

FLIGHTS

Our story started out a little rocky. None of our flights went according to plan. The first flight, our plane was struck by lightning while parked on the ground. No one was in it thankfully. The second flight, we sat at the gate before takeoff, for three hours due to technical issues. The third flight we barely made. The whole time we laughed at the complications. We have always wanted to run through an airport.

FRANCE



When we got to France after three days of flying, we were so excited to see Abby. The next day in Marseille France, Abby took us for a walk around the city. It was unlike anything we had ever experienced. It was so cool to see the small stone streets, and the many cafes. Oddly enough, we really enjoyed the soap stores. Our first Sunday in France, we went to church with Abby. The whole service was in French. When they sang worship songs the only word we could make out was Hallelujah and Jesus. This was amazing, and one of our favorite experiences during our trip. The people and connections we made in France just blew our minds. We never thought such close bonds could be made in such a short time. Abby's roommates are such amazing women. Our last night in France, all our friends that we had met (Lora, Amanda, Linzie, Clare, George), and Abby, prayed for us and our trip. It was such a powerful moment. You could feel the Holy Spirit in the room. Needless to say, we were in tears by the end of it. The day we left France we were able to spend a little time just us and Abby. We drank tea at one of our favorite cafes. We so enjoyed this time, discussing the experiences we had together. We also had fun trying multiple teas in the process. Leaving France was very hard, even though we knew we were headed for Australia.

AUSTRALIA

Flying into Sydney, Australia the windows were covered in this red fog. We could not see the runway or the beautiful city below. We later found out that the red fog was smoke from the bush fires. We immediately started praying for God to put out the fires. The first thing we noticed was the accent. The accent is so strong that it sounds like a different language most of the time. We had to really concentrate to understand what people were saying. Grandma Trish met us at the airport and helped us navigate the public transport to Avalon. We had scheduled to stay in an Airbnb for the first two weeks.

Avalon is a little beach town two busses away from Sydney. We were able to walk everywhere. The beach was very close and we were out there in it every chance we got. The Woolies (Grocery store) was so fresh. We would run in for something pretty much every day. One of the Australian foods we loved getting is Tim Tam's. They are this wonderful chocolate cookie with different flavored gooey stuff in the middle. The people in Avalon do not have as strong an accent as the people in the airport. They are much easier to understand.

Grandma Trish was our initial contact in Australia. We know Grandma Trish because our parents went to college with her daughter and son-in-law. We grew up with her grandchildren in the States. When Grandma Trish would come to the States she would sometimes stay with us. We had not seen her since we were very young. From what we could remember, we knew Grandma Trish to be a wonderful, kind, and adventurous woman. But as we got to know her better we realized that she is so much more than that. She is one of the boldest women to spread the Gospel that we know. To see her just slip it into conversations with complete strangers amazes us! And she does not do it in an argumentative way. She just casually slips it in there, and before you know it, she is in a theological conversation with a stranger. She is very



involved in the community. She meets people throughout the week to pray and talk about life. She is very wise! We had countless conversations where Grandma Trish would speak truth and wisdom into our lives! One thing we kept coming back to, and Grandma Trish kept saying, "Hold things and people loosely in your hands. Because they are God's, you want God to be able to do with them as He pleases. Even if that means He is taking them away from you." To hear Grandma Trish's story, and see how God stayed with her through it all. To see how she lives now because of what she has been through. It is such a testimony to God!



Our first day in Australia Grandma Trish took us on the lighthouse walk. It was beautiful beyond imagination. Pictures do not do it justice. It was so wonderful to catch up with Grandma Trish and see God's wonderful creation. We were so blessed in that we did not really have any jetlag, even with the ten-hour difference from France. Our first Sunday in Australia we went to Grandma Trish's church, St Marks. We attended all three services, two in the morning and one in the evening. The church is conveniently located across the road from Grandma Trish's house. After the first two services we were sitting on the beach. Magdalene was (silently) telling God how wonderful it would be if He would give her an Australian that she could be good friends with. Not two hours later, Zara sat down beside Magdalene in the five o'clock service. Zara began to tell her about how they needed more leaders in youth. Magdalene told Zara that we had already decided to help lead. Zara was so excited. She said we were an answer to her prayers. Magdalene had a feeling that Zara was the answer to her prayers, just two hours earlier.



The next day Zara took us surfing! It was so hard. Just watching surfers, you would think paddling out is no big deal. We quickly learned that it is harder than it looks. We thought we would pick it up quickly, but it was hard to tell which waves to catch. Later, we were sitting on the beach; Magdalene was telling Abigail how she would like a new pair of sunglasses that don't have mirrored lenses. She got up and went into the ocean to rinse off. She looked down, and there in the water was the most beautiful pair of sunglasses, not mirrored, and they aren't too tight! It was totally a God thing. God knew her heart and blessed her with those sunglasses! Magdalene wore those sunglasses everywhere.

