

From Niger To Bolivia

Hannah Cordle, *October 2005*



Choosing to go to Bolivia with SIM was an easy decision to make. How come? To put it simply the GAP programme that I participated in before I began at Bristol University left an indelible mark on me. My gap year was amazing! God was so generous in giving me a year of great variety in which I learnt a huge amount.

Without even mentioning my placement in Niger I can rave about all that I experienced during two months at Wetheringsett Manor. Though we learnt a great deal about mission, it was clear that those teaching us were also investing in our futures, with the desire to see us stand firm and persevere as Christians. We became a part of life at the manor, and were on the receiving end of incredible hospitality. SIM is an organisation where the people love God, humbly depend on Him in prayer and have captured His heart to reach the lost across the globe, whilst caring for each individual with whom they come into contact. That's why when I realised I could do more or less whatever I wanted for the

year abroad of my French and Spanish degree, SIM-UK was my first port of call!

As soon as I heard about the El Alfarero student centre in Sucre, Bolivia, I thought it sounded like a brilliant project. And I wasn't disappointed! After meeting Graham and Debbie Frith, the directors of the project, I felt sure I wanted to be involved. Naturally my Bolivian experience varied greatly from the time I spent in Niger ... different continent, language and culture! And yet in both cases I was filled with great confidence and peace at knowing the unchanging nature and grace of my Heavenly Father, and was humbled to be partnered by so many people who wanted to pray for me and encourage me along the way.

Being welcomed by the SIM team was a reminder of the blessing it is to be united in Christ with other believers, and how much we need genuine support and friendship. Though it was all very new, it was great to get stuck in straight away, and thankfully this time I felt that what I was doing was more up my street and I was encouraged to use my gifts. I loved getting alongside some of the Bolivian students and being able to study the Bible with a group of girls. I also learnt a huge amount from the courses I went to, and I was excited to see how this is equipping the Bolivian church.

Interestingly, the insight into mission that Niger had given me, meant that my expectations were more realistic. Strangely I had thought that God would be more tangible and reveal Himself to me in new ways when I was taking part in cross-cultural mission in Africa. However, in Niger, at uni and in Bolivia I have realised that God HAS revealed Himself so clearly in Jesus, His living Word! Therefore, wherever I am in the world, I need to feed my hungry soul on the truth so that I am daily living in the reality of what the cross has achieved, living out my new identity as a righteous child of God!!

In Niger and Bolivia there were both joys and struggles, and God taught me more of Himself through this AND generously provided me with special individuals to share many of these things with. In both locations I was spurred on by seeing God answer prayer and by being part of teams that knew the humbling and yet encouraging truth that with God all things are possible! Additionally, in both places I felt I received more than I gave, and that God filled my cup to overflowing because He's so abundantly generous!

A great lesson I have learnt from both of these short term involvements in God's work in different places in his world is that cross-cultural mission has unique challenges but also very unique blessings. It was wonderful to experience this first hand, and to see how God has tenderly shaped and changed me as a result. I have also become more thoroughly convinced that cross-cultural mission is massively exciting! More than that, we can all be involved ... in fact we all have a responsibility to play our part, though this will vary from person to person. I am currently thanking God for the opportunities that being back in Bristol presents. I can be praying, giving and hopefully sharing God's heart for the nations. And amazingly the nations are coming to us ... so it is exciting to be involved in getting to know International students right on my doorstep!

0 comments

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Urgent Prayer Need

Pray for the country of Nigeria - for peace to be restored, and for the Lord's comfort for all those affected by the recent violence.