

Coby Bracken

The bulk of the mission trip can be explained in just three newly obtained labels— Peruvian Adventurer, “Larryette,” and Gringo. These labels describe the many different aspects of the experience.

Throughout the trip, the team was blessed to have the saying “Peruvian Adventure!” – usually expressed in a long tongue-in-cheek manner – continually shouted out in every circumstance. I am proud to say that every team member has successfully earned the label of Peruvian adventurer. Whether it was experiencing thrilling Peruvian driving, or seeing stacks of guinea pigs sliced up and laying on a rack to be eaten, we got through it all and learned a lot about the vibrant and interesting culture of Peru. Part of the mission trip was seeing and appreciating God’s creation, and seeing these gorgeous mountains and things in nature makes you think and appreciate God’s splendor and greatness. Seeing these glacial lakes with the most beautiful color really puts you in a spot where you have to stop yourself and take it all in, because sometimes it can be so overwhelming. Driving up on Saturday morning to the middle of the mountain range was one of my favorite experiences on the trip. A unique beautiful landscape was displayed everywhere you looked. In one view, you saw the city, the snow-capped mountains, the fields, the canyon-looking rocks, and all of it was in complete silence. It would have been impossible to not take time to just sit there, gaze at God’s creation, and just pray.

If there were an award for coolest missionaries, Mr. Larry and Mrs. Sandy would win in a heartbeat. It didn’t take long for us to all fall in love with the Rockwells. The two of them make a Dynamic Duo of great hospitality, never-ending jokes, and a massive supply of things to learn. By the end of the week many of us (including myself) became “Larryettes”, basically low-key members of his fan club. Mr. Larry constantly taught me things like Peruvian culture, how to sing songs in Quechua, and things about the Bible. And Mrs. Sandy always made sure everyone had food in their bellies and a smile on their face. Seeing people who have moved out of their comfort zone, and given their lives to reaching out to people who need the truth was incredibly rewarding. Just seeing them and the work they have done really makes me consider a life in the mission field – or at least continuing with mission trips. Gringo, meaning “Outsider” or “Foreigner,” perfectly illustrates my initial perception of entering the village. Not being in control of the situation and really not knowing what to expect was kind of difficult for me. Honestly, coming into an unfamiliar environment where I felt like an outsider, where the people live nothing like me, look nothing like me, and don’t even speak the same language as me was really intimidating. Thankfully, I found myself without worries as soon as I saw the kids. Despite being called a Gringo during soccer games, I did not feel like an outsider whatsoever. The joy I got from just sitting down and laughing with the kids was almost overwhelming. Physically watching these kids engaging with the gospel for the first time, experiencing God’s love, and taking a break from their difficult lives was more rewarding than I could ever ask for. Let’s just say that this fantastic trip was a blessing to me, and I’ve already started praying about where God might want to send me next year.

David Brown

My experience with going on this mission’s trip was phenomenal. I went on my first airplane, which was not as bad as I thought it would be. When we arrived in Peru, we stayed in a hotel in Lima for a night. The hotel was fine, but that night I felt dehydrated due to water not being available until the next morning, (Although I drank 6 cups of orange juice before we got the water), and the faucet water being dirty. I managed to get through it mostly because my room had AC, which helped a bit. The view from the hotel room that I and one of the other missionaries stayed in was spectacular, because this was my first time in not just Lima, but in Peru. The city had the familiar vibe to Baltimore, but the difference was that it was bigger and the buildings were older looking.

The next morning after breakfast we took a 9 hour bus ride to Huaraz, Peru. We rode in a Movil Bus. It was very luxurious, but got really uncomfortable around the 7th hour. We went down a windy road with mountains off the side to get to Huaraz. We went on what I think was the most horrifying road I have ever been on. Everyone else was fine. We were close to the edge of the road, and below the edge was the ocean, and on the other side was a massive sand dune. We also passed by a desert and some old villages. I believe we left Lima at 11:00 AM, and arrived in Huaraz around 10:00 PM.

The morning after we arrived in Huaraz, we stayed at a missionary station. We met in the kitchen for pretty much all of our activities, except for the morning devotions, where we met at random places around the missionary station. (Me, John and another missionary studied our morning devotions in one of the apartments, and the rest studied outside in random areas of the courtyard). We all studied our nightly devotions in the kitchen. On Sunday morning, we visited a church down the street, where they talked about the Parable of The Prodigal Son.

