

# Kindred 2003-04 Journal

**Date:** 9/24/2003

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

**Journal Entry:**

Tuesday, September 23, 2003

After 5 weeks of training, I'm now on the road again- but with my Kindred folk- and getting back into the groove of a traveling music ministry team. (For those of you who didn't know, I was on New Dawn last year which traveled to Hong Kong and Malaysia as well as the U.S.) I'm striving to live life one day at a time, not getting overwhelmed by the thought of another whole YEAR of intense relational ministry and cross cultural experience. It has been difficult getting to know and live with another group of individuals, and at times I've doubted whether this is really where I am supposed to be. I've felt apprehensive, afraid, weak, unqualified, and unsettled. It's strange how in a year of team life - an environment of constant change - I had found a comfortable constant that I hadn't realized I'd begun to cling to and depend on. Then, when my old teammates were gone and I joined in with the new, it was like a rug being pulled out from under me.

Where do I find my strength, my stability and my comfort? In who or what do I really put my trust? I know it should be God, but that does not always happen. Nevertheless, God is still the ONLY constant- the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He will never leave me. Right now, I feel needy, vulnerable and fragile, but I find comfort in my precious Savior. I know He loves me and accepts me and there's nothing I can do, nowhere I can go, or anything I can feel or say to change that. God doesn't change- He is always love .He is always good. He is always with me.

Stephanie Kirkman



**Stephanie Kirkman**

---

**Date:** 9/27/2003

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

September 27, 2003

God taught me a lesson yesterday which I won't forget—or my teammates won't let me forget—for a long time! At our last gas stop before we arrived in Sergeant Bluff, I hurried into the trailer to get my good shoes. I wanted to be quick because my teammates and I really strive to be on time, so I grabbed my shoes, locked the trailer and ran to the front of the van. I was excited that I got back before everyone was buckled up and waiting and I'll admit that I started to become a little prideful because of my speedy stop. God soon checked my pride...

Fifteen minutes down the road a woman stopped us and said, "Your back door is open." My face drained. I KNEW I had locked that trailer! I went around back to see it for myself and sure enough, the trailer was locked...AND it was open. In my haste to please my teammates and look good, I forgot to make sure the trailer door was latched before I locked it. I got distracted by pride and forgot what really matters (making sure the trailer is locked). How many times in our lives do we get distracted by things of this world and forget about what really matters—God? Praise God that everything was still where we put it in the trailer. It wasn't an expensive lesson for me to learn...it only cost my pride.



**Amber Rislow**

---

**Date:** 9/28/2003

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

September 25, 2003

This morning I said goodbye to my family, after having stayed at home with them during our first stop in Iowa. What a blessing they are to me in my life! I know God's love more because of the love they have shown me. I will next see them at Christmas, and I know that the time between now and then will not be as long as it seems. May God bless and protect them, rain peace upon them, and watch over my little nephew. After departing from Waverly, Kindred headed back up to the Twin Cities, where we had started our journey only five days earlier. We spent the afternoon at Kaleidoscope, a children's non-profit organization serving inner city youth kindergarten through seventh grade. I served Kaleidoscope last year as their Volunteer Coordinator and built many meaningful relationships with the kids. The afternoon brought many joyful reunions with both kids and staff, and lots of hugs. My team also enjoyed the opportunity to interact with the kids, helping with homework, reading one on one, playing games, and providing them vital attention and encouragement. The children of Kaleidoscope are racially diverse and come from a variety of different faith traditions. Yet despite these differences, because of these differences, we were able to share the love of Christ with our hands and our actions, and equally to receive it from the children. Kindred presented a puppet show about respecting and appreciating all people, followed by some popular children's songs. Despite our inability to verbally share the Gospel, the God who has created all, sustains us all, and loves us all equally was served and glorified. May the kids of Kaleidoscope grow and flourish, and know the Hope that we share. Every day I spend on the road with my team I feel more and more blessed, seeing God's provision for our year. We have begun to share deeply and personally with each other, and together are building an intentional and supportive community. As we grow and struggle together, God teaches me about trust and unity. I pray that God would continue to refine us and draw us unto each other and Godself.



**Matthew Poock**

---

**Date:** 9/30/2003  
**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel  
**Journal Entry:**

September 30, 2003

So I'm writing my first journal. We're supposed to include information about things we've been learning, ways that we're being stretched, and the such. Right now I'm learning that typing in the van can be a little difficult. We're driving to Wichita right now. It's been a confusing couple days, with travel plans finally coming together this morning.

The next couple days are going to be a very different learning experience. Due to an illness in the family, Sarah has gone home for a period of time, and that totally changes our team. We are coming to the realization that the loss of any of our members requires drastic changes to our program, to our jobs, and how we go about all that we do as a team. I'm anxious about learning this, but know that at times it will be quite interesting as each of us is asked to do more than what we have been doing. The adaptation will be fun to observe, and hopefully we will soon have our whole team together.

Over the past couple days, God has been showing me a lot about trusting through the difficult circumstances in life. I've spent 20 minutes trying to type out what I'm feeling, and I can't do it. The best I can say it is that it's encouraging and challenging to see people approach the unexpected things in life with optimism and joy, even if the end result is unpleasant. Sorry to be so vague, but those are the only words I can come up with to explain it.

So I guess that's all I've got for you today. Not sure what else to say, but I'm sure if there's anything serious that I forgot, Jennifer will remind me.



**Deron Vaupel**

---

**Date:** 10/2/2003  
**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis  
**Journal Entry:**

October 2, 2003

Did you know that there is a story in the Bible with a talking donkey in it? Yep. There is—in Numbers. (Numbers 22:28-30) Turns out, you can sleep on high jump mats in a gym. Sometimes you have to find roads when you don't know the names. And every now and then you can be sitting in a 15 passenger van and wonder if this is really your life.

Recently a host mother asked us how we lived like we do—in the van, wondering if we have clean clothes and where they might be if we do, state-hopping from day to day. I was able to answer with a convicted, "I have never been happier in my life." Now when I applied to team I was a schedule girl, being flexible wasn't my best-favorite thing and I loved to be on time and I didn't like staying at other people's houses all that much. My, my, my how quickly a new way of life can change a person. I find myself being pretty laid back about most things on the road. "We're going to be 15 minutes late..." Okay, no big deal. "You'll be staying with a different family every night." Good, I like staying at people's houses and getting to know them. "We know that this isn't scheduled but..." Great! I love to jump in where you need me.

Who have I become!? Well, simply, I think I am the most "me" I have ever been. I am daily overwhelmed with the knowledge that this is exactly where I am supposed to be and what I am supposed to be doing. Now, life isn't all grins and giggles, there are daily struggles to overcome—feelings of inadequacy, impatience, and just plain-old being crabby. But WOW! God is good because He can use me anyway. Turns out, I am a new creation in Christ.



**Jennifer Jarvis**

---

**Date:** 10/6/2003  
**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito  
**Journal Entry:**

October 5, 2003

This is about the time I would have been in Texas, but I'm not in Texas. I am in Iowa, in Cedar Falls, my hometown to be exact. I am sitting at my own home trying to decide where I can be the most good. My parents are in Iowa City at the hospital with my brother, who earlier this week was fighting for his life and still lies in critical condition in ICU. I am helping at home with my younger siblings in whatever way I can. I have driven down to Iowa City the last two days, and I am spent.

My biggest struggle now is that I must return to my team and leave my family. I know that it is time and that I can do nothing to help my brother recover more quickly. The question now is--when. When will I go back? How do I say good-bye to my family at a time like this? Why is this happening? These difficult questions have been answered this week by God and His faithfulness. My family has been clinging to the Word of God. We have been sent a number of scriptures in the last week. Psalm 105 has an especially pertinent verse, "Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always."

I am learning that no matter what happens this year with my family and my team, God is faithful. He is teaching me to look to Him for my strength in all circumstances.

In His grip,  
Sarah

"But if it were I, I would appeal to God; I would lay my cause before Him. He performs miracles that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted." Job 5:8, 9



**Sarah Twito**

---

**Date:** 10/8/2003  
**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman  
**Journal Entry:**

Tuesday, October 7, 2003

The highlight of today, and leading up to today, was definitely the return of our

teammate, Sarah. She was at home with her brother for just over a week, but it seemed more like a month by the time she got back. It might be because she was gone about as long as we had been on the road before she left. It was really tough trying to put our programs together without her. Team dynamics changed, and there was a general feeling of an absence- a hole, if you will. We did our best to carry on and be Kindred minus Sarah. I felt suspended, like we were floating around for awhile trying to go on with team life, but still remembering Sarah and wanting her to be back to somehow complete the team.

Sarah's short absence from Kindred took us by surprise and in some ways knocked us off our feet. This wasn't in our plans, and I wasn't going to be program coordinator this year (I took over for one of Sarah's team jobs for the week- the one I did all last year). Things felt a bit out of control and whirl-windy.

But, it turns out that God remained faithful and steady and good. He can't ever be shaken. He's constant and even though I may have felt jolted or disoriented about the events of last week, I can rest in that God remained faithful to me and to our team. I love that God is with us ALL the time, despite the constant shifting of our state of mind or heart. God uses each one of us, broken as we are, in ways that we may never see or understand. He DOES see, though- and with perfect clarity and from every perspective, but He still loves us and works IN us and THROUGH us.

So, not only am I thankful for Sarah's return, but also for the reminder her absence brought about God's awesomeness and steadfastness.



**Stephanie Kirkman**

---

**Date:** 10/9/2003

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

October 9, 2003

Today we are in Odessa, TX, the middle of the third largest oil field in the world. The homes of President Bush and Dick Cheney, as well as many oil barons, are only minutes away. The horizon is lined with oil pumps that, to the untrained eye, look like horses on dry, sparse terrain. Tumbleweed is blowing across the front lawn as I write. How surreal for me! We are passing through this part of West Texas on our way to El Paso and then Las Cruces, NM, spending our time rehearsing and preparing for an approaching busy schedule of bilingual (Spanish-English) programs. Maybe not an overly exciting time for us as a team, but nonetheless filled with God's goodness, grace, and provision.

Last night Shobha, a former Youth Encounter team member from India, now living in town here, treated us to a home-cooked, traditional Indian meal. Following supper, my team shared with her a taste of the Spanish music we share with churches and families. And all this in the home of a young couple, one from Chicago, the other from Cambodia! The blending and sharing of cultures was a beautiful experience. We have so much to share and to appreciate in one another. God desires for our lives to be enriched in just such a way. How majestic is our God throughout the earth, in all creation, in all cultures!

As we witness God in others and in our differences, great and small, we gain a greater understanding of each other, of ourselves, and of God. Even within our team we have a diversity of experiences, aptitudes, and personalities from which to grow and struggle and celebrate. Living, working, serving, traveling, and being together constantly with five others, basically unknown to us prior to seven weeks ago, brings its challenges. But as we struggle and communicate and gain understanding, God is refining and molding me, and my life is enriched. I praise God for our frustrations and struggles for I know that they will bear fruit individually and collectively. I pray that God would make us one, united in service following Christ's example. In the same way, I pray that God would rain peace and harmony upon this earth and its many diverse peoples. For truly, we share and rejoice in "One God and father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:6).



**Matthew Poock**

---

**Date:** 10/14/2003

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

October 11, 2003

So there we were backstage with Salvador...As I stood beside my teammates waiting to speak with the members of this Spanish/ English Christian band, my mind swirled to remember how I got there.

The week prior my teammates found out that Salvador was going to be in the area and really wanted to see them, especially because one of our program songs, Grano de Mostaza, was picked up by Salvador when they heard us play it (maybe that's not exactly how the story goes). Somehow we found out about a free concert in Odessa, TX where we were traveling to and landed 4th row seats. After the concert we were standing near the empty stage when a man approached us and asked, "Would you like to meet the band?" When we found our voices, he led us back to where the guys were putting away their instruments.

As I observed the situation I recognized that I felt comfortable because I was like them in the sense that I was traveling around, sharing music, yet I felt uncomfortable because of their popularity. This dualism has been brought to my attention on more than one occasion.

For example, I write to you now from a mission site in El Paso. The outline of the moon is visible from behind the sparse clouds and the temperature is so comfortable it feels like I don't even have skin on. We are one mile from the Mexican border and while we are technically in the United States, it hardly feels like it. I can hear music in the distance with a Mexican beat and the street names here make my tongue twist. Some store fronts boast English phrases while others are entirely Spanish. All day today I was greeted in both Spanish and English; I never knew when I passed someone if they would say, "Hola, ¿cómo estas?" or, "Hello, how's it going?" Both languages co-exist here in a way, that I can't understand yet, I love.

So many times I think I try to draw distinct lines and categorize what I see into separate boxes, That simply can't be done anymore. El Paso isn't all Spanish or all English, it's both. I'm not entirely a musician or an audience member, I'm both. I'm not always confident or always insecure...I'm both. We can never be just one thing, and therefore the people and places we see can never be strictly one thing. God is challenging me to look farther in order to develop understanding.



**Amber Rislow**

---

**Date:** 10/14/2003

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

So another journal. Now that I'm done with my apple, I can continue this process. And now that Steph is done sending her e-mail, I can again continue the process. I think we're starting to get the hang of life on the road. More great host homes. More interesting people met. I'm excited because tonight we're going to a college campus. Having spent the last 5 years in a similar setting, it'll hopefully feel like home. I'm mostly excited about the opportunity to spend time with the students there. For some reason, I always enjoy the opportunity to spend time with college students.



**Deron Vaupel**

Some interesting and exciting things have been happening the past week or so. The past couple years, I've just been going through life not really sure what I'll end up doing as I get older. Spent lots of time asking God what to do, but have never felt clearly called to whatever I'm asking about (Youth Encounter does not fall into that category.....I know I'm supposed to be here). But the past week, God's been putting some interesting things on my heart concerning the future. Sometimes it's easy for me to let the questions linger for a little while, but then I kind of forget about them, but this time they seem a little more solid. There have been definite answers to prayers concerning personal struggles with the things I don't know about my future. Unfortunately, with those answers come even more uncertainties, but there's been a peace in my life that hasn't been there before.

You may ask "How is life on team bringing up all of these questions?" Short answer: I'm not quite sure. Longer answer: When you live with people, you get to find out things about yourself that you don't necessarily want to deal with. Lessons in communication and working together, giving up your own desires, living a day at a time, etc.....and that is why I prefer to go with the short answer. Hopefully in time I'll have a better explanation about all of this, but for now, guess you'll have to be satisfied with knowing that good things are happening. Sorry. And now, time for a root beer float. Bye.



