

SRI LANKA



The City:

Colombo, Sri Lanka

Arriving into Sri Lanka, I had no expectations regarding the people, much less the country's environment. The minute I stepped off the airplane, I definitely knew I was no longer in the United States.

After meeting the team and a 14 hour "nap" due to jet lag, I was ready to begin exploring the city of Colombo. However, a month later, the adventure still continues.

There has been an endless amount of coffee shops, fast food, restaurants, shops and historical places to explore just within Colombo. I am amazed daily by how beautiful everything is here, whether walking the streets or riding on tuk tuks (taxi) throughout the city.

Daily interactions with the people here has taught me the true meaning of hospitality and humbled me tremendously. Every single person I have made conversation with has addressed me with such kindness and sincerity. They know we are not locals but have received us with open arms.





People:

Even though it is my first time coming to Sri Lanka, I have never felt so at home and welcomed as well as here. Sri Lankans have gone above and beyond with their hospitality.

They have such big hearts and are true examples of willing vessels and what it actually means to have a servants heart.

Between traveling through the city, church, restaurants and hotel, we have not had a bad experience so far. Everyone is so loving and friendly.

Many times we've traveled by tuk tuk, all the drivers enjoy answering questions and telling us all about their beautiful country. We've gone to explore recommendations from these drivers and ended up loving the places.

Despite Christians being the minority here, we have not faced any negative situations because of our beliefs. All people are accepting and treat everyone with so much respect. My heart has been so overwhelmed by the love shown by all these people who struggle much more than I will ever. Definitely a first hand eye opening experience.



Training & Leadership:

Three weeks of training have come and gone. It is bittersweet to see all these amazing new role models who have impacted and poured into the whole team leave while we continue our apprenticeship weeks. However, I cannot begin to describe how much change each one has made in me.

I got the privilege of meeting Alan and Georgene Shalm, missionaries to Pakistan. Also our missions regional director Lynden and Kathy Shalm. Such kind and funny people with a huge passion for missions and even greater for new generations of missionaries.

Sister Angie Clark and Cori Smith were great supporters of helping the team to push beyond our comfort zones and believe how God hand picked each one of us to be here.

Meeting Brother and Sister Howell felt like family. Previously serving as missionaries to El Salvador and still continuing to follow God’s voice as Global Missions General director.

All these wonderful leaders were strongly led by God to basically perform open heart surgery on the whole team and I am incredibly grateful for such an unforgettable experience.

Lynden and Kathy Shalm



Cori Smith



Brother & Sister Howell



Alan and Georgene Shalm



Angie Clark



Training into Action:

This past Sunday, we had a familiar face join us for morning service at church. One of the hotel staff who treated and served us with such respect began to ask questions and curious of our praying, devotions and training being done. Invitation to church was offered and he gladly received it and brought his family along. God is already working!

The Great Coffee Adventure:

For those who don't know, I am a major coffee drinker! Not just any coffee but strong good coffee. Yes, Sri Lanka has amazing tea; however, coffee is not a priority here for some odd reason. As we try new coffee shops here and there, in search for good espresso, we manage to stick to a Coffee Bean that's about 30 minutes from our hotel currently.

As we ended our Saturday night with a trip to Coffee Bean, we came across some guys who were scheduled to play some live music later that night. As we initiated conversation with them, they played and sang one of their original songs for us. After they had requested us to sing for them which we then mentioned we sing Christians songs. They requested "How Great Is Our God." As we all joined our voices and harmonized, God came and moved so strongly.

As one song led to another, we could feel how God was amongst us. Tears began to fall, hearts opened, praise and worship was lifted and that coffee shop became a worship place.

After worship and fellowshiping with our new friends, we discovered that they are all from different churches here in Colombo but join together for a worship night event.

My heart was overflowing with so many emotions as we made our way back to our hotel. Every single one of us could not stop smiling and were speechless how God's hand is most definitely controlling our every step.



*Fun fact, I had no idea Coffee Bean is not as popular as Starbucks in other states like in California.

Gangaramaya Temple:

A few weeks ago, we got to visit a Buddhist temple. I honestly had no expectations and viewed it as a tourist activity. However, the second I stepped into the temple I could feel something supernatural. Deep within my heart, something felt off and bothered, but I didn't know why or how to explain the feeling.

As I walked through the temple, I passed by other people who were worshipping and praying. This is where I felt a deeper tug in my spirit.

The question that immediately came into my head was 'How do these people worship an object' followed by a strong burden in my heart like Jesus said in Luke 23:34, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

In no means did I feel like I was judging these people, but it opened my eyes to realize that these people truly don't know better. They are just following traditions. However, this is why God sent me. This is why God calls us. To be able to reach the souls who **do not know**.



Elephant Orphanage:

The day has come and unfortunately gone, but we got to visit an elephant orphanage in the city of Pinnawala. Such an amazing once in a lifetime experience.

Yes, I got to ride a beautiful elephant. I do admit, I was terrified when I first sat down on the elephant. Mainly because I thought I was going to fall forward, but luckily I didn't.

Overall, I am so glad I got to experience it. I'll forever remember that moment.



Next Steps Team:

As some of you may already know, there are 14 other young ladies on this life changing experience with me. All have quickly become family in just the first few weeks.

It is a little crazy to think that a month ago, all 15 of us were in different states and had never met. Now we have spent every single day for the past month together and made incredible memories.

We've all connected so strongly spiritually and grown so much through our daily devotions and prayer time while in training.

I am so grateful for each one of them and can't wait to see what more God has in store for us in this country.

Our social media is limited due to country's religious restrictions.

Please continue to pray for the team and I. But most importantly, pray for Sri Lanka as we serve here.