When our two weeks were up at the Airbnb we were invited to stay with Zara. Of course, we accepted the invitation. Zara is a kind hearted soul. She is real and honest when you speak to her, and that is hard to find these days. Most importantly she is faithful to Jesus. We so enjoyed spending time with Zara. We had spur the moment Bible studies together. We stayed up talking all hours of the night. We found a true friend in Zara. We even started calling her our third sister. We really are that close. Zara has a sister, Lexie. She is a wonderful person and we became close to her also. Zara's family accepted us in as one of their own.



The people in St. Marks are such amazing people! We were encouraged by their kindness. We so enjoyed every single occasion that we were invited to dinner! Each one was unique but equally wonderful. We were picked up or offered to be picked up on many occasions. We were amazed by every service's welcoming response to us. We met wonderful, genuine, friends at each service.

The small groups that we went to were amazing. We enjoyed getting to know people better while studying the Bible together. We went to The Gathering small group the most. The Gathering is a small group composed of young adults our age. In our past, when we would attend small groups composed of people our age, there was always someone much older leading the small group. We are amazed that The Gathering has leaders, young people, mature enough in their Faith to lead. It's such a big deal in our generation for young adults to be mature in their Faith, and even more to lead. It's hard to find. It was a very new and amazing experience for us! We loved it!

The youth group we were involved in is called the Rising. We began to teach and lead there every Friday. Abigail lead discussion group for year six through nine girls. She led games and two studies for the whole group. Magdalene taught year ten through eleven. This included leading games and multiple studies/discussions. We had never held a leadership role requiring us to teach the Bible. We were very excited, maybe a little nervous. We also took it very seriously. *James 3.1 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.* Teaching was so much fun. We learned that even in our weakness God will use us. We just have to follow His lead and allow Him to move in our lives. Even if that means doing things we are not comfortable with. And boy did we do a lot of things out of our comfort zone.

Teaching scripture in the schools was a wonderful experience. St. Marks had a shortage of scripture teachers when we arrived. It was so great to see that God had sent us when we were needed the most. In order to teach scripture, we had to do online venerability training, as well as five two-hour sessions on curriculum and how to teach. Because of God's perfect timing, we were able to attend a scripture teaching seminar in order to get some of our training. We completed training in less than two weeks which was unheard of; and right before they needed us to start teaching. We taught kindergarten, middle, and high school. We also took this very seriously. We were reminded of how much impact we have on someone younger than us. We forget so easily that we are constantly looked up to, and our conduct influences those around us. *Titus 2. 1-8 But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. 2 Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, 4 and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. 6 Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. 7 Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, 8 and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.* On Tuesdays, Magdalene would watch Grandma Trish's grandkids Benji and Ava, while Abigail and Grandma Trish taught scripture to the Kindy kids. Benji is four and Ava is two. Magdalene enjoyed being involved in their lives. She looked forward to spending time with them every week. Abigail enjoyed teaching the Kindy kids so much. After the first day the kids remembered her name. They were all so young and enjoyed anything that you brought, if you could make it fun. It was so cool to see that even though so young; they already had some thoughts about God and Jesus passed down from their parents or grandparents. We taught the Kindy and Primary kids on Tuesdays and the High school kids on Thursdays. After every session, our team would go out for a lovely cup of coffee to debrief. This was a great time for us as we were able to discuss the questions from the kids. The questions included "Is God real? Is the Bible a book of fairytales? Why do you believe what you believe? etc." It was so crazy being around kids who did not even know what the Bible was. They had no concept of who Jesus is or what He has done for them.



Leaving Australia was very hard. We left five weeks before we initially planned to. The hardest part about leaving was not getting to say goodbye to everyone. We had to leave so suddenly...

In Conclusion

The friendships we made along this trip we hope will last a lifetime. It is hard for us to imagine that we are already home, writing about this adventure. We were sad to have to leave. We are glad to be home, but also hopeful that we will be able to plan a trip back.

Things Magdalene learned:

- I learned to be bold in approaching and getting to know people.
 - I learned to be bold getting to know people in France, at St. Marks Anglican church, and really everywhere we went. I was forced to be more outgoing because I was meeting so many new people. Sometimes it can be really hard going into new situations and meeting new people. I have learned to really enjoy the

excitement of going into these kinds of situations. I learned that if I don't allow myself to meet new people, I am not allowing myself to meet new friends! I think God wants me to meet new people. To go out and be bold in meeting them, so I can then be bold in sharing what He has done for them. That He Loves them!