---

**Date:** 10/16/2003  
**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis  
**Journal Entry:**

October 16, 2003

So, I thought I was grown-up. Turns out, I'm not. Today I was feeling kind of yucky in general and all I wanted was my Mommy. Bless Amber, our sweet-tempered-health-coordinator! I was completely whiny and I knew I should take medicine and eat something but why is it that when I don't feel good I immediately become a 5-year-old? I have discovered in my short adult life that it really doesn't matter how old I get, I am always going to want my Mommy when I don't feel good. And I am blessed beyond belief to have a mommy to take care of me when I don't feel good and when I feel fine. I know that where-ever I might be, my Mom is always thinking about me and worrying that I am not taking my medicine and that I'm not sleeping at night. That is something that has taken on a new meaning since I left my East Tennessee boundaries to travel all over the place. What a gift from God! Even as much as I know my Mom loves me—so greater still is the love of GOD! So my challenge to everyone is to sometime within the week to tell your moms/dads/grandparents/who-evers that you love them.



**Jennifer Jarvis**

---

**Date:** 10/18/2003  
**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito  
**Journal Entry:**

It's hammer time in So. Cal.

When I woke today in Yuma, AZ, it was already 90 degrees. It's October 18, and the heat in southern Arizona could bake Deron's loogie in 5 seconds flat (not that I timed it). Amber and I found out about the lovely in-transit retirement community here. One thing I learned is that you can bike into a driving wind with a little bit of energy provided by cinnamon rolls. Our lovely hostess took us for an hour and a half bike ride up to the foothills. I am amazed because later today I saw a sign that said it was 119 degrees there. I think it exaggerated a little bit, and I would estimate that it was closer to 109 degrees.

The title of my journal may seem a little strange, but it seems to encapsulate where we are right now. The hammer part has a story behind it. In the last couple weeks our trailer jack has become worse and worse. The jack is now at a precarious angle, which has caused us some concern. Finally, we called the office, and we were given permission to take the trailer off the van and hit it with a hammer to get it back to a 90 degree angle. I think that this may fix the problem, or it may give our vehicle safety manager a way to relieve stress. We'll see.

The other part of the title refers to Southern California, which is where we are at this very moment. Southern California is our home for the next few weeks. The ocean is not in sight yet, but it will be soon, and we are excited! So, hello, Cali! Good-bye, desert and amazing retirees.

I suppose I should share a little bit of where I am now that I'm back with the team. Life has been a little crazy with my heart in two different places. I am learning to give my heartaches to God because He is always there to hold me. I am now constantly reminded to pray for my brother, who is now home. He is doing better at home than he was at the hospital, and for that I am thankful. My place with my family on the road continues to be determined, and my family at home continues to support me. Thank you to all of you for your patience and continued prayers. God has blessed me with you!



**Sarah Twito**

---

**Date:** 10/26/2003  
**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock  
**Journal Entry:**

October 23, 2003

We know from God's very nature as the Trinity, three in one, that He has designed humans for community. In loving, serving, and being in relationship with one another we follow after the example of Christ Jesus. Along with this call to community, God has made us all in great diversity with different personalities, gifts, preferences, families, experiences, styles of communication, and ways we express and receive love. We can learn so much about God in learning about His creation; everyday I am blessed by the people we meet and by those I travel with.

Yet understanding each other in our diversity does not come easy. Today I feel the challenge of living, traveling, and serving with my team. In this intimate, intentional community our differences are brought to light beyond typical familiarity, and I sometimes feel very different from my teammates. I don't always know how to communicate with and care for them, and they for me. I want to celebrate our differences, but right now I feel isolated by them. Truly, however, I rejoice in this struggle. As Paul writes in Romans chapter five, "we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us." While I feel this challenge and brokenness, I know that God is refining me, sharpening me, and working to unite us in service toward Him. I don't know the answer to our differences, but I know God is with us and for us. Alone we are divided; only in Christ may we be one, and may our diversity bring God glory. This is my prayer.

I praise God that we may experience His joy and peace despite our emotions, and that He uses broken vessels to further his work in this world. Yesterday we had the opportunity to share with an inner-city Los Angeles high school as well as students at UCLA. Despite our fears and faults, together we have shared in the love and grace of Christ through worship, laughter, dance, and conservation. My first time in L.A. has surely been a memorable event. I even got to see the "stars" on the sidewalk, the HOLLYWOOD sign, and to walk down famous streets like Santa Monica Blvd, Hollywood Blvd, Rodeo Dr, and Sunset Blvd (all the while singing songs in my head with those places in the lyrics). Is this really my life? God's goodness never fails.



**Matthew Poock**

---

**Date:** 10/28/2003

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

10-28

Not really sure where to start. I'm at a time of mourning. For some, you will mourn with me. I have just discovered that I left a pair of pants at a recent host home.....yes, the kung-fu pants. It is a tragic event, but if it is meant to be a lasting relationship, they will return to me. But I digress...

In all seriousness, there is much to write about as we have slowly strewn our belongings across the Los Angeles metropolitan area (sleeping mats, toothbrushes, computer power cords, pants, Stephanie, etc.....).

Our theme this year is that in Christ, we are new creations. All that is old in our lives has passed away. Everything becomes new. How truly amazing that change is, and how difficult it is to be in Christ each day if the indicator of that is us dying to ourselves. God is teaching me many new and difficult lessons about that process. Each day I wake up and face the challenge of putting my own desires aside for the sake of God's. Ideally, my desires will be the same as God's plan for my life, but I am human and must work through that frustrating sinful nature. New lessons are being learned each day, and they can usually build on each other, if I can only remember what the previous day's lesson was. The overall theme is that God's plan is sufficient, no matter how much I know. I thought I had learned that before and become content with my lack of direction for the future, but something about this year just adds a new element of confusion to my life.

The other thing I would like to briefly touch on is the confusion that so often accompanies short-term missions work. Having been on short-term trips before, I have learned about being confident in your work despite seeing little to no result. Much to my surprise (sarcasm), team life puts a new twist on that as well. Almost every day, we are in a new location working with new people, putting



**Deron Vaupel**

on almost the same program, singing many of the same songs. At times it is difficult to see through the monotony to all that God is doing. It is even more difficult to believe that God can use us in any way at all to make a difference. Even as I type that, though, the only thing running through my mind is that it doesn't matter because I know God has put me here to be used. I know I don't have to see the results, but it doesn't hurt from time to time. But then again, I can just look at the 5 others riding in the van and I can see how we have been sharpening each other already.

Guess that's about it. Sorry it's been a long journal, but it's helped me get my mind off the sorrow of losing my pants. It will be difficult to fall asleep tonight, but I have the weariness from the day to help me with that. So I bid you all a good night and a good morrow.

10-30

I guess it was meant to be. The pants came back. Now I can be a ninja for Halloween.

---

**Date:** 10/30/2003

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

October 30, 2003

So, it turns out that you CAN see the Pacific Ocean in the daytime. For the first two weeks in CA I was convinced that they took it in during the day because we only saw it at night. It made everyone pretty happy.

So while the kids were being happy, looking at the ocean, I was reminded how much I like to see other people happy—even and/or especially when I am not happy or not feeling well. Like the other day, I was in a bad mood and trying to restore some sort of order to the trailer and I found Deron's pants (you know, the pair he left behind). So even though I wasn't too happy, I knew Deron would be happy to have his pants again.

I love to be happy too. As Amber just handed me 4 cheetos, I am reminded that I love cheetos. It is raining and I am looking out of the front window, with the ocean on one side and the mountains on the other—what more can you ask for? God has provided a day to sooth my spirit in a life that isn't always easy. I have longed for rain and Stephanie just yelled, "Look at the rainbow!" The symbol of God's promise—how can I doubt? Right now, I can't and is times like this that get me through the times of doubt. And now, because I would rather be looking at the view more than my computer screen.....



**Jennifer Jarvis**

---

**Date:** 10/30/2003

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

**Journal Entry:**

Stephanie Kirkman- Tuesday, Oct.21 (and the next few days)

While in L.A. we've been able to stay at the University Lutheran Chapel at UCLA for a few days and hang out with some of the students here. I feel abundantly blessed by the people we've met. It's a small, but lively and growing mission church in the middle of campus, and in the time our team has been here we've been showered with nothing but love and open and embracing arms. Our contact, Faith, is a bundle of joy and energy- so full of life and love to share.

Even though their church is a mission church with a limited budget, they have provided us with items from our "needs list", received an offering for us, and Faith even asked each of us what our favorite candy/snack was so she could go to the store and get it. At this moment I am thoroughly enjoying a Fruit-Roll-Up, my best favorite snack in the world, which I haven't tasted in a LONG time. My taste buds are rejoicing and my heart is smiling right now! It may seem like such a little thing that Faith did for us, but it touched my heart in a BIG way. Faith sticks out in my mind as one of the most servant-hearted and selfless people I've ever met. Not just because of the fruit-roll-up but because of her willingness to give her time and attention and caring words of encouragement to our whole team. I think her kindness and generosity touches my heart so much because when she gives, it seems so natural- like she truly enjoys giving, without expecting anything in return. It's so beautiful! It makes me want to give more of myself, to love more, and to let God shine through me



**Stephanie Kirkman**



like crazy like he does through her. I want to know and experience God and live in his love like that. I love how God loves us in so many ways- in big, spectacular ways, but also in the everyday things. He knows all the little things that touch our hearts and make us smile, and he knows every favorite we've ever had. And he CARES about those things. God knows us inside and out and his thoughts toward us outnumber the grains of sand (Psalm 139). That's crazy! I don't understand how God could love me that much- how he could care about every person in the world with such depth and passion and call each one of us his children. I don't deserve it, and I don't understand it, but I am so thankful for God's perfect and unchanging love.

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are!" I John 3:1

---

**Date:** 10/30/2003

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

Un dia a la vez. One day at a time. Things are a little rough these days for me, probably because I'm being pushed, well more like shoved, out of my comfort zone. We're in LA and spending time in a variety of settings with folks of all different backgrounds. My name is now Rosa, as this was easier for one of my host mothers to remember. She speaks only Spanish and so to communicate, I have to rely on my dwindling language resources. Ahhhh!!! I hope my Spanish magically comes back in the next three months before we take off for Peru and Bolivia. For now, I'll take it one word at a time...



**Amber Rislow**

We spent a few days on the UCLA campus and walked around LA one evening; as we walked, I tried to fully comprehend where I was. I recall a month ago being excited to travel to Texas, and now all that time has passed and we are in California. When I think that I'm in California, all I can see is a little arrow on a map that says "You are Here." New places and new faces; I'll take them one town at a time...

While in the van today we played cell phone tag and tried to utilize our free weekend minutes. My teammates and I called a variety of fellow teamers on three different cell phones, and at one point we were passing around the phones speaking to Watermark Germany, traveling around Washington, and Cross Fire, traveling around in Florida. Consequently, Cross Fire was also on the phone to New Dawn while we were talking with them, and New Dawn was traveling around New England, SOOoo... we were connected to four other teams at all edges of the country from our little van driving in California. It blows my mind how technology can connect us even though we are so far away. Some days I intensely miss all the other teamers and wish that it was midwinter training so we could see one another again and talk about this crazy lifestyle that is Team. For now, I'll just take life one day at a time...

Until next time,  
Rosa

---

**Date:** 11/4/2003

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

October...er...November 1, 2003

Where has the time gone? I just realized about 8 p.m. that it was November. When did that happen? Time flies when you are singing, playing and traveling with the Kindred circus. Our lives seem to be constantly on the move. It just dawned on me today that we are leaving for South America in two and a half months. Have I really been on team for two and a half months? It honestly goes too quickly sometimes.



**Sarah Twito**

I have been learning a lot in time between the programs and church services. I have found myself stretched to my limits at times in preparing for programs and meeting the needs of those around

me. My strength has come to its end at times, and those moments have caused me to turn to my loving God. He is teaching me to run to Him in my times of angst.

Our team loves books, and sometimes we even read them. This is exemplified by our large collection of books that looks the same as when we left Minnesota. Sorry, I'm off on a tangent. My point was that God is teaching me about His love and adoration for me through a book I am reading. The book talks about how much God adores each one of us and desires to dance with us through our lives. He wants to lead us and teach us the dance steps. It is an image that makes my heart smile even in the times that I want to cry out in frustration. I know that God has a plan (Jeremiah 29:11). He wants to show me where to go if I will only follow Him with the trust of a dance partner.

One of my favorite parts of the book so far is this: "This is the God of all creation who provides the music, sets the stage, takes you by the hand, and then leads. If you will rest in His arms, you can trust every turn that He takes." Today, I want to leave all my cares in His hands because He can lead if I will follow. I just have to listen to myself when I am completing our skit. It's funny how you can say the same thing over and over and never listen. Hear the words the Lord says to us (and I say every program), "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy burdened and I will give you rest..." (Matthew 11:28-30) So let Him lead your steps, and pray that I will do the same.

---

**Date:** 11/4/2003

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

**Journal Entry:**

Tuesday, November 4 –

So, the usual schedule for a day on the road is to arrive at the church at 4:00, meet the contacts and go from there; maybe have a program around 7:00 or so. But today was different. We were given directions to a home and told to just walk right in, and there would be food waiting for us. It felt weird just walking into a stranger's home and helping ourselves to the delicious food sitting on the stove. What if we had somehow gone into the wrong home and greeted an unsuspecting, surprised and maybe frightened family with our presence? It could have been a quite awkward situation. Fortunately it all turned out okay. While we were enjoying our meal, our host brother came home and joined us, then came our host mom and it was a lovely evening of talking and eating and enjoying each other's company: just nice, and comfortable, and fun. Later on we had a program in a garage; sang some songs and shared some stories with a small and very receptive group of people. When we finished singing, they sang some songs for us. Then, to end the evening we took turns praying for each other- it was so beautiful.

People are so nice to us- so giving. They leave their house unlocked and let six strangers come in and eat their home-cooked food. They give up their beds and rooms and round up people to come hear us sing and shower us with hugs, and smiles, and prayers, and love. What have I done to deserve this awesome treatment? Nothing. But I'm thankful. Today, I feel blessed. Thanks God for providing for us and loving us through your beautiful children all across the country.



**Stephanie Kirkman**

---

**Date:** 11/6/2003

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

November 6, 2003

How great is our God! This morning I received a phone call at our host church from a college friend, Janelle, now studying at Stanford University. Having tried to connect for the past week, she and I finally made plans to meet up later in the day and for her to attend our program in the evening. After our conversation, I shared my excitement with the team and joked that I could stay with her if the church ran out of host homes for us. Of course, this has never happened before, as much as we kid about sleeping in the van. Imagine my shock when the pastor in San Jose said exactly this! They had only found housing for five of us and were still looking for a sixth. Needless to say, as much as I enjoy host homes (actually



**Matthew Poock**

it is one of my highlights to meet and share with host families), Janelle offered her couch to me, and we were able to spend time catching up and encouraging one another. God truly know our needs and the desires of our heart, all the time, and sometimes we actually quiet ourselves enough to see this truth in our lives. "You have granted him the desire of his heart and have not withheld the request of his lips." Psalm 21:2

Most days I can still hardly believe this is my life. Today was a day much like many others (with the added joy of seeing my friend), full of God's grace, goodness, and instruction. After my five mile run and breakfast, the team met in the midmorning at the church where our program had been last night. We began with some personal devotion time and then met for our "team huddle" during which we support each other and fellowship together. For our team devotion this morning we each shared about the ways God is speaking to us and the lessons we are learning. God surely is active and moving in our lives and in this world. We can learn so much from each other. Instead of rehearsing, we took this morning to work on other business aspects of the ministry. After spending our usual 20 hours in one place, we grabbed our sack lunches and piled in the van. Rather than head straight to our next destination, we took a detour to the Golden Gate Bridge and had a picnic lunch. What a sight! All the while we sang songs referring to the city of San Francisco – you may know a few. We arrived in San Jose at 4:00pm and confirmed the details of the evening with the pastor. After an impromptu half hour singing with preschoolers from the church's daycare, we set up instruments, joined youth for a potluck, shared our program, and enjoyed fellowship afterward. After reloading the van, we departed for our host homes (tonight staying in four different places) and retired for the evening, all to do most of it again tomorrow.

