

January-February

THE HARVESTER

Lifelines: an outdoor and experiential ministry of Cru



15 Days + 5,800 miles = lives changed



Paradise... Lost

“But you are the *chosen* people! Of all the people on earth, God chose *you*! God treasures you,” I pressed emphatically as I gazed at the bemused faces of our new Israeli friends.

We were staying at a lodge in Bariloche, a much-frequented stop for Israeli hikers making their way through Patagonia. For a week our team served at the lodge, befriending our fellow hikers and learning about their culture while sharing our own. Our Israeli friends were surprised that we knew so much about the Hebrew “Tanakh,” and we were surprised that they didn’t! Most of the Israelis we met—just finished with their military service and taking a year off to travel—were agnostic, and Jewish in heritage only. But as one of them said, “We are traveling to learn new ideas.” Encountering Christians who believed them to be the people of God, and learning about Jesus, were definitely new ideas. All week we cooked together, rock climbed, played cards and talked late into the night. On Friday night we celebrated a traditional Shabbat meal followed by a Bible study with the gospel message. A number of our friends left with Bibles, some of them began reading the Tanakh for themselves, and prayerfully all left with the seeds of faith. Our team left knowing how to share the Gospel from the Old Testament, with a love for the Israeli people, and with a new realization of how blessed we are to be counted as children of Abraham.



Two of my favorite new Israeli friends!!!



The lamb being prepared for our traditional Argentine Asado and Shabbat meal



Our mission to Patagonia was three-fold: 1.) to develop students as faith-filled followers of Christ 2.) to share the Gospel and be a witness wherever we went 3.) to scout out the area for future mission trips.

From the very start, missing luggage and delayed flights caused us to pray fervently and trust in the Lord for His provision. We found out on the plane that we could not cross into Brazil for our layover without visas, which we did not have. Then, two days before our return trip, we discovered that all our tickets had been canceled and resold! Throughout all of this, God faithfully carried us and increased our faith. Meanwhile he caused our team to bond deeply, and gave the students opportunity to open up about real fears and hurts that they had not yet expressed. One of our students—a self-proclaimed loner who was trying hard to be a man in his own effort—finished the trip a radically different person, depending on others and seeking real relationship. His whole countenance went from detached and aloof to playful and sincere. Others broke down in tears and were met with grace and truth over broken relationships, sexual sin, neglect, absent fathers, and depression and anxiety. Even as God was renewing them, He was also emboldening them to be His ambassadors. Kahler came in feeling that it was wrong to share her faith, and God so moved in her heart that on her way home she took the initiative to share the gospel with a stranger on the plane and was bouncing with excitement when she told me about it!

One of my great joys was that our daughter, Emma, and my brother, Andy, were part of our team this year. Emma was worried about backpacking for the first part of our trip since the pack was about as big as she is. 😊 But, she slogged through mud, climbed the grueling heights of the Andes, and ate her freeze-dried meals without complaint! In fact everyone learned the value of perseverance and encouragement since our route was longer than we anticipated from our pre-trip planning. But the views and handiwork of God were stunning. We also took a day off in the middle of the trip to go white-water rafting, which was a huge highlight for all. We ended at the border of Chile (pictured below) and hiked out of the gorge while horses packed out the rafts. As mostly non-Spanish speakers, we were hugely dependent on the Lord, and yet He crossed language barriers to help us connect with natives and with other travelers. We were blessed that all the Israelis spoke English, and that God led us to friendly helpers along the way. Although no one prayed to receive Christ, we planted seeds everywhere and saw the evidence of God dramatically at work in our own lives. I can't wait to return!



We served at the lodge by cleaning, reseeding the lawn, and digging a new leach field. We also helped a local church lay tiles in their sanctuary. Over 75% of Argentines are Catholic; only 9% are Protestant.



Here, the girls are reading Colossians, the book we used to teach our team how to study the Bible. During the hike we also taught the students how to share the Gospel, and each person shared parts of their testimony around the campfire.