- I learned how to be bolder in my Faith.
 - I learned how to be bolder in my faith from Grandma Trish and through teaching scripture. I considered myself bold to be in my Faith before this trip. But I learned, or experienced, how to be bolder, through allowing God to put me in situations out of my comfort zone. By constantly not only reading the Bible, but also studying the Bible.
- I learned how to lead/teach the Bible.
 - I learned this by leading the youth, by teaching in schools. Leading is a hard thing to do. I found myself watching small group leaders and preachers as they taught, trying to learn how it should be done.
- I learned to be more confident in public speaking.
 - This is something I never imagined God would want me to be good at. I learned confidence in it by being constantly asked and pushed into it. And I am glad that I was pushed (I required a little pushing). I could never have gained confidence had I not been pushed. Thank you, those of you that pushed me!
- One thing that I learned stands out to me so much more than anything else. That God loves me!
 - I knew God loved me before this trip, but I did not understand that God loves everything about me. He is so in my head and knows everything in my heart. He is so involved in every little thing that happens to me. I heard a sermon a few years ago that spoke on prayer. It talked about how we are always praying for the big things, but God is so involved in our lives He wants us to even pray about the little things. The things we may think are too little to concern Him. Ever since that sermon I have prayed for the little things in my life, even if they seemed silly. I have seen God answer a lot of these prayers over the years. In Australia, I don't know if I was praying more, I know I was talking to God more, but I saw Him answer so many of my prayers. I think it was every day; God was answering one or more prayers. I saw His love and care for me everywhere! I saw Him provide for the desires of my heart! *Psalms 37:4 Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.* It was like nothing I have ever experienced before.
- I hope to continue to meet people and be bolder in my Faith. I want to take the skills I learned and use them to reach people in my community, here at home. I want to lead and teach where God would have me teach. I want to be available and willing, to do and go, anywhere God wants me to. I want to continue to see the world the way I learned to see it in France and Australia.



Things Abigail Learned:

- To be more outgoing to begin with. How to keep a conversation going. How to say yes to things that will bring me out of my comfort zone. I did most of the public speaking to begin with because I was more comfortable with it than Magdalene. It was great to see her grow in this area, but then also hard for me to step up and do it in the beginning. I am not the best at it but do feel that I grew a lot in this area.
- It has always been hard for me to keep a conversation going with people that I do not know. I think I grew in this in watching Zara meet new people. It also did not hurt that I did not know anyone going into St. Marks.
- It was so great to see God's perfect timing. St Marks had just lost most of their young leaders to college or something of the sort, as well as having a shortage on school Scripture teachers. When planning the trip, I talked to Sturt the lead pastor at St. Marks. It was hard to figure out what exactly we would be doing. Seeing God's hand, we decided to go and see where God would use us. I am so glad that we went and that we were



able to help in so many areas. It is hard to see in the moment the way God is filling the need until you look back. I so enjoyed working with the youth and seeing the young girls grow in their faith.

- It was also eye opening to see the need for being in God's word each day. In some ways I was forced into this. In that I was preparing for a study or a school scripture lesson. It also helped that I was not getting up for a regular job. This trip helped my walk with the lord so much. It was great to see him work in the lives around us. It is amazing, when I think about everyone we met, and the stories that we were told. There is so much hurt in the world today. It is hard to see when you are at home in your own comfort zone. I think it is good to get out of your comfort zone every now and then.
- Australia is such a beautiful place filled with wonderful people. It was amazing to see the wonderful creation of God all around us. The days I enjoyed the most were the long theological talks with Grandma Trish over dinner or a cup of tea. A close second was the days we got to spend just us on the beach reading Gods word and talking about the days before.
- Get in people's lives. Walk through life with people. The biggest thing in life is people. Don't miss this because you are too focused on yourself. If I learned anything on this trip, it is to put yourself out there. Be bold for the lord, don't be afraid of offending people because of your faith. Make sure your actions are through the looking glass of God's love. Don't forget who you are here for, or who you are living for. Don't miss a moment, enjoy every second. I know that I myself get self-focused more than I would like, I think this is the reason we need to be in the Word every day. We need the Word of God and Jesus's life to show us just how sorry of a person we really are. All our striving earns us nothing, at least let's do it for God. *Ecclesiastes 1:14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind.*
 - *"God, send me anywhere, only go with me. Lay any burden on me, only sustain me. And sever any tie in my heart except the tie that binds my heart to Yours." Quote By David Livingstone*

Our Relationship

We deepened our relationship with each other. We were already spending a lot of time together before the trip. But sleeping together adds a whole new level to your relationship. There were a few things we had to learn about each other. We had to learn how to communicate better. We had to be very conscious of each other's feelings. I think we can say without a doubt we are the closest we have ever been!

Prayers that where answered:

- God put out all of Australia's fires
 - Friendship with Zara
 - Spiritual growth
 - Learning unexpected things we would never have asked God for
- These are only the big prayers that where answered....

Let us leave you with this

1 John 4. 12-19

12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 19 We love Him because He first loved us.