Even though this lifestyle is non-traditional and exhausting, God has recently given me an attitude and perspective focused on Him and the goal. With my eyes truly focused, small frustrations become insignificant in the light of eternity. On Tuesday I was locked out of my host home while on a morning run and had to go to the neighbors to call my hosts. Yet sitting in the sun waiting to be let back in the house, God gave me a transcendent peace and joy. How often do I let small things distract from the blessings and beauty that surround me! I pray it will happen less and less often. "My eyes are ever on the Lord." Psalm 25:15

---

**Date:** 11/8/2003

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

11/8/03

"The Untouchables" Yes that's right, this journal is about my tennis shoes. Before I go further, I should let you know that I have the stinkiest, smelliest feet in the entire world. I'm not sure if there's a spot for this in the Guinness book of world records, but if there is, my picture appears right next to it.



**Amber Rislow**

I have a pair of tennis shoes that I love dearly, and they're fairly new because I purchased them in May. They've been through summer camp in the mountains of Colorado, they've been at YE training in northern Minnesota, and lately they've been in the sand along the Pacific Ocean. Somehow they managed to pick up a stench like none other. I've been considering throwing them out because I can smell the stench while I'm standing up, a good five feet from my shoes. (That's when you know it's REALLY bad) My only hesitation in throwing them out is that I don't have quite enough money for another pair right now, and I worry that if I get into a pattern of throwing out my shoes every six months, it might get expensive.

I shared my concerns with my teammates, and they also urged me to do something about these shoes. I think it was Sarah that had the brilliant idea "wash them!" I proposed this to my host mom, and she took my smelly shoes under her wing. I tried warning her not to touch them, I suggested rubber gloves, but she grabbed hold of those stinky things and got to work. That's right, a woman I had met a mere four hours earlier was touching my smelliest shoes. I was slightly embarrassed about their state, but she didn't complain. She was there to help me out, to take care of the things I feared the most.

In the past month, I've found myself faced with some of our world's "untouchables." These are people who push around shopping carts which hold their belongings, people who beg on street corners, people who turn lonely eyes as I walk by. What makes them untouchable? What makes

them different? How can I have the same compassion for them that I do for my family members, for my friends?

Something that helps me to love is to remember that we are all someone's precious children. There are days when I get frustrated with my teammates, but then I think about how at one time, somebody held them tight and rocked them to sleep. Somebody looked in on that little sleeping body and felt a peace and a joy surging through their spirit. Those teammates of mine are somebody's babies. What a precious, precious gift I have been given to be entrusted with their care this year. The people I pass on the street are all somebody's babies...who looked on their sleeping eyes 20 years ago, 30 years ago, 60 years ago? Who held them and rocked them? Am I giving them the kind of love and respect that their parents had hoped for them? Am I seeing the gift from God that they are? My capacity for love is so small; sometimes it amazes me that God would even want to use someone like me...

But God does. It's beyond my comprehension, but God does. God takes the small amount of love that I have and multiplies it. God takes my smelly tennis shoe self and draws it close. Just as my host mom wasn't afraid of the worst part of me, God isn't afraid of the worst part of us. God's there in that worst part, waiting for us to give it up, to allow God in to change us and take away the stench of sin. Let's both give up our stinkies today. God has better things planned!

---

**Date:** 11/11/2003

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

11-11

Where to start. We're driving out of California. 3+ weeks of short drives (mostly), great scenery, fires, ocean, an earthquake, a few really big bridges, and several sweet hosts. God's teaching me pretty much the same things since last journal, so that'll save me a little bit of typing. Yippie.

One good new thing that God's bringing to mind is a lesson concerning generosity.

Frequently we ask each other what we're doing, why are people being so nice to us, why do we get so many free things? It can be so hard to receive when it feels like we're not really doing anything to warrant it. We've been treated to several nice dinners, movies, free Disneyland, and people provide in abundance when it comes to our needs list. And we drive in a van. Sometimes play music. But then there's the days where it all clicks and you say "hey.....we can actually be used. And people are giving to us because it's pretty much the only way they can partner with us." And that is what makes it easier to receive. People have a desire to minister, but do not always have the ability to do it in the ways we first think of ministry. But doing something as simple as opening a home or providing a meal can at times be even more of a ministry than our perceived opportunities. If that makes any sense.

I'm sorry if you're reading my journals and are like "Yeah. That's an easy lesson to learn. Tell more stories!!" This year will be a great year for refining things that God has already taught me but that I have somehow forgot or have not fully understood. That's why there will at times be "easy" lessons. But I digress.....

Now to transition into a somewhat lighter topic. It's exciting to know that in 8 months you'll get to return to a place where you've spent some time. We are now booked to do a VBS in Santa Clarita in July, and we just happened to spend the past 2 days in Santa Clarita getting to know hosts. And when I say getting to know hosts, I mean it. I am already somewhat fearful of the practical jokes that will be played on us upon our return, but we as a team are already beginning to plan for our time there. All alum from the Southwest know what I'm talking about with that. I guess the funnest joke that I can quickly describe would be when we were sitting in the offices of a local business owned by one of our hosts. Sarah had to use the facilities, and while she was away, everybody else was ready to leave, so knowing that she would not be out for a minute, we all left, turned off the lights, locked the door, and moved the vehicles. Yep. It was pretty sweet. She saw the van driving away as she opened the door to possibly run after it, but a couple seconds later was greeted by much laughter. She greeted that laughter with some darting glances, perhaps a few



**Deron Vaupel**

kicks and a punch. There was also the time when my host dad put on a Halloween mask and proceeded to throw himself up against the kitchen door of another host family while 3 individuals were sitting around the kitchen table. Yep. Lots of screaming. And one dropped cake. So, that is why there is excitement and fear about returning in July. Oh yeah, we'll get to work with some great kids, too.

Guess that's all I got for you today. We're stopping at a rest stop in a couple minutes, so I should probably shut down the computer and wake people up. It's been fun. Write to you all in a couple weeks, if not sooner. deron

---

**Date:** 11/13/2003

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

November 13, 2003

The past week has been completely random—well, all life on team is random—but after our month in CA, we headed to AZ and then there were LONG drive days. Let me tell you a little story about how you really get to spend quality time with people when you are trapped in a van with them for 9 hours. Don't get me wrong, it is a blast because there are so many fun things to see on the side of the interstate, like big fiberglass dinosaurs, not one or two mind you but like six. And my new best-favorite sign is "Elk/ Next 20 miles" and the "falling rock" sign that just has a picture of boulders falling on a car and so many more interesting things that make you look twice and then say, "Well, that is different." However, when you are driving for nine hours, even 20ft tall farmers on the side of the road fail to peak your interest after awhile.

While we have seen wonderful things driving from one side of Arizona to the other in one day, I have been learning a lot of things in the last couple of weeks too. Like, Selma, CA is the raisin capitol of the world. I have also been learning about how people give and receive. There are so many ways that people give. I watch people everyday give to us as a team. However, I also watch my team give to them and to each other in ways that I don't think they even realize. Everyday I watch my team be selfless with their time and their love. I know that there are many days when they are tired or don't feel well but they give of themselves because that is their ministry. I am continually amazed at the incredible strength and perseverance that God provides us with on a daily basis. It is so amazing that when I think I can't go on anymore or I can't sing one more note, God is always there to lift me up and carry me through until I can rest or He provides the rest for me. There are many days when Philippians 4:13 is my mantra.

God is faithful and He continues to provide.



**Jennifer Jarvis**

---

**Date:** 11/16/2003

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

November 16, 2003

What has been going on with little Sarah Twito? Well, lots. It's hard to say all of what has been happening. There is so much happening that I will only be able to focus on when little part of my life for now.

One thing that has been going on in my life is the changes happening at my home. Some of you may have heard that my brother had bacterial meningitis earlier this fall. I left my teammates for one week to be with my family and to spend time with my brother. That was quite some time ago, but I feel that I must share that he is now much better. He is home. And although he continues to do dialysis, his kidneys are functioning much better than they had been.



**Sarah Twito**



This time of change has been difficult for me because it is happening without me. My family has gone through a tremendous amount of stress and struggle without me being a part of it. I don't know how God is using this in my life, but I do know that He is changing me too. It is hard because I am changing without my family. We are separated, and it is very hard sometimes. But I know that God has called me to this ministry, and despite the increasing cost, wants me to continue.

One small thing that God has taught me in the past week that I should share is that I must take my eyes off of serving. I have grown up in the church and serving God. I have gotten caught up in being good at serving God. I must now allow Him to blow me away with His love. I would like to focus my eyes on giving God to love me and fill me, so that my service to Him is an overflow of the heart. This is my prayer for all of you: "And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love surpassed knowledge-that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." Eph. 3:17-19

May God's love amaze and change you.

His,  
Sarah

---

**Date:** 11/18/2003

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

**Journal Entry:**

Tuesday, November 18, 2003

Stephanie Kirkman

It's nice when we get to stay at a host home for more than one night. The past three nights in Rio Rancho, New Mexico I was blessed to stay with two wonderful children of God, and it was great getting to spend quality time with them- more time than we usually get with host home families. My host parents are around the same age as my parents with children all grown up and out of the house and we had fun times chatting and sharing stories and eating and laughing.

Unfortunately, my lovely time in Rio Rancho was tainted by two very unlovely things. First of all, I spent 24 of my hours there as sick as a dog. Somehow I caught the flu or maybe ate something that REALLY did not agree with me. What a nice house guest, eh? I felt bad for my host parents and in my sickest moments I just wanted my mom. I didn't get any sleep that night and so I tossed and turned and tried to watch some TV to pass the time, but the food commercials had an unsettling affect on my sensitive stomach.

To top it off, I had a dentist appointment scheduled at 8:00am the next morning! I hate going to the dentist- it's so scary. I cry when I'm at the dentist office; not even kidding. Now, I don't know of anyone who really LIKES going to their dentist appointments, but that morning it seemed all the more undesirable. Well, I ended up canceling that appointment and spending the rest of my day-off resting and slowly but surely feeling less sick. Not really my first choice for day-off activities, but I got better and I'm so thankful for my host mom who used her mom skills and tender heart to comfort and help me.

"Luckily" the next morning, the dentist had an opening for me, so I went in to have him check on a tooth that had been bothering me. I rejoiced when he said to me that the drilling and fixing could wait until later. Thank you, God (at least it's postponed).

So, maybe I wasn't the best house guest for my host family in Rio Rancho, NM. But in our farewells they shared how they loved having me around, that they'd like to keep in touch, AND that they'd love to have me back again. Again I'm surprised by how God loves and blesses me through his beautiful children- how he cares and provides for me every day. Why are you so good to me, God? I love how God loves us.



**Stephanie Kirkman**

---

**Date:** 11/20/2003

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

## Journal Entry:

November 20, 2003

We spent the past five days in Albuquerque, NM, worshiping and sharing with several different congregations. While in town, I was able to stay with my aunt and uncle. My aunt reminds me so much of my mother, and she made all my favorite foods and made me feel right at home. What a blessing it was to see family! We had the opportunity to talk about our family history, the church, faith, and life. I visited both my aunt and uncle at the public schools where they teach and saw the blessings and challenges of the ministry to which they are called everyday. My cousin and I were even able to get better acquainted having always lived far from each other.

After saying good-bye to my family this morning, my team met back together at the church in order to prepare to depart for Las Vegas, NM. The senior pastor and youth director joined our morning meeting to share a devotion and lead us in celebrating the Lord's Supper. As we broke bread and drank wine, participating in our Lord's very body and blood, the pastor directed us to declare to one another the immediate and absolute forgiveness of our sins. The meal that we shared and that time spent together served to strengthen me, renew me, and draw me closer not only to the Lord, but also to those present and, especially, to my team.

Through these experiences God is reminding me how much we need one another. Even though our relationship with the Lord is, indeed, personal, God calls us into community. In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul urges us to meet together to support and care for each other. "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25). In spending time with my family, in meeting with churches, and in sharing the Lord's Supper, God has strengthened and encouraged my heart as I run this race and live the adventure to which He has called me.



**Matthew Pooch**

---

**Date:** 11/22/2003

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

## Journal Entry:

11/22/03

When we ask, God provides in abundance! Traveling in the southwest for so long, I grew to miss the snow and cold temperatures of Minnesota. I hoped with the deepest part of my heart that our team would see snow soon, and sure enough, God provides! I write this as we are detained in Colorado Springs due to a small blizzard outside! When the few flakes started this morning, I was filled with joy, but who knew all this much more was to come! There's even talk of us staying here another night!



**Amber Rislow**

Last night we played the best program of our lives for the boys at the Pueblo Youth Offender Services. The boys were a blast, dancing along and requesting songs. Also, the best part was to witness how the spirit moved through Stephanie; at one point or another during the program we were all teary-eyed listening to her angelic voice. We walked out of there on a complete high; God provided in abundance for us and the boys who were able to attend the concert.

With Thanksgiving coming closer, my mind jumps to my family members who will be eating turkey, lefse, and fudge without me this year. I'm disheartened to be absent from this tradition, but today God gave our team a little touch of Thanksgiving. Aly and Chad, two YE alums, had us all for lunch at their house. As we were gathered around the table enjoying warm soup and great conversation, the flakes fell gently outside and with a warm heart I looked around at the family I was with. In my biological family's absence, God has provided a different family for me.

With an expectant heart I count down the days until Sunday, when I get to see another member of my "family." I am blessed to stay with one of my dear friends Jen in Fort Collins. Some of my fondest memories are snowshoeing in Decorah with her, and I'm not sure if there will be enough snow for that on Monday, but I look forward to laughing and fellowshiping with her just the same! God has blessed me with amazing people in my life, and this Thanksgiving week I am grateful for that gift.

---

**Date:** 11/25/2003  
**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel  
**Journal Entry:**



**Deron Vaupel**

11-25

Let me tell you a little story about finally getting a chance to do something i've been waiting to do for the entire year. Before i get to that, though, we'll preface it with the interesting events leading up to the exciting time.

