

While holding a branch of hyssop in my hand, we were reminded about God's mercy to His people during the first Passover. Because of the shed blood of a lamb for each household, then spread over the doorpost, God allowed His judgment to pass over the houses of Israel (Exodus 12:22-23). What a foreshadowing of Jesus becoming our final sacrificial lamb! We have long known that truth, but it takes on a whole new texture while holding hyssop in your hand and listening to the story.



Walking on the Mount of Olives and recalling the weight that Jesus felt while there was a very sobering experience. It was here that Jesus surrendered His desires fully to the Father. In the face of the cross and separation from His Father, He still prayed "Your will be done" (Matthew 26:39). I couldn't help but think what am I still not surrendering?

The weight of a millstone usually isn't something to write home about. But when you're standing 15 feet from one, you realize its massive weight — and significance. In Matthew 18:6, Jesus tells the disciples it would be better to drown in the sea than to cause someone to stumble in following Him. As we stood in the ruins of Capernaum, which was considered Jesus' hometown during His years of ministry, our guide Charlie shared this passage and pointed at the Sea of Galilee; it was a mere 100 yards away. In that moment, it was like a coin dropped. I finally felt the gravity of what Jesus is saying in this lesson. His passion to protect His sheep is fierce!

The stop in Capernaum wasn't the only time that our guides brought God's Word alive by giving us context, significance, and insights. Both of our guides, Charlie and Jim, are Moody Bible professors who have previous experience with pastoring churches. Even though their Old Testament knowledge is off the charts, they also have hearts to shepherd; the ultimate aim is to help us worship the Lord as a result of what we see and experience during the trip. We appreciate they didn't view us as primarily tourists, but more as pilgrims.

We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to experience the Holy Land and God's Word at the same time. Our personal devotional times and ministry efforts will be much richer because of it! Thanks for praying for our trip, and for our month of Sabbatical. You can pray that we would continue to gain insight from our experiences in the coming months and years. If you have any questions about our trip, please ask! We'd love to share more details.



Charlie illustrating how Gideon chose his 300 men in Judges 7



floating in the Dead Sea



Jesus' burial and resurrection site



walking in the Kidron Valley (John 18)