



the gillespies and the Good News

April 4, 2011

We've made it back from Florida with big smiles on our faces.

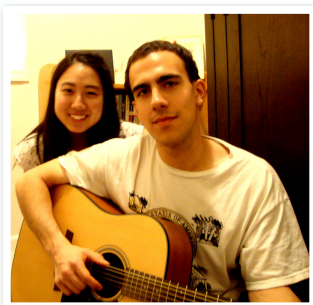
(After most Spring Break trips that would be a given, but not after this one!)

Our Spring Break trip this year was full of surprise and adventure, and we are now praising God for the great things He's done. The big surprise came a week before we were due to leave for the trip. We had recruited nine students from two different Christian groups on campus to go down with us to serve in the inner city of Orlando for a week. We had been talking about God's heart for the poor, doing quite a bit of fundraising for the trip, and then one week to the day before we were to leave, due to unforeseen circumstances, our trip was cancelled. Uh-oh.

The next morning we met with our team of students and pitched to them the idea of going to a different Campus Crusade conference in Florida, this one in Panama City Beach. Every year CCC hosts a conference called *Big Break* for college students from across the country to learn how to share their faith with others. The conference is complete with hands-on experience: the students spend their afternoons on the beach talking with spring-breakers who are hanging out by the shore.

Needless to say, this was a bit of a shock for our students, and a big ramp up in challenge from doing hands-on service with the poor. Evangelism on the beach? To half-naked, partying college students? To our surprise and joy, our team of students was game for the challenge. A couple of them were genuinely excited; most were very nervous, but trying to have a good attitude. Two of the students were honest enough to tell us that had they known this was going to be the Spring Break trip, they'd never have signed up, but since they had nowhere else to go, they were willing to come along.

JACOB was one of those two most reluctant students. We'll let him share with you, himself, about the experience:



The unexpected shift from service work in Orlando to evangelism in Panama City Beach immediately struck me as God making a bold statement in my life. At first I was reticent to embrace the change and approached the trip with ironic detachment, but as soon as we began our arduous journey I was enchanted with the spring break experience with [Campus Crusade for Christ]. Faye and Jason provided wonderful guidance for the nine of us and we had the most incredible road trip followed by a wonderful family-esque experience in the condo in Panama City. The substance of the trip was powerfully moving, as well, and wonderfully edifying spiritually. The opportunity to understand and practice outreach and evangelism proved far more meaningful than I could ever have imagined and I am so thankful that God's plan worked out the way it did. Approaching college students from different backgrounds and spiritual perspectives and engaging them in substantive and fruitful conversations was an opportunity I never anticipated enjoying so much. The skills and experiences I gained in Panama City Beach will prove invaluable in my time at Dartmouth as a growing student and Christian.

Our students were coached in how to be good listeners, ask good questions, and ask permission to share the good news that Jesus, our Savior, can heal and change a life. They were incredibly courageous, approaching very intimidating people, loving and engaging others deeply, and taking the risk to ask if they could share their own beliefs about spirituality and Jesus. We were so proud of them.

We've been back for one week and already Jacob has had two conversations with acquaintances back on campus whom he says he wouldn't have talked with had he not gone on our Spring Break trip. *Please thank God with us for His incredible grace and pray that these nine students would continue to take such risks back at Dartmouth.* This Saturday we are all going out on campus to ask random students if they would share with us their opinions about spiritual things. Woo hoo!

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