Friday, Nov 21, 5PM, Pueblo, Colorado. We got into town an hour early and decided it was time to eat. Yummy Taco Bell, with a Wendy's right across the street. So we turn into the parking lot and quickly realize that it is not the most exitable parking lot for those driving a 15 passenger van with a trailer. The dilemma then became how do we make a u-turn fast enough in a confined area without hitting the surrounding cars and being in the way for too long. Well, 5 minutes of backing, forwarding, hopping curbs, and driving on sidewalks and we resolved the solution. After solving the problem, we then proceeded to find a new parking spot. What better place than in the large public lot right next door. Find "the entry", but then we realize that it is yet another trick. A curb and a small gravel area are all that separate us from successfully parking and eating, but instead we have found another lot non-conducive to exiting. Well, more backing, more forwarding, some unhitching of the trailer, and 4 parking spots later, and we were finally able to quickly consume our sustinance.

After that ruckus, we then proceeded to the youth detention center to do 2 55 minute programs. We arrive just in time to have all of our equipment checked in and quickly set up. Soon after, 42 young men came into the room, grabbed chairs, and sat down. We began with some music, and they politely sat and listened. A little more music, and then it was time. Sarah had asked me to share that evening, which was not the favoritest thing for me. The past couple times i have shared, i have been very uncomfortable and struggling for words, but i am not sure why. So, the time came. I stand up and start asking some questions about love. What is it, what characteristics it has. Some very deep answers came out, enough to talk for hours, but i only had 5 minutes. It went by so quickly, but during that time, i had many opportunities to share with them the love that God has despite ourselves. it was amazing. After that, we entered into some time of worship, and several of the young men joined right in. Singing, dancing, clapping, all worshipping to our God in Heaven. Truly amazing.

Having a night like that was truly refreshing. So many times it is hard to see how God is using our ministry, but that night, it was aparent that the Holy Spirit was moving. I only wish we could have stayed and spent time with those guys.

Sorry that things came out kind of quickly there. We're on our way out the door for dinner. It feels like i could write so much more, but i know that it is essentially an indescribable experience. God is good.

---

**Date:** 11/26/2003  
**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis  
**Journal Entry:**



**Jennifer Jarvis**

So we decided that we would really like to write a journal as a team for Thanksgiving. We are so thankful for the overflowing abundance of God's love. As a team, we want to thank everyone who supports us in everyway, both prayerfully and financially: our families, friends, sponsors, partners, host families and church contacts. Thank you all for making this year possible.

We also want to share some of our personal thanksgivings...

Amber: the blue sky of CO, the magic of a snowfall, all of the faces I have seen on team

Matt: God's strength and joy amidst struggles, raisin bran and laughing monkeys

Steph: gentle and compassionate hearts after God's own heart, hugs, smiles and laughter

Sarah: inside jokes of every shape and size, Christmas decorations in the van, mail from my mom, struggles

Deron: detention centers (see 11/25 journal), uncertainty because it requires us to trust, music

Jenn: playing music because it is fun, my rari, people who love me enough to hold my hand (literally and figuratively)

We are deeply thankful for God working in our lives and teaching us so many new things this year...He isn't finished yet. (Phil 1:6)

Wishing you all a very Happy Thanksgiving!

Love,  
Kindred

---

**Date:** 11/27/2003

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

November 27, 2003

So it is time to journal again. After giving my team a little speech about how important it is to get your journals done on time...mine is a day late. However one of the perks of being the correspondence coordinator is that I can always do it at the last minute before I put it on the web page. (That's right, now you know the real reason I signed up for that job, I am a chronic procrastinator.)

Thanksgiving away from home isn't my best favorite thing...but we definitely lucked out and spent the day with a wonderfully, amazing family who opened their home to us. After the traditional turkey and dressing and the best strawberry desert thingy of my life, we kind of hung out in the post-meal "Oh! I ate too much!" state. Then, there was Catchphrase...

Playing games with people that you spend every day of your life with is interesting. Sarah and I, even though we were on opposing teams, insisted on looking at each other to give clues. Yeah, that didn't really work. We also had some interesting interpretations of the words that we were supposed making the rest of the team guess. For instance, you don't find a mammogram embroidered on a towel, that would be a monogram. And, a space bar is not a source of liquid satisfaction orbiting the planet.

What is God teaching me through a game of Catchphrase? Well, turns out, I have a family no matter where I am or who I am with. I am part of God's family of believers. So even though I wasn't at home playing Catchphrase with my family (which happens to be a family tradition at my casa), I was playing with my family which currently consists of 5 really wonderful people who I love with all my heart. (Amber just gave me candy so she is really especially wonderful.)

As we are driving down I-80 through Nebraska, I am overwhelmed by how much I love my team and I wanted to share that feeling with all of you. I hope all of you are overwhelmed by love today. Peace be with you!

Jennifer



**Jennifer Jarvis**

---

**Date:** 11/30/2003

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

"Oh, the people you'll meet"

November 30, 2003

Journals...the thing that reminds me of college and how I am the ultimate procrastinator. It also reminds Jennifer who threatens to write some horrible journal and put my name on it. So here I am... a day late, but I live by the adage "better late than never."

The thing that has struck me in the last couple days is what amazing people I have been meeting. My dear friend, Amber, often reminds me often what these people can teach me. The past week has been filled with one wonderful host family after another. They constantly remind me of God's provision.



**Sarah Twito**

I have stayed with a couple team alumni who listen and understand where I am coming from. They have shared stories of the road and their teammates and their adventures. My favorite stories were from South America because it thrills me and scares me to remember that we are going. We are REALLY GOING!!! Sometimes I forget. Then I get excited. After that, comes the moments of anxiety, but I try to give those moments to God.

Some of my favorite people are the smallest and the eldest. After programs and church services most likely you will find me with either a couple little ones or some seasoned citizens. I have seen precious children whose smiles give me a reason to keep on singing and make my face practically break open from smiling back at them. During a church service I almost lost my place when a little guy waved at me. Kids are cool.

I love people with stories. There are such fun people with great stories of where they have been. God blessed me with a wonderful gift this morning. I met a lady who had been a WASP, which was a group of female pilots during WWII. As my grandmother had been a WASP, I asked if by chance she had heard of her. What a wonderful surprise to find someone who did in fact know my grandmother through that history making group of brave women. God has given people beautiful stories and reminds me that there is a legacy I can leave as well.

There you have it. The family of God blows me away everyday. Praise the Lord for He has blessed me through His children. So laugh with a child, and laugh with someone older because they are fun. They all have stories to share, even if they are only three-years-old. May God bless you!

His child,  
Sarah

---

**Date:** 11/30/2003

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

Wow. California is a big state. It seems that when you get there, it's so big that you never even have time to write when you remember to and when you have time, you never remember to write. So many distractions. Disneyland (for free), fires, earthquakes, a really big ocean, lots of mountains, and no days under 50 degrees. Wow.....that's a lot of sheep. Sorry. Got distracted again. We're driving south from Kingsburg to Santa Clarita to spend our last 2 nights in the state. 3 \_ weeks of intense travel and probably the most diversity we will find in congregations in our entire time in the US. We started in Temecula which is just outside of San Diego. Got to spend some good time working with the youth and had a day off where I got to hit the trailer with a hammer. Then we got to drive around LA for just over a week. Couple days at UCLA working with a campus ministry, youth services in Inglewood, Compton, Whittier, and the such. We have met many amazing people and often had to ask ourselves what we are doing to deserve the treatment we get. They're way too generous. We just sing songs and talk to people. We did get some time off while in the city, so we got to go see some of the sights. My hands are exactly as big as Arnold Schwarzenegger's. It's kinda cool. How do you feel about that Paul? We had tickets to go see The Price is Right, but other things came up. Now we just have a souvenir hanging in the van, right next to our ticket to Jimmy Kimmel Live. And yes, Disneyland was free. Know the right people and that kind of thing happens. After our time in LA, we headed north along the Pacific Coast to Monterrey and the Bay area. Everybody should get a chance to drive along the Pacific Coast highway, especially after getting a



**Deron Vaupel**



free gourmet seafood lunch provided by your host's brother. So yeah, we got to eat sushi right by the ocean and see some of the best scenery in the world all in one day. Stuck around the Bay area for a week or so, got to work with some other awesome churches, several good programs, and I got to hit the trailer with a hammer again. Lots of fun. Now our California tour is starting to wrap up as we head back to Arizona and New Mexico, then who knows where by Thanksgiving.

Now, you're probably asking "so is he just going around hanging out at churches and being a tourist?" To answer honestly, sometimes yes. But it is much more than being a tourist. God has been doing such amazing things this past month. Hard things, but amazing. For all of you who read my last journal entry (posted on Youth Encounter's web site), God is still doing much of the same work in my life, especially concerning the future. Some days I am very extremely superbly anxious about what I'm gonna do after this year. I learned long ago that all of that anxiety is really just fear because I'm not in control, but it's so easy to forget that. I struggle to remember every day that God has it all under control and I don't need to know all the answers.

So you're probably all asking how some of the team issues I've described before are going. Or at least, if you weren't, you are now. And if you still aren't, I'm gonna tell you anyways. Even though I don't really remember what all I've told you. Communication on teams is always a big issue, and in the past week, things have improved a lot. We're having a lot of fun as a team, and even more fun as friends. It's becoming easier to understand each other and get past our own perceptions. That can so easily tear people apart. Also, I've gotten to have some good conversations with those that I haven't gotten to talk to as much as others, and that's been really encouraging because I want to get to know my teammates. Horray.

Wow. 2nd page. That means this is getting kinda long, so I guess it's a good thing I can't really think of much more to write about. I could tell many stories, like about the time we got into a town and weren't supposed to meet anybody, just walk into somebody's apartment and heat up dinner even though nobody was home. Or about hitting things with hammers. Or about the time we.....tee hee.....i giggle just thinking about it, but it's too much to type. You'll have to ask me next time I talk to you. For now, I think I'll get going, and hopefully you all can read this e-mail before we leave California. Sorry it's been so long since I've written. It's difficult at times to get the time to sit and collect all my thoughts to fill you all in. As far as prayer concerns, travel, language, and communication. We're going to begin driving in more winter conditions as we head back north and through Colorado, my Spanish is still really struggling, and there are still many areas on team where communication can improve. Thanks so much to all of you. I'll hopefully talk to you sooner than later.  
deron

---

**Date:** 12/2/2003

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

**Journal Entry:**

Tuesday, December 2, 2003

This morning a pastor led our devotion and asked how each of us was feeling about our upcoming trip to Peru and Bolivia. We voiced some of our fears and worries as well as what we're most excited about. Having been to these countries already she had some good incite as to things we might run into; like new foods, change in climate, different cultural norms, etc... She also pointed out, though, that we can't REALLY know what to expect, how our trip will unfold, or what specific struggles and joys we'll go through while in South America. This aspect of our trip can be pretty frustrating at times. I'd like to know a little more about what to expect. How do I know how to prepare myself, if I don't know what it will be like? I don't feel totally ready or prepared to go. However, as our host pastor pointed out, this isn't the point. The point is that God has called us, not to have everything figured out for ourselves, but to just listen and go and trust Him in whatever circumstance. If we knew beforehand what the road would be like and every little thing we would encounter, we wouldn't need faith; which is believing, even though we can't see, and stepping out and following God and fully trusting Him to guide us each step of the way. God's grace is big enough to cover all of our worries and fears and all the "unknowns" of our lives. God has gone before us and He is trustworthy and faithful and always good and always walking



**Stephanie Kirkman**

along beside us and holding our hands in His. God knows, and I can rest in that.  
"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."  
-Hebrews 11:6

---

**Date:** 12/5/2003  
**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock  
**Journal Entry:**

December 5, 2003

How is it possible that it's December already? Today we are driving back into Minnesota where on Monday we will begin mid-winter training. Before we know it, we'll be flying to Peru! The adventures we have had and the lessons I have learned could already fill volumes. God's grace for the journey has been abundant. Even though sometimes we don't know what we are doing, or why we have come to this particular place, we trust that God's plans are greater than what we can understand. While we may not see the fruit of our words or actions, "the Lord works out everything for his own ends," Proverbs 16:4.

Last night we shared a program in the small town of Lake View, IA. Although a little reserved at first, the congregation brought us great joy and energy as they joined us in worship. In contrast to the generosity of individuals in larger cities, we felt the hospitality of the entire community, from touring the popcorn factory to visiting with residents in the local dinner, to receiving enormous amounts of supplies and baked goods, small town Iowa will charm you like no other place. Similarly, the love of our God is abundant, overflowing, and personal. "How great is the love the father has lavished upon us, that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1). From our time in Lake View, as well as our entire journey, I understand the enormous grace of God more fully. May the grace and abundance of God be manifest in your hearts and minds and families as we celebrate the joyous season of our Lord's advent.



**Matthew Poock**

---

**Date:** 12/30/2003  
**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel  
**Journal Entry:**

What day is it? Where are we? Ok. We're back on the road. I think I'm oriented again.

12-30-03

Wow. How to sum up 4 weeks of something totally different than what the past 4 months have been. Midwinter training was quite an exciting time, a good way to prep for our time at home, to catch up with those we spent the first month of our lives on team with.

Then we all went home. That in itself was quite an adventure. 15ish hours, 5 different vehicles, and a couple short travel breaks, but I made it. It was kind of like culture shock to be in the same place for almost 2 weeks. I didn't get to see everybody I wanted to, but having that time to share with friends and family all that God is doing this year was nice.

And just as we're getting used to being home.....POW!!!!!!!!!! back on the road again. We are currently about 11 miles away from Amber's hometown of Lewiston, MN. What a great way to get reacquainted with life on the go. See, Lewiston is about the same size as my home town (1400 people). Everybody knows everybody, things seem a little more laid back, and life just feels more comfortable (for those of us who grew up with that). We could tell that there was a good deal of anticipation for people to see what Amber's spending her year doing. The weekend was organized very well, we got to stay with great host families, some of us got to play with Legos (thanks Luke), and we all pretty much enjoyed ourselves.

But, along with the good there was also some bad. Initially, Jennifer was awaiting some test results



**Deron Vaupel**

after a quick trip to the hospital right before returning. That meant she was unable to join us this past Saturday. We then had to struggle through reorganizing our program, all the music, the skits, the puppet show. It was not fun. And being down a teammate is not just a programmatic struggle. It's weird to look around and feel like you're not all there, because you're not. We've all been through it before, and we all hope that we won't be going through it much longer. Our prayers are with you, J.