Monday afternoon, we headed off to a Quechuan village, where we taught the kids Bible lessons through skits, crafts, and games. The village was on top of a mountain, so it took a couple of days to get used to the altitude. We had been driven up the road VIA a van. The road going up the mountain looked more terrifying than the road up to Huaraz at first, but John had told me to just focus on the scenery, and ever since then I was excited to get back on that road. We then came back to the village every day until the 27th, where we performed other Bible skits, crafts, and games. I must admit that I was not very good at some of the crafts. We also sang a few Peruvian Christian songs to the Quechuan villagers as well. We then said our farewells to the villagers on the evening of the 27th.

On the final day, we visited Huascarán National Park, where we got to see and take pictures of the Llanganuco Lakes. Everything in that park was beautiful. The lakes were a turquoise color due to the minerals of the glaciers feeding the water. The mountains were snowcapped as well. The park was home to the tallest mountain in Peru, the Huascarán Mountain.

Later that same day, we went shopping in one of the plazas in Huaraz, (Although I am not a huge fan of shopping, unless it is grocery shopping). We then went to dinner at a Peruvian restaurant, where I had steak, fries, and vegetables.

On the 29th, we packed up and took a 7 hour bus ride to the Peruvian airport. We then arrived at the Fort Lauderdale airport at 7:00 AM on the 30th of July, then made it back to Washington DC later that day where we took the church van back to Aisquith.

Being the first time out of the country, it was a little tough getting used to unfamiliar territory. During the entire trip, I felt home sick. But it has taught me what to expect next time and how to make it easier to cope with. This trip has also taught me how to understand younger kids more, as I am the youngest in my family, (Although I have 2 nephews and 1 niece that sometimes come over). Overall, what I had participated in was absolutely a privilege, and has overall, taught me how to toughen up.

I would like to thank my Pastor John, the Rockwells for letting us stay at the missionary station, all the other missionaries who participated, and everybody who prayed and donated. I would not have been able to go if it were not for all of you.

John Ceselsky

When pondering what this year's trip would be like, I found myself a bit anxious. We were going somewhere we, and I, have never been. We were going to work with missionaries that I had only had the pleasure of talking with twice in my life. This was a relatively young team, experience wise – 2 were on their first trip, 4 were on their second (and for 1, it was a first with me), and 1 who had been on 2 trips, and then there was Julie and myself. How would this new team work in a new environment? And even more concerning, how would we do working at 10,000 – 12,000 feet above sea level? I have to say

though that as I feared some of these things, I had great trust in the Lord who was sending us, and in each of the 9 of us who were going.

All of that being said, it didn't take very long for some of my anxiousness to find reason for showing itself. In Reagan National while waiting for our first flight, we learned that our flight was going to be roughly 40 minutes late. That would put us landing in Ft. Lauderdale while our flight to Lima was already boarding – when I purchased the tickets, the airline assured me that we would have plenty of time to make our connection, but the staff at National wasn't so sure. Would we make it? Would our luggage make it? Nervous team leader. We made our way quickly from one terminal to another in Ft. Lauderdale to find that this second flight was late too – so we were fine. By late, I mean that we ended up leaving 2 hours late – which included sitting in the plane just off the runway for over an hour. This travel day was long, but we treated to a nice hotel in Lima.

The next day brought what should have been an 8 hour bus ride from Lima to Huaraz. Again, we were treated to comfort as the Rockwells purchased executive seats for us – our 9 ½ hour ride through beautiful and unexpected scenery was at least in comfort. When we arrived in Huaraz and met our hosts, anxiousness and fear began to subside. Larry and Sandy, as well as their son, Jonathan, took great care of us and we all stayed in complete comfort. We were treated to comfortable surroundings, amazing food, and a great view of the snow-capped mountains.

The team spent most of the week prepping for crafts, reviewing games, and practicing the acting out of Bible texts. The challenge of this was trying to sync our acting and pantomiming up with Larry's reading of the text in Quechuan. This was quite a challenge, but our young actors did an amazing job. Basically, each day we did a mini-VBS for the children (and some of the older folks) in the village of Huallcor. I should mention that the drive up each day was striking. By the second day, some of the children of the village were coming out to greet us as we drove into the village and then they would run after us up to the square where we would meet. They would often race after us as we were leaving too. The children were precious and we loved every minute we had with them, making it hard to leave on Thursday. It is our prayer that the seeds of the Gospel were planted and watered and that the Lord would bring in a great harvest among these children.

While our return trip was extremely long (the bus ride followed immediately by two flights) and again brought delays, it was much easier.

