carry out the Great Commission.



GOD IS AT WORK

One day while my teammate and I were prayer walking around our hostel, we met a lady who was excited to practice her English with us. We asked if we could pray for her, and she asked us to pray for her household and for peace to return. While we prayed, she was physically shaking. She was very emotional and grateful. We found out her name meant "sculpture." We then got to tell her about the character of God and how He made us special as His masterpiece.

Something about the whole situation made us acutely aware of how little we were doing and how much God was already at work in this lady's life. It reminded me of what our host missionaries told us when we first arrived: "You are not bringing the presence of God to this city. He is already here."



A silhouette of a person standing on a wooden platform, looking up with hands raised in prayer or contemplation. The background is a sunset over a mountain range, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a warm, orange glow. The sky transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a pale blue at the top.

CALL TO MISSIONS

For many interns, God uses the Pathways experience to confirm or provide a clear call to serve unreached people groups as their next step of faithful obedience. Often, Pathways interns become missional apprentices and full-time workers for the Gospel.



ONLY GOD'S STRENGTH

The missionaries who hosted me sacrificed a lot to move to a difficult place. They left successful and fulfilling jobs, gave up their dreams of a comfortable retired life, and moved overseas. They left behind their young adult children and grandkids. I was extremely convicted when I realized if I were in their shoes, I would have counted the cost too great.

They told me about their struggle with the decision to move overseas. One of them said that he calculated how much money he could donate if he stayed in the States and just sent funds. He seriously considered whether it would be better for the Kingdom if he continued working and instead donated toward the cause. He asked his mission pastor at church for wisdom and was told, "When you stand before God on judgement day, He is not going to ask, 'Why didn't you stay and just give money?' He is probably going to ask, 'Why did you feel my call and not go?'"

This story really impacted me. The missionaries left so much to work with an unreached and difficult people group. At this stage of my life, I feel I have little to lose, and the epic stories of faithful men and women overseas are attractive. However, a desire for adventure will not sustain me long-term in missions. Only God's strength and my alignment to His purposes will help me persevere and see that no cost is too great.





SAYING YES

The Pathways program is an opportunity to discover God, yourself, and what serving as a long-term cross-cultural worker really looks and feels like. I learned during Pathways that God has given me a servant's heart, and that He desired to use it to show His glory among the nations that have never heard of Him! I found it amazing that God could use me in a place where I wasn't fluent in the local language, had no professional experience, and had very little understanding of what missions was — and He is still teaching me today!

Through Pathways with Team Expansion, God is inviting college students to be challenged, encouraged, and shaped in their faith while serving among and blessing people around the world who have never heard the Good News of Christ — and won't hear if more servants don't say "Yes!" to His invitation.

EVEN ME

My Pathways experience showed me that I can be a missionary — which I didn't think was possible for me. Before Pathways, I had major doubts that God could use a cancer-survivor with a speech impediment in any useful way. But during Pathways, I learned about how God was working through missionaries. And of course, He canceled every doubt.

During my internship, I met a missionary who has cancer, and it's like God was saying "So what if you had cancer?" Then, I got to learn about all the various ministries and needs that could be used to share the Gospel — needs that I could fill! Before the internship, I focused on what I couldn't do for God. After Pathways, I saw how God could use me to glorify His Name.



PRAYER AND PURPOSE

I was on track to be a physical therapist, and then God interrupted my plans and drew me toward missions. I changed my major, my school, and my state to follow His leading, and then I signed up for a Pathways internship to get some experience in the field. My team was serving refugees, and we were doing all of the things we'd been taught at orientation. We were pursuing spiritual conversations, and every attempt was hitting a wall. It seemed like we were wasting our time.

In that moment of frustration and confusion, my team unified together to pray even more persistently. We set up a 24-hour prayer calendar so that one of us was praying at all times. We continued to have conversations and started to see very small bits of hope. We thought maybe one day the missionaries who were living there would see fruit.



On our last day, we got a text from a refugee man we'd been talking with. "We want to change." We hurried to meet with him, and found two other men with him. Each man had his own journey to faith in Jesus, but all three were baptized that day. I knew it was almost unheard of for Pathways interns to see this kind of transformation in their short time on the field. I was humbled and awed, and it felt like God was saying, "This is what I want to do with you." I knew this was the purpose He was confirming for my life.

EDITED BY
Carla Williams

DESIGNED BY
JC Williams

STORIES ADAPTED FROM
PATHWAYS INTERNS
Gloria, International Services
Anthony, Japan
Elijah, Jordan
Kenyon, New Zealand
Sara, Philippines
Sarah, India
Ryan, Sicily