Happy New Year. I'm off to write the last Christmas cards (the envelopes got lost in the van)

---

**Date:** 1/1/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

January 1, 2004

"Home sick" has taken on a whole new meaning...now that I am "home, sick." That's right, I should be writing to everyone from the lovely state of Wisconsin, however, I am in Tennessee. (Though, it is lovely here at 62°.) Let me tell you a little story about team struggles, as many struggles as you have with your team—it becomes nothing compared to the struggle to not be with your team. Some of you may be wondering, what exactly is wrong with you—are you just slacking off because you wanted a longer Christmas break? Well, no, see I had to go to the emergency room on Christmas day in the worst pain I have ever experienced. Then they shot me full of drugs, told me to get an ultrasound done and sent me home. So the next day I went and had the ultrasound done, waited (not patiently) all weekend and found out on Monday that I had gallstones. Now, this is not really the best time for this, as I want to be, well, not here. So I have to have surgery (on Friday, January 2) and have my gallbladder removed. So I have been at home and will stay here for at least another week. So what is God teaching me through all of this? Patience. There is nothing I can actively do to make myself heal—believe me, I thought of just taking out my gallbladder myself. So it just involves a WHOLE BUNCH of waiting for stuff. Now, I know there is good reason for this. One, I'm sure, is that had I gone to South America and had this problem, well, I probably would have had to come home. Also, had it continued to go untreated, there is a chance it would have killed me. I have to admit that, right now, it is hard to see that and not just have my crabby pants on all the time because I can't have what I want. I just have to trust that this is what God wants. Now sometimes, I need to be beaten over the head in order to learn the lessons that God wants me to learn. What was my devotional verse for December 30th? Revelation 13:10 "...This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness..." Turns out, not only does He know how I feel and what I want, He bothered to write little messages to me thousands of years ago. What an amazing love.



**Jennifer Jarvis**

---

**Date:** 1/2/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

1-2-04

Woo-Hoo! Life is GOOD! I don't know whether it was the long Christmas break, seeing my teammates again, playing for my friends and family at my home church, or the new year, but I feel so great. God has given me a joyful spirit this week, and I can't help but marvel in this feeling. I feel so strong and positive and "together."



**Amber Rislow**

I want to cherish this time because I recognize that our walk with Christ has both peaks and valleys, and what I'm experiencing right now is the mountaintop. The encouragement that God is granting my spirit now will help me when tough times come in South America. Speaking of South America, I must confess something to you all. This entire fall, I was scared to death to travel to Peru. When I saw you at programs, stayed in your houses, or talked with you on the phone and you popped the question "are you excited?" I may have answered positively, but what I REALLY wanted to say was "Please save me so I don't have to go! Please please take my place....I will do anything if

you will just spend the next four months there instead of me!" I prayed for Mono, and I prayed that maybe my loans wouldn't get deferred so I would have to quit team to work to pay back the money I owe the government. I even tried finding a replacement for myself, but after trying to convince some of the Captive Free girls at midwinter training that they should be on Kindred, it was to no avail, and I knew that I had to be the one to go.

During the times when I was afraid, the words of wise Pastor Barb in Iowa echoed in my mind. In early December, she did a devotion for our team during which we discussed our joys and concerns about our time abroad. Barb said that we weren't ready to go to Peru at that moment, but God would ready our hearts in God's time. I was a bit skeptical, but she was right. One day during Christmas break, I picked up my plane ticket and examined it. While holding it in my hand, I started understanding that we were truly going to Peru. Youth Encounter wasn't kidding after all, and we were, in fact, going to spend four months in South America. I, Amber Lynn, was going to be travelling in a beautiful country with five of my closest friends, singing songs about Jesus to fellow believers! Who wouldn't want to do something like that? What a fun adventure and blessing this time will be! Holding my ticket in my hand at that moment, I felt that God had finished preparing my heart and I was set to go. Unfortunately, the plane wouldn't take off for another three weeks from that day, but God is sustaining my enthusiasm and passion for what we will experience in just a week and a half. Please continue praying for our team; the next four months won't be all fun and games, but God will sustain us during the hard times. When we look to God to fill us, we will never run dry.

---

**Date:** 1/3/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

January 3, 2004

Being on the road on the Midwest has been a wonderful in-between time. As ready as we are to get ready to go to South America, it has been a very good thing for many reasons to be hanging out in Iowa and Minnesota the last week. For one thing, it has given my dear partner in crime, Jennifer, time to get better (see journal 1/1). She will be with us before we leave for Bolivia and Peru, and for that we are very grateful. We love you, J, come back January 10th.



**Sarah Twito**

Another reason to enjoy the Midwest was the way we spent our New Year's Eve. Let me tell you when I saw on the schedule that we were doing a lock-in for New Year's Eve, I didn't have the best attitude. For those of you who may not have spent time at a lock-in, it's a night with youth at a church hanging out the whole night. This night usually involves not sleeping. That was definitely the case for this night of fun at a retreat center on the Minnesota/ Wisconsin border. Nearly every student arrived with the goal of staying awake the entire night. I finally got into the excitement and decided I would go for it. Was I crazy?

The night was full, and we thankfully were able to hang out and participate quite a bit of the time instead of leading the entire night. We did an ice-breaker and a program and then turned it over to the other leaders. The night's big contest was the cardboard sled contest. The idea was to get your group of ten people down the hill in your contraption for the farthest distance. Now, I'm not trying to be crabby, but I would like to go on record as saying that our team made a valiant effort with what we had. Our team went first and maybe moved a foot and a half. So, for those of you reading from my sledding team: we get the "good try" award. Good job. ;) Those of you on my teammates' sleds: well done, but I'm glad Stephanie's team won. Sorry if I sound frustrated, but it was definitely the only low to the night of fun.

After the sledding we led the worship at midnight and offered up our burdens to the Lord. We want to be New Creations this year, and we ask God to make us new. I was privileged to share during our program a challenge to the students to live right with God and also to make peace with friends and family. May God change all of us and bring reconciliation in our relationships.

Back to the craziness... Our night continued with Finding Nemo, volleyball (lead with vigor by

Amber), Princess-Knight-Rider, talking and playing cards. My highlight (besides being the only team member to stay awake until after 7am) was spending quality time with a few gals. I hung out with some girls talking and playing cards. It was so great to get a "youth encounter" with them. There was one in particular, who really encouraged me, so to those girls: thanks and let's chat!

Special thanks to those who have housed us in the past week. You all are wonderful. To all of you reading: blessings on your New Year. Keep us in your prayers as we prepare for our travels as a complete team to Peru and Boliva. God's peace be yours in these final days of Christmas.

---

**Date:** 1/13/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

January 13, 2004

I can hardly convince myself that it's true, but we leave for Peru tomorrow morning. Until yesterday we had remained relatively calm about our impending adventure. Then, after going over our checklists in the afternoon, we began to move faster and more efficiently than I believed possible. We were determined, running here and there in a state of frenzy. Only right before our program last night did I stop to breathe deeply. And as we came together to sing and to share – to offer what we had been called to give this year – God's peace washed over my mind. Many of our friends came to support us and send us off with God's blessings. The evening was a great celebration, and I felt God's love and goodness to me through my loving friends. Also, on break here in the twin cities, the missionaries we will be working with in Bolivia attended our program. We met with them and reviewed our schedule, asked lots of questions, and received some helpful cultural advice. I look forward to seeing those familiar faces in March.

Despite all our preparations and last minute errands, I can't help but feel anxious. Tomorrow I start speaking Spanish for the next four months, and I have much yet to learn. I don't now exactly what we'll be doing or where we will stay. Or who we will meet. I'm sure at some point each of us will get sick. So many unknowns lay in front of us. My heart and my mind are filled with excitement and anxiety. Thanks be to God, that through all that is to come, God loves us, God knows us, and God is for us. I know that God will prepare our way, and I rest in that hope and promise. "You, O God, are my fortress, my loving God. God will go before me." Psalm 59

As we continue this adventure and take another step in faith, please pray for us. Pray for God's peace to wash over our hearts and minds; for our safety and health; for peace and welcome in the nations of Peru and Bolivia. Pray that as a team we would not only "survive" but that we would thrive in this calling God has given us. You will be in our thoughts and prayers as well. "May God watch between you and me when we are away from each other." Genesis 31:49



**Matthew Poock**

---

**Date:** 1/13/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

January 13, 2004

So it isn't my day to journal and Matt wrote for today but I had some stuff to say so... Well, I am finally back with my team! My surgery went well and I am recovering fairly quickly. Still no lifting and I am supposed to kind of take it easy (well, obviously, these things aren't exactly happening) and I am doing the best that I can. Right now everything is flying around and crazy in the attempt to get six people (and all of their stuff) to South America. And it turns out, we are going! I was so intent on getting back to Minnesota I was kind of forgetting about the larger goal of going to Peru and Bolivia! God has been good though. As always. While I am struggling with lack of energy and the limitations placed on me due to my weakened body (it wasn't all that strong before), daily I am reminded that God wants me here. He shows me in so many ways! There are so many people concerned about me and willing to do all this stuff to help me (God bless Deron for hauling around my pack along with



**Jennifer Jarvis**



his). I am overwhelmed by the love these people have shown. Really, I just wanted to thank everyone for praying for me and to ask ya'll to keep it up. May God bless you in abundance today!

---

**Date:** 1/15/2004  
**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel  
**Journal Entry:**

January 15, 2004 Lima, Peru

8:27 a.m. It feels like any other morning, ya know, waking up on a new bed. Then I remembered... "We're in Peru. I knew it sounded different. " As soon as we left the airport (which went quit smoothly), all the old memories, lights and sounds came rushing back. Then it was time to start observing, signs, people, traffic, try to take in as much as possible. It's tough to do, but that's always been my first response to a new culture.

So that's where I'm at after one day, walking around, international banking, a trip to the embassy, taxis, food, etc. It's good to get these couple of days to acclimate to the new environment, especially with where I'm at. Without going into too much detail, I've been thinking a lot the past couple of weeks about purpose, life, God and everything in between. Mix that in with mental, spiritual and emotional exhaustion, and it's pretty easy to get into a weird state of mind which basically involves lots of lies and frustrations. Plus, I'm also going into a different culture for 4 months. GAH!! Everyday will continue to bring new struggles with all of that, but to sum it up, some days I don't want to be here. Actually, let's rephrase that to, "some hours." But, I'm here and with a purpose. Yeah. Purpose. Right? Yeah. Purpose. Yeah.



**Deron Vaupel**

---

**Date:** 1/16/2004  
**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis  
**Journal Entry:**

January 16, 2004 Lima, Peru

Wow- I actually made it. There was awhile there (like when I was in the hospital) when I didn't think I would. But I'm here and it is amazing. After suffering from exhaustion yesterday, then sleeping tons I am doing much better- there is actually color in my face and I don't look like death warmed over.

We are having all sorts of experiences- a trip to the embassy to register, eating in fun restaurants, paying for stuff in "soles" and buying new musical instruments! (I know, take a moment to recover from the shock I'm sure you just experienced.) I especially enjoyed watching Deron's extreme joy in looking at churangos and all sorts of guitar-type things.

We have been blessed with wonderful contacts and easing into the culture here. We have even rehearsed. (Turns out, eventually, they are going to want us to play some music.)

Actually, we are leaving Lima tomorrow and going to Chiclayo tomorrow. I kind of feel like we will really be beginning then- partially because we will be doing programs and stuff there. I'm so excited and I can't wait to see how God is going to be using me when I'm tired and hot and can't remember how to say stuff in Spanish. I know he is going to do it and that will be awesome.

I also feel I should tell you that it is 12:00 (midnight) and I am sitting outside in the patio waiting- on January 16th mind you, in short sleeves. There is a lovely breeze and it about 65°. Welcome to the deep, deep south.



**Jennifer Jarvis**

---

**Date:** 1/17/2004

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman  
**Journal Entry:**

January 17, 2004 Lima, Peru

We've spent the last few days seeing the sights of Lima, enjoying Peruvian food, perusing Incan markets for...traditional wear and spending quality time with our contacts, Preben and Helena. They've been prepping us for our time in Chiclayo (about 500km up the coast) which will start tonight and end in three weeks.

You might say I am in the honeymoon phase of culture shock- soaking up all my surroundings in awe with a goofy smile glued to my face. I'm reminded of how much my heart loves Latin American culture. The street signs, the buildings, the busy streets, the SPANISH, the music, the kisses on the cheek and the closeness all bring me back to time spent in Costa Rica with my family and the amazing people we were blessed to meet and become close to there in our 1 ½ year stay.

Today I'm delighted to be in Peru and excited to see what God's got planned for our time here in South America. Each day brings new adventures, new faces and friends and more and more opportunities to love, trust and follow God wholeheartedly.



**Stephanie Kirkman**

---

**Date:** 1/19/2004  
**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock  
**Journal Entry:**

January 19, 2004 Chiclayo, Peru

Yesterday we arrived at the first stop of our tour in Peru. Leaving Lima at 8:30pm on Saturday, we traveled by bus-cama, best translated "overnight bus." It was a cross between a double-decker charter bus and an airplane flight. After 11 hours of restless sleep, we made our way to our host home in Chiclayo with an hour to spare before church.

In both the morning and late afternoon, we joined three different church communities in worship and praise of our Lord. So many children and such beautiful people! They welcomed us with gace and enthusiasm, as well as many kisses on the cheek. My meager Spanish skills were put to the test, and despite my new-found talent as a comedian, I succeeded very well. The worship services consisted of song after song and we joined along as best we could from our songbook. The people sang with great passion and devotion, unreservedly offering any joyful noise they could make. One service included a guitar, flute, piano, saxophone, an electric piano set to "organ" and a bass drum. All self-consciousness seemed to give way to sheer joy in the Lord.

Sadly, my first impression of Peru is of poverty, pollution, under-employment and oppression. My heart hurts for their earthly conditions. And yet the Christians I have met surely know where their treasure lies. God is their most prized possession, their all in all. If only I, if only all people, were so poor, so that we may know how rich we are and where, truly, our treasure lies.



**Matthew Poock**

---

**Date:** 1/20/2004  
**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow  
**Journal Entry:**

January 20, 2004 Chiclayo, Peru

Right now I am sitting on a mattress on the third floor of our house. Looking up, a few sparse clouds mask the stars overhead. To my left is the clothesline in view with a few towels and many clothespins, and to the right I see the tiled roof of the overhang. Crickets are chirping, dogs barking. I hear children speaking Spanish, car horns of passing taxis...estoy muy contenta. My feet are really tan—I have a tan line from my flip-flops...wait...maybe it's dirt. I can't really tell and for the moment it doesn't really matter.

Today God showed me joy in many shapes and sizes. Just like God created each one of his children to be unique and special, God gives us joy daily in unique and special ways.



**Amber Rislow**

This morning we had our first program with 50 kids. We played games and sang songs on the roof of the church—one thing I am still getting used to is the manner of greeting one another here in Peru. When you see someone you know (or know of, in our case) it is common to say a simple greeting such as buenos días and give a kiss on the cheek. I thought I was something else when I could say that by 12:30 this morning I had kissed 5 guys—one of them being the pastor. While it still takes some getting used to, it makes me feel like we're family in Christ when the little girls run up, pull my head down and kiss me on the cheek. It brings joy to greet them in this way too. After lunch, the girls on our team did the dishes. I found myself soon singing Natalie Imbruglia's "Torn" while cleaning the plates with 3 close, dear friends. What joy! We also sang a little ditty to the tune of "I like to chew my gum with God," which went something like, "I like to take malaria meds with God."