As I look back now at the anxiousness and the fears, I am reminded of just how foolish I am – trusting in the strength and wisdom of man. The Lord tells us not to be anxious about anything, and while that is often the case for me, mission trips can sometimes bring out the worst. While I trust Christ completely and our Lord's sovereign plan, I, like so many of us, need to be constantly reminded of my Father's love and care. That was one of the greatest blessings for me with this trip – that and making new friends while serving the Lord in a culture so far away. May we all continue to pray for the Rockwells, for the Quechuan people, for the spread of the Gospel – all for the glory and honor of our triune God.

Julie Ceselsky

I've been going on Mission Trips over the past 25 years, eager to obey The Great Commission in Mark 16:15 to "Go...preach the gospel to the ends of the earth.", UNTIL traveling there via Peru! Considering what it took to get there, I felt like I couldn't go that far ever again! BUT GOD, gave us the best all-round Mission Trip that I've ever been on, even with the smallest team! The accommodations, food, weather, working entirely with kids, no manual labor or chores, help with crafts, great team dynamic, the best day off, the most sleep and time ever spent with the missionaries, who made ALL this possible, especially Sandy, who was recovering from shingles!!

John and I were being challenged, in multiple ways, right before the trip as well. BUT GOD, stayed true to His Word in Romans 8:28, "To work all things out for good, for those who love Him & are called according to His purpose.", even though it was last minute! So, it shouldn't have surprised us when we found this to be true on the mission field as well. One instance is when Coby, unintentionally, was getting the attention of some of the older girls. The day after our group discussed it, I appreciated Coby suggesting I go over to the older girls to give them name tags while he went to the younger kids. I found it interesting that one of the girls was named Genesis, so after trying to explain it was the first book of the Bible, I had Sandy come over to translate. She not only started with Creation in Genesis, but summarized the Bible all the way to the Resurrection!!!! These girls personally heard The Good News all because God took something seemingly negative and turned it around for GOOD!!!

So, will I, and should you, keep going to the ends of the earth, no matter what, to proclaim The Gospel? Most definitely!! And, not just because it's the last thing Christ commanded us to do, but He will NOT return until ALL nations have heard, and the LAST person in The Lamb's Book of Life is saved! Which every Christian should desire more than anything this world has to offer! According to II Peter 3:11-13, "...what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells".

Angelo Cicone

As someone who has never been on a mission's trip before, this was an amazing first experience. I think the biggest problem we had, was that literally every plane and bus we took ended up being late. Besides that minor setback, the rest of the trip went flawlessly, in my opinion. After a few days of long travel we finally got to meet our wonderful hosts, The Rockwells. They gave us comfy accommodations and fed us amazing home-cooked meals with a fresh-baked dessert every night. I even got a whole apartment to myself! Each night we would practice a skit with Mr. Larry that was based on a Bible story. It was much harder than we expected because he would tell the story in the native language of the town which was Quechuan. Because of this, half the time we had no idea what he was saying, but we tried to learn key words so we would know when to act out our part. Also, I always got chosen to act out the weird parts, including a demon-possessed man and the devil. However, I had a blast doing all of my parts. In the morning, after breakfast, we would finish setting up the craft for that day and then would start the next craft for the next day. We would usually sing songs while we did this to pass the time. Once everything was set up and we had eaten lunch we head up to the village which was about a 40 minute ride up the side of a mountain.

After we arrived at the small courtyard of the village, we would set up our fairly simple sets. Although after a couple of days we would play a little game with the kids at the beginning so that we could gather more of the kids together. Then we would have the kids sit on the steps of the church that was there and we would act out our skit. Mr. Larry would then ask the kids some questions about the story to make sure that they understood it and then we would let some of the kids come up and act it out. The last day we even got some of the older kids to read the story. After the story we would have the kids and even some of the parents do the craft which was based off the story of that day. Finally, we would play a game that was also based on one of the Bible stories and a few of the days we went up to their soccer field to play soccer, which is much harder to play at 12,000 feet. So this was our daily schedule for the whole week except Friday which was a special day. To start off it was Peru's Independence Day, but the really exciting thing was that we got to see the absolutely beautiful lakes that rest at the bottom of the mountain range. Then later that day we got to visit the market and see tons of little trinkets and clothes and lastly, we went out to dinner and we tried guinea pig! That

concludes our Peruvian Adventure! Hopefully we can come back for a part two in the future. Overall, I had a great experience with the kids and learned a lot myself, I hope to be able to go back soon.