I also found joy at our program tonight. As we stumbled over our Spanish, the Peruvians and us gingos laughed together. God is good. I encourage you today to look for the unique ways God is giving you, His precious child, joy.

P.S. I have a favor to ask...

Please pray for me. The medication I'm on to combat malaria makes me have bad dreams. This morning I woke up pretty scared at 5, after being shot at in my dream while I was riding a bike (strange, but scary). Thanks friends!

---

**Date:** 1/21/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

January 21, 2004 Chiclayo, Peru

Today was a day where I thought more than once, "I wish I had more time to talk with these beautiful people." I think that sums up pretty well today as a whole.

We spent our afternoon in a small town outside of Chiclayo with many beautiful, excited children. Their big brown eyes and black hair and brown skin so contrasted with our blue eyes and blonde hair and white skin. (When I say "our" I mean, they guys!) They were so excited to see us that they waited "patiently" outside while we ate with a family.

Side note: forgive the digression, but I must share the story of our afternoon meal! We ate with our missionary family around 12:30 or 1:00pm (and it was a big meal) with the idea that we would have a small snack with people from the church at 3:00pm. When we arrived at the hosts' home and they brought out some food. This was not just desert and coffee. They served us meat and rice? Well, we sat down and our hostess said, "cabra." "Wow!" I thought. I got to write my journal and tell everyone that we ate goat! Also the potatoes, it turns out that's what we were eating, were actually somewhat stringy. Yuca, they called it. Alrighty. That's all well and good except not one of us, except our missionary contact, could finish the meal! I felt awful because they didn't have the money to be buying us goat meat, but they wanted us to feel welcome. I wished very much that I could somehow stuff it all down, but alas, it was not to be. We were truly blessed by that lovely family.

Back to the kids. They would take us down to church after we ate. They each greet us with a kiss and sometimes a hug. Each with a shy smile. Each with joy just to see us. Their excitement for whatever we had sometimes was a bit overwhelming. One thing that has been worth its weight has been my digital camera. The kids love it, but I sometimes feel it will be smashed to bits as each child struggles to see the small image on the back of the camera. I had more than one moment today where a picture of me and a few children became a stampede to the picture. So precious, but they scare me! Several of my teammates were almost mauled when they handed out stickers to the kids.

After songs with lots of actions, games, stickers hugs, kisses and lots of love, leaving was similar to trying to get the Beatles in and out of places. I physically had to take Amber's hand to get her into the missionary's van. They loved us, and it made me ache to want more time with them to teach them more games, more songs and more stories. This may be a passing feeling, but they need love, and I wish I could give it to them.

Tonight we went to another church for our second program. Such an amazing night! I was definitely something, so I will try to sum it up. The program was scheduled for 7:00pm. We arrived at 7:30pm or so. (Peruvian time) We started playing loud English songs because no one was there.



**Sarah Twito**

A few people came, so after 3 English songs we started the actual program. We had children running in and out, the Civil Service dropped off some food, but they looked like police outside. They were rumbling around while I was sharing the message. For those of you who have tried to speak over a crying baby, trying speaking over a car, without a muffler, right outside. Puppet show snafu, doing songs a little different without rehearsal...

Despite all the craziness, I saw God working. My dear teammate, Stephanie, has translated parts of one of our songs so it is now in English and Spanish at the same time. I got chills sitting, listening to it. Singing with these people. Praising our Savior. Seeing their faces as they did crazy actions to "Who's the King of the Jungle?" God giving me words in Spanish when I don't feel ready to share. God is hear among us. He has been working. He is working and He will continue to do His work long after we are gone. I am priveleged to be here for a small glimpse. May God give you a glimpse of what He is doing around you.

---

**Date:** 1/22/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

January 22, 2004 Chiclayo, Peru

It's been a long time since last week. I know, you're saying, "It's only been 7 days," but 7 days can hold a lot. I think I'll start with culture shock. We left Lima (the "little America" of Peru, as some have called it) and proceeded to Chiclayo on an 11 hour bus ride. Right about hour 9, I moved from the much loved honeymoon state to some weird funk which, simply put, resulted in much frustration from language barriers, exhaustion, confusion and many other things you encounter in different cultures. Needless to say, then the door was open for all the unhealthy thoughts about being on team to creep in. No, I'm not leaving, but I'd be lying if I said I didn't think about it. It comes with the territory.

Let's take a moment to discuss linguistics. We arrived in Peru expecting to run into some Spanish, perhaps some Swedish from missionaries we will be working with, and a native language or two. Our current language count is 10, and for someone like me who struggles to remember simple vocabulary, that is overwhelming. We've worked with missionaries, so far, from Denmark, Sweden and Germany. Sorry got distracted. Essentially, what I'm saying is that all my Spanish did not come rushing back to me like I hoped. Rather, it is a daily struggle to try and remember all the vocab I've forgotten, especially when playing "Simón dice" (Simon says).

Now you're all probably wondering why I haven't talked about today, January 22nd, just yet. I'm getting there, be patient.

The schedule so far has been very conducive to time with God. I came to the conclusion this morning that I would love to have a job that starts at 10am. Even with 2 programs a day, that's the earliest we've started, and it's been great for all of us. I especially enjoyed it because for me it is the perfect way to overcome culture shock. An example of that from this morning comes from Romans 8:2—"Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of Life has set me free from the law of sin and death." Through Christ, all the lies that go through my head about being here are proven to be just that...lies. Sorry if the connection seems a little rough, but for me with where I'm at, it hit me really well. I don't know if there's too much more to say. We had fun with kids this morning. I still don't know the verb for "untangle," broke a string in our 3rd program overseas, 3 hour bus ride tonight for a weekend in Trujillo where we will be playing for a church dedication, as well as two other congregations (stay tuned for more info on these...all will be told in the 1/23 and 1/22 journals). For now I should probably write in my journal because God is doing a lot right now...yes, even more than I just said. If you're curious, e-mail me. Personal account (if you have it) or the team account. I never get any mail.



**Deron Vaupel**

---

**Date:** 1/23/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

January 23, 2004 Trujillo, Peru

How many people were you in a car with today? I was in a vehicle (made to hold 11, by the way) with 16 other people. Yes, it was hot and not the most comfortable ride of my life but it was an experience and a half and, in the end it was fun just because I can say it happened.

I guess I should mention that we are on a three day excursion. We left our "home" in Chiclayo and traveled three hours by bus last night to get to Trujillo. When we got off the bus, we had no trouble locating our contact- a 6'6" German missionary. This was our first adventure away from the protective wings of Preben and Helena (our main contacts in Chiclayo).



**Jennifer Jarvis**

Today has been a day full of great experiences. We toured two huacas (pyramids, basically). In the huaca del brujo (wizard), we were actually close enough to reach out and touch the artifacts and paintings (don't worry Mom, you taught me well, I didn't touch anything). We climbed to the top and were able to see miles and miles of the coast line, which is almost completely undeveloped, unlike at home. Later, after some very dusty travel and sight-seeing, we were invited into the home of the man who lead the church where we had our evening program. We were all invited to have a cold drink and then a light supper. (Usually, the heavy meal is lunch here.) Now, it isn't like there was an eight course dinner but even a light supper for about 20 people is no light matter. Yet, we all had plenty to eat and drink (my new favorite thing is cinnamon, clove tea). Then the hosts' daughters had little gifts for all of us, mostly little rings or bracelets that they made—when Deron's didn't fit, they made it bigger for him. This is where I received one of the best gifts of my life. I told the eldest that I really liked her earrings (an innocent comment to start at conversation) and she took them out and gave them to me! Despite my protests, she maintained that she really wanted me to have them. What an incredible act of love and generosity. So many people loved us in so many ways today. The day was topped off by a concert by candlelight—good thing we are acoustic—and it was really neat to be able to do that.

So while, for me (and apparently Deron, since I just typed his journal from yesterday), the honeymoon is over, there is still so much to be thankful for and to store away and treasure in my heart. I am amazed at how God is using me despite all my shortcomings in language, energy and my many mistakes. I am still more amazed at how much I am learning about loving and caring for others both from the people here and the people on my team.

---

**Date:** 1/24/2004

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

**Journal Entry:**

January 24, 2004 Trujillo/Chocofan, Peru

We had a day trip to Chocofan today full of fun times, strange happenings and memorable moments. The ride from Trujillo to Chocofan was about 1 ½ hours long and we squished 17 of us into a "combi": a small bus designed to seat 11 people! They fit a bench along the side of the combi to squeeze in four more people. We departed late morning and it was a very warm and long and cozy ride with the sun blazing in the windows. It was definitely a bonding experience with our new friends from Trujillo because by the end of the journey I felt like we had all struggled together and made it through together. There was a sense of accomplishment. Upon arrival in Chocofan we all filed out of the combi and were refreshed by the cool wind. Then we took a few minutes to tour the new church that would be dedicated later that night.

I noticed that some of the boys we came with were walking away and asked our host sisters what they were doing (in Spanish) and I was a little confused when they said the boys were going to find a pig. But I was like, oh well, maybe that's a normal thing to do and then proceeded to explain to Matt and Amber what the boys were up to. So Matt, also being confused, asked the girls, using another word for pig, if they were indeed going to look for a pig and they just stared at him confused. Well, we just kind of brushed it off as a language confusion- maybe he pronounced something wrong- and we went to join the boys who had headed off towards the small mountain across the way.

It wasn't until we had climbed the mountain and come back down that I realized that the word for small mountain in Spanish is CERRO which sounded a lot like CERDO – or pig – to me. And NOW we



**Stephanie Kirkman**



understood the girls' look of confusion when Matt asked them if the boys had gone to find a CHANCHO- another word for pig. Yeah, I felt a little sheepish, but it was a good laugh. The whole time we were at the top of the cerro I kept wondering where the pigs would be and thinking, "I guess Peruvian pigs must dwell in the mountain tops." Silly me.

After our cerro trek we enjoyed a very large serving of rice and chicken for lunch. I'm continually amazed at the ability of our new friends here to eat such mass quantities of food in one sitting. I have yet to master this skill. The rest of the afternoon was quite laid back; a lot of sitting and relaxing and talking or not talking and playing games to pass the time (including 5 rocks). I find it amusing how quickly the mood or flow of the day can change. We went from hours of nothing scheduled and lots of time to do whatever you might want to do, to HURRY UP! It's time to go- jump in the combi, and then we're racing away to do mini-concerts in the central plazas of surrounding towns. First they had Deron bang away on the drum to get people's attention, then we got out the guitars and sang some sing-a-longs, but the thing that attracted both young and old was – yes - the puppets. It's amazing how everyone loves puppets. We did 2 of these little concerts to announce and invite people to the dedication service of the new church.

Then came another plentiful meal of the yummiest chicken noodle soup I've ever had. We were all ready and excited for the service to start. Kindred sang some worship songs and sing-a-longs and four pastors shared encouraging words and prayed for the new church and its members. The night wasn't over yet though, because afterwards we still had a few hours of games until midnight. They were the crazy, wild, fun, make-your-sides-hurt-laughter type games. Finally, after saying all our goodbyes, the 17 of us packed ourselves back into the combi to make our way back to Trujillo. I must say, it was a deliciously delightful and adventurous day. Thanks God.

---

**Date:** 1/26/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

January 26, 2004 Chiclayo, Peru

After only three days in Trujillo, I grieve our departure; our time there was blessed and memorable. On Friday night we offered music and worship in the small, neighboring pueblo of Magdalena. As we sang inside the small chapel, lit only by two candles, people filled the room and the doorway. Beginning with only a handful, we ended with a crowd, all to God's glory. For this small Presbyterian congregation, the night was a grand celebration. On Saturday night, following two late afternoon "advertisements" of music and puppets in courtyards of neighboring pueblos, we offered a concert to celebrate the dedication of their first-ever, brand new church building. The building is small by US standards—the size of a living room—and made of adobe brick and not only functioning electricity but also a stone floor. Surely it was evident that our God dwells not in homes of brick and mortar but in the hearts of his children. And finally on Sunday, we joined two other congregations in worship, sharing new songs encouraging them to sing and move with actions, and rejoicing in the love of God through Jesus Christ.

The families and individuals we met were so genuine and grateful and excited and eager to open their hearts and homes to us, much like in the US, but with an even greater understanding of the great family of God. Much like the poor widow's offering in Luke 21, they give out of their material poverty and spiritual wealth. Throughout these adventures, a small group of young adults from the home congregation traveled with us. With such great language barriers and in such small time we became closely connected. Together we climbed small mountains, explored ancient ruins, played many games, crammed twice too many people in mini vans, went for walks, laughed, taught each other English and Spanish and worshiped the Lord. Truly, we have friends in Trujillo, Peru, all by and to the glory of God.

While each day I am amazed at God's work in and around us, our time here is not with frustration. Despite the hard work our hosts and schedule, we spend much time waiting around. Meals kind of happen when they happen, and sometimes not at all. Similarly, restrooms are available when they are available; and sometimes not at all. At moments I am completely filthy, reeking of diesel fuel (used to clean the church floor) and crammed into a little tiny space on a hot day in a vehicle with one working window and no air conditioner. I try to communicate in Spanish and out come a language no one can understand. During these hours, I will experience moments of desperation. Yet, they last only a moment, by the grace of God, as I become filled with patience and humility and



**Matthew Poock**

love beyond myself. Thank you for your prayers. Psalm 68:19 "Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, we daily bears our burdens."

---

**Date:** 1/26/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

January 21, 2004 Chiclayo, Peru

Written by our Danish host Helene Edited by Sarah

It is a pleasure for me to really know that Sunitha has been telling the Truth: It is a really great Kindred-team!

Well, we have been in Las Lomas this evening – the shanty-town where I work. When the team arrived the only person present was Harold – one of the leaders, a woman, and a dog.

The rule in Las Lomas is that people start showing up when they hear the noise! So Kindred made noise – two songs in English. We waited 7 minutes and people began to come. 15 minutes later the church was half full.

The team went through their program – poor Matthew – the before mentioned dog wanted to see how his feet smelled. (Editor's note: this in fact happened during Healer, a song where Matt sings lead.)

We got really good instruction on the sing-a-longs. The only small problem was that Peruvians like to sit close – so acting like a tree – a river – a sea resulted in a little girl getting slammed in the face!!! By her neighbor.

It was time for Sarah to share. She did a really good job! Halfway through a car stopped outside the church. It was from public service – food for the public dining hall. Hope for the kids!! Hope for tomorrow. But poor Sarah stood there. Trying to raise her voice... competing with that car wasn't easy!!!

Well, the church was now about full – and we were lead through the evening in a wonderful way.

A lot of things happened – funny things like the puppet forgetting a card with the words on it... kids starting a fight on the church floor, and bugs falling down from the ceiling/roof.

But what was the most important to remember from this evening in Las Lomas is what Harold said in his prayer: We are together in Christ.



**Sarah Twito**

---

**Date:** 1/26/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

Sometimes jokes are meant to be funny.



**Deron Vaupel**

---

**Date:** 1/28/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

January 28, 2004 Chiclayo, Peru

The day has come my friends. I have hit the wall. My brain hurts because I have to lead, speak, sing, act and think in Spanish (Castallanó). See? Even now I am thinking and explaining in Spanish. How did I get to this point? I'll try and explain the best I can what is going on in my head at this point of the journey.

Yesterday we did a long afternoon of teaching workshops on skits, puppets and games. Now for those of you who know me well can invision the scenario with me. I speak (comfortably) the most Spanish on our team. I have a hard time not helping people. And this time was a total of 4½ hours. By the end of the afternoon/evening session I was spent. The amazing thing is that it did not



**Sarah Twito**

completely hit me until today. I ended the night at the church talking with one of the leaders. Today, however, during rehearsal, hiking and all that was team time, I began to feel the intense exhaustion coming. By our program tonight I was almost worthless. By God's grace He fills me enough to enjoy the program and encourage each church we visit. Now as I sit and write, I am finally able to unwind.

Besides God and the other thing that has gotten me through the struggles of being "Spanish speaker" and program coordinator is the help and support of my teammates. They have done their best to lighten the load and help me not completely lose my mind. So, thanks guys. Sometimes I need you to tell me not to do everything.

I pray that God will continue to renew his strength in me and that I will revel in His presence every moment of everyday. Peace be with you.

---

**Date:** 1/29/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

January 29, 2004 Chiclayo, Peru

This is the first time in quite awhile where I can't think of how to start my journal. It's 11:45, we had 4 hours of workshops this evening and it's our second late night in a row. Our days haven't been very full, just a couple of hours of programming each night. We've had lots of time to rehearse, which is decent because it provides structured language lessons, even if it is only a couple words. Essentially, the only new language skills I've acquired is how to politely ask for a repetition and how to ask if the taxi driver has enough change. It's a frustrating place to be at, but I think I'm understanding more as time goes on. Eventually, God will teach me to communicate, but whether that is primarily with words is yet to be seen. Music is a versatile language, so are smiles and games. Maybe a good balance of all of those will be found.



**Deron Vaupel**

---

**Date:** 1/29/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

January 27, 2004 Chiclayo, Peru

Kindred has reached rock star status here in Chiclayo. Today we had children at the church ounding on the door to get inside, and one child who even scaled the church to get a peek at Kindred. We spent the afternoon doing workshops with 13 of the adult leaders from three congregations, and as soon as the children in the neighborhood heard us singing, they came to the church. Chaos really broke loose when they heard our puppet voices instructing the adult leaders and soon we heard childish whining outside saying, "titeres" (puppets). We didn't let them in, as were busy instructing others, but we certainly knew they were out there for some time afterward!

With the warm welcome we received here I have felt some other "rock star" moments. Once when we visited a church there were two taxis waiting for us outside afterward. The children followed us out to the taxis and continued hugging/ kissing us as we got in the cars. As we drove away, they pounded on the cars and waved until we were out of sight.

While in Trujillo, we had to make it to the bus station that night at 8:30 to catch the last bus to Chiclayo...the only problem was that we had a program at 7:00, and programs never start at the time they are supposed to. When we finished we were presented with shirts and then the goodbyes began...Matt had to urge us to hurry in saying, "We won't make it home if we don't leave now." We left and the congregation members followed us out to the van, hugging and kissing us as we left. We hopped on the bus just before it was to take off...what a crazy life at times.

People's enthusiasm, especially the child who climbed up the church today, encourages me to seek God with the same enthusiasm and fervor that people seek us with. What would it be like if I was willing to climb a building to get only a glimpse of God? How would my day be different if I sought God with all my heart and being? What would it be like to serve God with vigor? May I seek God



**Amber Rislow**

with enthusiasm here in Chiclayo as you seek the same Lord wherever you are in this moment.

-Peace-

---

**Date:** 1/30/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

January 30, 2004 Chiclayo, Peru

Whew! What a day! For some reason it seemed a little longer than normal. We had two programs today. We sang for a women's group in the afternoon. It was great because we are really starting to get to know some of the people here—I mean more than, "Hey, you are so and so and go to this church and have this thing, yada, yada, yada." That is really fun for people who are used to hit and run ministry. The women in the group were great and got into the singing and dancing/actions that we were doing. Watching people enjoy music that much reminds me how much I love it too, because it is something you can share, regardless of language.



**Jennifer Jarvis**

We were also blessed to spend time with two guys from one of the churches this afternoon. It turns out, they are really interested in starting a team like ours (well, without all the traveling but using music, puppets and drama stuff). So we met with them this afternoon and they sat in on part of our rehearsal and then asked us questions. It seems they really have the passion for this and we are looking forward to meeting with the whole group and working on a covenant with them. It is so amazing to see that we really are making some sort of impact here. And when I say "we," I mean, God is making the impact.

Remember when I was telling you we had two programs? Yeah, back to that train of thought. So after our afternoon with the ladies, we set off for San Antonio (a town about 20-30 mins away, not TX). We were scheduled to do a family night program but it ended up being mostly children, which is cool or bacán (there you go, little cultural moment in Peruvian slang). So we are up there singing away and I look out and realize that about half of the congregation is in long sleeves and/or pants. Then I look at my team (girls in skirt, boys in pants, all in short sleeves and sandals) and we are sweating like pigs! I mean sweat just dripping off every single one of us! (Gross, sick, disgusting!) Not only are we a little more than "glistening," no one in the audience even looks the least bit warm! However, after we sang ourselves into exhaustion, we were treated to a mini concert by the youth of the congregation—that was really neat to be able to stand back and clap and cheer for them. So we have our little deal and talk to the people a bit and then start to pack up. Well, Sarah couldn't find her digital camera (her own, not the team's) so she asked us and she asked the kids but to no avail. So Matt rallied the troupes, he gathered the kids and asked them if they saw it or knew where to look so all these kids are running around looking for Sarah's camera. After about 45 mins of being convinced that it was gone (a tragic loss not just because of the value of the camera, but it's value to us because of the pictures it had and the opportunities it presented) the camera was recovered. Man alive were those kids happy to give that camera to Sarah! (She was just as happy to get it back, as you may imagine.)

So besides the camera thing, it was a good night. However, at the end, when we were too tired to really move, they kept asking for one more song. And we did it. Now that may not sound like much but let me just tell you, there is definitely a "God moment" when you think you can't lift your arms over your head and then suddenly, when inspired by the fact that someone else can do it, and you know they are just as tired as you, then suddenly, you are doing "Lord, I Lift" with more energy than you knew you possessed. I am continually being amazed and encouraged by my teammates. When you think, "There is no Spanish left in my brain," and, "If I have to sing one more song I am going to fall over," and "If I have to do one more puppet show!" Then there is someone there, cheering you on, knowing that you can do it, not because you have to but because God is there with you, holding up your arms, putting words in your head and a song in your heart. What an amazing, amazing gift! I think it is also teaching us to rely on each other as a team in new ways because we are stretched and challenged in different things than we are at home. It is such a growing experience that really, you can't put it into words, you just feel it.

Well, it is about that time, my friends, my voice is trashed and I need some sleep. Those of you who know me (well, even who have met me) know that the best way to rest my voice is to sleep because otherwise, I will be tempted to talk. So I hope God stretches you today. May there be abundant blessings for you today!

---

**Date:** 1/31/2004

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

**Journal Entry:**

January 31, 2004 Chiclayo, Peru

Tonight we did a program, scheduled to start at 6:30 but actually starting at 7:30, at a town square in Chiclayo for people from the three surrounding churches and for anyone in the neighborhood who might want to come and listen to us "gringos" sing and talk about the coolness of Jesus and see us dance around and do puppets and skits and other crazy stuff. The sun had gone down, but there were enough street lights to illuminate the area. Like many of our programs here, the puppets brought in A LOT of spectators, young and old. We did 2 puppet shows because by now we know their intense love for those wacky creatures that live behind the Kindred curtain. It was good to look out into the crowd and see many familiar faces from the churches we've been able to visit. There were also a lot of new faces- some looking cautious, some enthralled, and some confused. Sometimes I wish I could peak into people's hearts and see what's really going on there- how God is stirring things up.

After we sang our last song, we had time to hang out and talk with the people who had come out to hear us. My high for the day came when one of our new friends walked up to me with tears in her eyes and hugged me. I thought she was sad about something, but when she started to explain why she was crying, I realized they were tears of joy. She told me about how her family had been going through a really hard time and how event after event had led up to a decision that had to be made earlier that day. She explained how her family members were all extremely stressed out and anxious- not knowing what to do- but strangely she found herself peaceful, knowing exactly what way to go. Although it was a hard decision, she felt like she just knew the right thing to do and had the courage to step out and do it. Her parents and siblings were confused at how calm she was, but she knew it was God who was giving her peace, and God who had guided her through the struggle and given her courage.

I felt so blessed to hear her story and see her heart being touched by God's love for her- and to share that moment with her. The hugeness of God's love never stops surprising me- how can it be that He loves EACH one of us so deeply? I don't know how, but I'm thankful.



**Stephanie Kirkman**

---

**Date:** 2/2/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

February 2, 2004 Chiclayo, Peru

When in Peru, be careful what you do with your legs. During our first concert in Chiclayo, we sang a song that has actions with it, including that of a tree. I made my tree by extending my arms up and putting one of my legs behind me in the air, just as I always have. The kids especially thought this was hilarious—my tree pose—and so I played it up a bit more. Come to find out only a few days ago, here in Peru, that movement with my leg indicates a man that wants to be a woman. Not at all what I had intended to communicate.

During our visit to Chiclayo, we have worked primarily with three congregations. While separate communities, all three come together for worship three times each year. Having postponed their annual New Year's celebration (a whole month) for our sake, yesterday afternoon we all gathered together in a city park for hours of worship, food and games. The day felt something like a family reunion for us as well. I played several hours of soccer (fútbol here) with some very young (7 and 8 year olds) and very talented players. People of all ages joined in the game played on concrete with a



**Matthew Poock**



ball much like a basketball on this hot, sunny summer day. I had a great time, although I'm certainly not a very good player here. Nonetheless, I am rather a celebrity with them (and they expect me to know the real ones in the US). My good friend Alberto came to the event and we played soccer on the same team. Before I realized it, he and his friends had piled in the van to leave, and I didn't know if I'd ever see him again. So I ran after him climbed into the van and gave him a small lapel pin along with a handshake. I later gave a similar gift to my friend Erick, who then asked me, as politely as possible, if I had any shirts as gifts. Sadly, I did not.

Here my thoughts run in circles. These people have such need –broken homes, underemployment and little earthly hope. My heart goes out to them, and I want to do so much more for them than just give them a small gift. It's hard to even know what it is they need in their best interests. And in another week, we'll leave this place and declare a holiday in another church. What then? I feel somewhat helpless, at a loss for words and actions. Yet, I am honored and blessed to be here, knowing that God has a purpose for this. I, personally, am not the answer to their problems. I am simply called to love and to hopefully offer encouragement, joy and resources. May God multiply my offering in their lives. God is faithful to all his children. "You know that with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed." Joshua 23:14

---

**Date:** 2/3/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

February 3, 2004 Chiclayo, Peru

Tonight I flicked off a roomful of 130 Peruvian students. During a song we were teaching in English, I wanted to encourage my side of the auditorium. I promptly put my index finger to my thumb and flashed the symbol to let my side know they were doing okay...unfortunately, as some of you who recently read Matt's journal know, this sign does not translate to a "good" sign here; rather, the opposite. I knew this going into the night, but forgot in 'the moment.' Now, fortunately nobody ran out, nobody cried and nobody did it back. Those who saw it forgave me for it and I imagine that they brushed it off as "those crazy Americans."

Another thing that doesn't translate well is my name. Amber in English is just fine—a color, a jewel...amber is beautiful. Here I pronounce it ahm-bair because they don't use the same vowel sounds as we do, and it sounds strikingly like the word for hungry—hambre (ahm-brey). So many people say, "What? Hungry?" I have to explain and pronounce it over and over again. I was going to use Marta or María instead but I also find it incredibly ironic because I do, in fact, love to eat. People say, "¿Amber, tienes hambre?" (Amber, are you hungry? And the answer is always yes.

I have forgiven those who mispronounce my name, and those who tease me a little for it. I'm sure that any of the people attending our program tonight who saw me flash the okay sign forgave me. In all reality, these are such small things to forgive. A bit harder for me to wrap my mind around is my teammates forgiveness they grant me daily. I mess up so much each day! This year has granted me the opportunity to see all my imperfections and things that I need to work on, and sometime I fear ever marrying because I would hate to put somebody I love through a lifetime of me and my faults! If God does have me marry someday, I at least hope my husband never ever meets my teammates. They have seen all my colors and boy, do they have stories!

In all honesty though, they show me so much grace. I am thankful for their hugs, pats on the back, listening ears and forgiving hearts. With their support I marvel at how much greater the support and love we have from God is. God sees even more of me, yet still loved me enough to send Jesus to die for me. God sees the ways I try to be better but still hang on to the old habits, and God forgives me each and every time I call on Him. Wow. That is something to write home about.



**Amber Rislow**

---

**Date:** 2/4/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

February 4, 2004 Chiclayo, Peru

As I drove away from San Antonio—a country church outside of Chiclayo—I thought to myself, "Those kids really love us!" And as I talked with one of the missionaries, I found out about hurts, broken families and the history of the church. My heart breaks for them.

To give you a better understanding of the kids in San Antonio, I give you the greeting: many want to greet us by kissing us on the cheek. Now we've been there three separate times, and many of the children even hug us and give us sloppy kisses. Some of us tonight, found that not long after entering the church we had one little person on each arm. They wanted to be close to us because we did not push them away; in fact, we opened our arms to them.