Gwen Cicone

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your prayers and financial support. It takes many hands to support a work like this! Now that I have been home a couple of days it is amazing to think of all that went on while we were in Peru and how each of us grew through the process. Working with the children of the village was exciting and wonderful to watch as they listened to stories, participated in games and made crafts you could see that God was working in some of them to bring these stories closer to their hearts. However, watching Larry and Sandy Rockwell in action made even a bigger impression on me. They opened their home and hearts to us during the week and we could see how they used every opportunity to share Christ with their friends, neighbors, the villagers and everyone we met. They taught us about the Peruvian lifestyle, the Quechuan village culture, let us experience Peruvian food, visit several markets and enjoy the amazing landscape but never far from our conversations was our Lord and Savior Jesus. They made us feel like an integral part of their outreach during the week and thanked us for the work we did there. However, they worked so hard to feed us, transport us and prepare a wonderful place for us to stay that I felt loved by them in a special way. During my time there I particularly enjoyed working to prepare crafts with Sandy and helping her in any way I could manage. While we worked side by side, we could share about our lives. As sisters in Christ we have a special bond that was started during this trip and will continue as we pray for each other during the year. If possible, I would love to return to Huaraz, Peru but regardless of my future travels, I will always feel connected to Sandy, Larry and their son Jonathan as my siblings in Christ.

Gratefully and thankfully,

Gwen Cicone

Maria Cicone

During this year's impact trip to Peru, I learned and experienced so much more than I could have ever expected. Although the trip to Peru was less than desirable, considering each plane and bus we got on was delayed at least an hour, the opportunities there made it all worth the while. Surrounded by towering mountains and snowcapped peaks, the city of Huaraz made a most beautiful home base for us. Within the city and especially when visiting the village, we were able to witness the unique culture and customs of the Peruvian people as they went about their everyday lives. Seeing these people made me reflect on my own life and how I prioritize things they find trivial and vice versa. I also came away with a much greater appreciation of language and the wonderful bond it creates amongst people. In the village, I watched Mr. Larry talking to the people in their native tongue and their faces would light up as they spoke to him. Seeing how his reaching out to them through language showed me a part of missions I had never known before. Overall, this impact trip was an incredible experience filled with memories I'll never forget.

Hannah Leubecker

I want to begin by thanking all of you for your support, both financially and in prayer! Because of your efforts I was able to go to Huaraz, Peru and be a part of a team that, Lord willing, made an impact in the lives of the Peruvians we came in contact with. While there we were able to get to know the children in the villages where we worked, and also get to know the culture. One of the things that was

most eye opening for me was seeing the kids, no matter how young, look out for each other. Also watching how they opened up to us even though we didn't even speak the same language. They were so loving (especially the little ones) and had the prettiest smiles! I also realized once again, how incredibly blessed I am to live in our country with the opportunities that we have if we work hard. Whereas these kids do what their parents do. If their parents are farmers, most of the time, so are they. Another impactful thing to me was to see the reaction of the children when we gave them lotion on the last day. Their skin was extremely dry, ashy and cracking. To see their reaction and joy to receive something as simple as lotion really puts things in perspective and made me realize some of the things I take for granted. So thank you again for this great opportunity, and please continue praying that the seeds we sowed while we were there would grow!

Thanks again,
Hannah Leubecker

Beryl Wickham

This mission's trip has taught me two important lessons. The first is what we take for granted. We traveled by bus, plane, and cars to get up to Huaraz in the mountains of Peru to see the children of the Quechua village so we could help spread the gospel to them, many of whom will probably never travel out of their country. The first time that we got to the village the kids asked Mrs. Sandy how old we all were and where we were from. They saw that a lot of us have blonde hair, which they found fascinating because everyone there has dark hair and skin. We are so used to seeing other people of so many different ethnic backgrounds and nationalities that we often don't notice our individual uniqueness. Even though we looked different to them, they still came up to us with big smiles on their faces and numerous hugs. To me it seemed like I had already known them for a while.

It is very dry in Huaraz, Peru because it's up ten thousand feet in the mountains. Because of this, the kid's skin was very dry and cracking which made them bleed and looked sore. On the last day that we were in the village Mrs. Sandy got together some lotion for each of the children, which made them so happy because to them it was like receiving a special gift. The children may have never seen lotion nor have any Rite Aids to buy it in so we had to show them what to do with it. Hopefully it helped to relieve some of their symptoms.

The second lesson taught me patience with my other team members, with myself, and with the children. I love each person that decided to come on this trip, but one of the things I love to do is just spend time by myself. We didn't really have any free time on this trip so I had to figure out how to keep myself together without being alone. It was also hard to speak to the children because I am not fluent in Spanish so I couldn't carry on full conversations with them. Now that I am home and have a deeper understanding of patience and what we take for granted it has made me appreciate my family, friends, and people I have yet to know even more.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to help make this trip possible for me to have been able to go on.