They also love to sing. Such joy for singing. I love to see them smiling and doing the actions to the songs. One of the songs they love is "Desde que sale el sol" (From the rising of the sun). The words to the song go,

Desde que sale el sol (From the rising of the sun)  
Hasta que se oscurece (until the setting of the same)  
El nombre del Señor alabaré (the name of the Lord will be praised)

I thought I would be singing that song until the sun rose...oh, our poor arms! Jennifer even had to come up to help Stephanie do the actions. Similar to Moses in Exodus 17: 11-12  
The songs, the kisses, the hugs, the smiles...these are our legacy. They may remember us forever, and I pray that we ducked enough so they remember Who we were here to serve. My prayer is that somehow, God worked through us to draw them closer to Him. It is only by His grace that they got any of His love because I was definately not the most God-focused today in San Antonio. It's a good thing that it's not all up to me for them to experience God's love. God is more than enough. I don't think I will ever forget how they said god-bye to us for the last time. I received no less than four hugs from one of the girls and multiple others from the others around us. They followed us from the church to the home where we were served, saying, "¡No se vayan!" (Don't leave!) When we emerged from the house, we were mobbed by the kids who told us we could stay at their houses. Getting into the van was the biggest challenge of the night because Amber and I were the last to get in. Literally, Amber was being pulled in the opposit direction of the van. I was behind her and wasn't sure if I would have to push her in. What an exit! The children surrounded the van and it seemed likely we would run one or two over as we left. I have never felt so much like a celebrity. There is a part of me that wonders if God would ever bring me back here. I also remember that God's work in the lives of each individual will far out-last any person who is ministering to them. So even if I would work here for years, I know that I would feel that God still had more to give than I had time. This is why I am thankful to be a small part of the work that is happening here in Chiclayo, Peru. So with David, I say, "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, HIS love endures forever." (I Chronicles 16:34)



**Sarah Twito**

---

**Date:** 2/5/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

February 5, 2004 Chiclayo, Peru

It's come to my attention that my past couple journals haven't been super. Not my favorites. Seems like I've lost the zip, the spunk, the..., the....yep. It's gone. God's doing lots of great things, I just can't express them in a journal as well as I would like. So, on this, the eve of our departure from Chiclayo (where our hosts have been more than we could have ever asked for), I would like to present a few lighthearted observations and reflections.

Oops, the paper almost started on fire because of the heat radiating from my body. We went to the ocean this morning, and we've got some temporary, yet painful, souvenirs. We have fortunately been provided with some aloe to ease the sunburn. It was a great time spent with people we have gotten to know over the past couple weeks.

I've got some good news. I haven't dropped any guitar picks our entire time in Peru. The bad news is I've broken 8 strings in the past week: 2 tonight, 2 last night, one Monday, 2 Sunday, and one on



**Deron Vaupel**

some other day. It's been frustrating trying to figure out what to do when you keep breaking the same string and have no music stores around. Fortunately, I know where to go in Lima and maybe the problem will be solved. But at least I know that if we get stranded in the Andes, we have enough wood for a decent fire.

Transportation update. 22 people in the van to the beach today. 7 people (counting driver) and guitar in the taxi to the program tonight. And the taxis are the size of old-school Ford Festivas.

-Deron

---

**Date:** 2/6/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

IMPORTANT TEAM JOURNAL NOTICE!!!!!!

There are actually some journals that were posted out of order--it all started on January 23rd. So if you are confused and like, "hello, what is going on here?" Please go back and read the older ones! God bless you all!



**Jennifer Jarvis**

---

**Date:** 2/6/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

February 6, 2004 Chiclayo/ Lima, Peru

Well today was a travel day and when I say travel day I mean, travel night. We left "Little Denmark," I mean Chiclayo, at 8:00pm and traveled overnight by bus to Lima. Now before I tell you about the actual traveling part, I need to tell you about the leaving part. To start with, we piled into three taxis (to the bus station) for 13 people, 6 packs, 2 guitars, 1 giant drum case and several other various small bags. When we got to the bus station there were 36 people there to see us off! In addition to our 3 missionary families, there were several people who we are lucky enough to call friends. We said our good-byes over and over. (And then again.) Just to put it in perspective for you, there were 6 girls with their faces pressed to the window sobbing and waving as we got on the bus. It was the most pathetic thing I have ever seen. We went between laughing and crying. For awhile Steph and I just sat on the bus crying, when we could talk again we wondered why they loved us so much. What did we do to deserve that love? Clearly, God was working in those relationships. The funny thing was that neither of us thought we would cry! I was fine until I saw our host mom crying, then it was all over for me. I am going to miss them so much.

Now about the 11 hour bus ride. So one thing about me is that I don't really sleep in moving vehicles. I don't sleep in the van at home, I don't sleep in planes so sleeping on a bus (though it is pretty posh) isn't likely. It was a million times better than last time though- turns out that a month after surgery is better than a week. Anyway, the point of that discourse is that you can see lots of interesting things driving through small towns in the middle of the night: the ocean, a tree growing through the roof of a house, a guy sleeping on a Pepsi stand, a Ghostbuster's sticker in Spanish...and my best-favorite thing, a store with the sign "Day and Night/ 24hours" that was closed.

Now we've told you about several "Peruvian" experiences- sunburn at the beach (2/5), all the random program stories (just pick any journal, I'm sure there is a story there), learning about Danish culture in Peru by staying with Danish missionaries, and I feel we have left out something very important. Inca Cola. Politically incorrect as the name is, it has become a very important part of our lives (afterall, it is the "flavor of Peru"). Yes, especially for Deron, Sarah and I. Now we thought Code Red Mountain Dew was the best thing since Steph introduced the word "monkey" into everyday vocabulary, but that was only because we had yet to experience all that is Inca Cola- SO GOOD! (Simpsons fans can insert the "drooling Homer" noise here.)



**Jennifer Jarvis**

Now that you heard about Inca Cola and your life is complete, I hope you have a wonderful day.

---

**Date:** 2/7/2004

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

**Journal Entry:**

Saturday, February 7 Lima, Peru

After a very tearful good-bye at the bus station in Chiclayo (see Jen's journal, Feb. 6) we traveled 10 hours through the night back to Lima. My mind was rushing with memories of time spent with friends in Chiclayo and how good they were to us. It's funny to think back to the first moments of meeting those beautiful people and compare it to how close we feel to them after spending three weeks together.

This morning I found myself tired and worn out from a night of uncomfortable bus sleep and not very excited about meeting a whole new group of people. I realized how comfortable I had become staying in one place and hanging out with the same people for so long (for a teamer 3 weeks might be compared to 3 YEARS in the life of a non-teamer).

Upon arrival, one of our contacts was at the station to pick us up, and she brought us to our dwelling for the next week. While in Lima we'll be staying with a cool Christian family that opens their house to guests. They were at the door to greet us and to welcome us in to their home. The mother of the family hugged each one of us, showed us our beds and fixed some breakfast for us 6 travel-weary gringos. During breakfast she ran out to her garden and picked her most beautiful and perfect pink rose to give to us and put in our room. After more hugs and kisses she sent us off to get rest. They were such simple acts of kindness to offer us, but now I find myself feeling at home all over again.

Thanks God.



**Stephanie Kirkman**

---

**Date:** 2/9/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

February 9, 2004 Lima, Peru

I miss real ketchup, the kind with actual tomatoes in it. (Real is a relative term.) Peruvian ketchup is most comparable to sweet and sour sauce. So as long as I tell myself I'm having sweet and sour sauce, I like it well enough. But sometimes you just want ketchup (the tomato kind). Instead they always have this very spicy sauce called aji; if you know my taste buds well enough, you know I avoid it.



**Matthew Poock**

And beef. Now I grew up in Iowa, and I'd like to think that I know what beef is. Although I have been served "beef", I have not eaten Beef. The closest thing I've had resembles refried beans. I have, however, been served chicken. Chicken with rice. Chicken with potatoes. Chicken with chicken. A leg of chicken dropped into soup. Tasty, usually, but watch out for the bones, they come with it. While we're on the topic of meat, ceviche is probably the most popular Peruvian dish - raw fish with lemon. Two bites was enough for me. Goat isn't half bad, but I'm glad I found out what it was that I ate after I had finished. I believe it was Sarah who said "there goes supper" as a goat walked by the window.

On the flip side, I have had some great homemade ravioli and delicious pancakes (with potatoes!). We are often served complete meals of bread rolls with jellies and tea, especially for breakfast. We've also been treated to granadilla, a passion fruit, resembling and also called jungle snot. I like it. And not only have we had Peruvian food, but also Danish, Columbian, Argentinian, and Swedish, most of which I appreciated. Oh, and now that we're back in Lima (also known as Little America), we had a moment of "weakness" and went to Pizza Hut. Last and greatest of our food adventures, Inca Kola. For the past eight years I have rarely consumed any pop or carbonated beverage. But all that has changed. While I'm not addicted like some, this yellow, almost fruity, almost cream soda (but not either) delight has

weakened my defenses. See Jennifer's journal, February 6, for details on "The Flavor of Peru".

A couple unrelated notices: I've stopped shaving until Jennifer tells me to. It takes too much effort for now. Also, I have a nice farmers tan. My neck and the back of my knees are brilliantly red. Otherwise, I'm healthy and happy, and my stomach is usually full.  
Peace.

---

**Date:** 2/11/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

February 10, 2004 Lima, Peru

I know so much of how little I know.

To the woman selling candybars on the street -

Do you have kids at home? It is 9:30 at night, are they putting themselves to bed while you try to sell a few items in order to get some money for breakfast?

To the 50-year-old man on the bike selling ice cream -

I'm sorry that you have to honk that horn to get my attention so I might perchance buy some ice cream. I'm sorry for that bright yellow shirt you must wear that says nothing of the life you've lived, the wisdom you've gained, or why you spend your days peddling instead of walking in the park with your grandchildren.

To the young man who flipped his hat off and began to beg when he saw us gringos coming -

What, besides my white skin, makes you think I have money to give? What makes me think that I don't?

To the little boy no more than four years old who I saw sleeping while squatting next to the supermarket -

Do you have to sell that candy everyday? Where is your house? Where is your bed? Please don't tell me that you sleep on this concrete because it's safer, or because this IS home. Please tell me the bruise on your face is from playing with friends and not from one of your family members, not in anger.

Red and Yellow

Black and White

They are precious in His sight

Jesus loves the little children of the world.



**Amber Rislow**

---

**Date:** 2/11/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

February 11, 2004 Lima, Peru

There was a chicken foot in my soup. Not only my soup, but the soup of three of my teammates. Yum, yum. We also thought we had discovered the Heart and liver of the bird. It was similar to dissecting your soup. It, the foot, looked a little like a small white hand coming out of my rice and vegetables.



**Sarah Twito**

On a more serious note, I have had some incredible God moments in the past couple days. My favorite was hanging out with some children at a Lutheran run daycare. We got to see the entire facility, which was impressive. By far the most memorable room was the baby room. They were all beautiful and my heart was full looking at them. One of the nurses finally asked if I would like to take one home. Oh, if only I could. The four-month-old I was holding at the time snuggled into my



heart. Lord only knows where He will call me in my life, but perhaps some day I will adopt a little Peruvian baby to have in my arms for good.

God works so much through the people at this daycare where they give two meals and wonderful care everyday. What a privilege to work with such amazing people and hopefully leave them with some resources. Please continue to pray for the people who have been called to ministry here as they minister to the spiritual and material needs of the children.

Peace be with you.

---

**Date:** 2/12/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

February 12, 2004 Lima, Peru

Thud! 6:02 and the dog decided to plop down against the door next to my bed. Occasional barks over the next 45 mins eased the waking process, but did not help me forget that our day had been rescheduled to leave at 8AM, 2 programs, and time at the beach in between. Sounds great, but leaves room for some pessimism because I know how I respond to the combination of heat and not too much sleep...exhaustion. So after remembering all of this, I

roll out of bed, go to breakfast, almost jump at the offer to drive our contact's car but realize that Lima driving would probably be too harsh of a starting point after not driving for a month, write a really long run-on sentence. 2.5 hour drive to our church for the day, we arrive for a program and are greeted by a dozen kids. I forgot to mention that my brain was not processing Spanish for the first 7 hours of the day. As our program progresses, more than 30 more people show up. Some got bored and left, but many were excited to be there. It was a surprise to me to hear that because very few seemed interested at the time, but we were told later in the afternoon that many went back to their summer school classes singing these new songs and they even wrote about us. I'll probably never fully comprehend the impact we have, so just faithfully wake up each day and go do what I'm called to do.

Brief update: I haven't broken any guitar strings this week, and I found sufficient replacements on Monday, so it is no longer a concern. Hooray!

After our program, we were served a good meal of rice and duck. I got a clean plate club gold star. I think Sarah got a silver star, and everybody else drank a lot of water during the program. Then, after eating, we drove to the beach. Fortunately for me, there was a shade option which I gratefully took a.) because I'm still peeling from last week and b.) I didn't want to be in the sun for too long. Our program start time had changed, so we weren't at the beach as long as we thought we would be. Speaking of change, I've noticed that, like in the U.S., Peru has a monetary system that extends to the second decimal place (hundreths). Fruit can cost 0.79 centimos per kilo. My concern, as treasurer, is that I have seen no money that extends beyond the first decimal place (tenths). They can charge

5.49, but the closest I can pay is 5.50. Where do the extrahundreths of soles go? This is a question that will keep me up late tonight.

Sorry for the tangent. We got to our second location and after awhile had a chance to sing with a dozen young people, ages 7 to 17. It was a very relaxed atmosphere and seemed to be a good fit after the long morning. They were excited to sit and talk after we were finished. It's exciting to see God working in all these different places we go, especially when I know I am expecting a different response.

So there you have it. My journal. Maybe next week I'll have some more random ponderings to share, and even better, some good insights from God. Northeast rocks my face off, and Matt Rowden, your journal on beards has been an inspiration to many, including one female teammate of mine who is severely encouraging me to 'let my facial hair be all it can be.' I'll keep you posted on that.



**Deron Vaupel**

---

**Date:** 2/13/2004  
**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis  
**Journal Entry:**

February 13, 2004 Lima, Peru

Snow Day! I'm sure that you are thinking, Snow day in Peru? Well, it wasn't really a snow day, but let me explain. Today we were supposed to leave the house at 8:00am and as we were rolling out of bed at about 7:30, we received the blessed news saying that we didn't need to leave until 9:30, granting us an extra hour of sleep. It was the best hour of sleep I've had in a long time.



**Jennifer Jarvis**

Today was pretty good, long, but good. We did some workshops, gave a children's program, hung out with the youth from the church: it sounds uneventful but do not be deceived! I had several near-death experiences today. The first came during a skit. Now in this skit Matt chases me and I run away, tag on a smaller scale. However, in the running away, I slipped in some water/ diesel fuel (which is often used to clean the floors) and nearly split my head open. Then there was lunch. We were served a stewish looking thing. I looked at it and thought, that doesn't look bad. Well, I pick up my fork and while it is poised to go to my mouth, Steph goes, "I taste peanuts!" I am allergic to peanuts; there was no Benadryl. She saved my life. (Well, she saved me from a really miserable afternoon.) Luckily there was other food to eat but I felt bad about being such a pain when these people were nice enough to feed us.

I guess my point in talking about these near-death experiences is that I am so amazed at how God works sometimes. He uses the skits that I mess up to deliver messages, He takes care of me with teammates who look out for me and provides me with food that people work hard to prepare for me so that I have something to eat. Now I know that I don't deserve this love but He gives it freely and is always showing me love in new ways.

Now I have two more things to share. 1. I am encouraging Deron and Matt to grow their beards so if you want to help that would be awesome, I mean we are in a different country for crying in the mud. 2. My favorite thing about Peru, not Inca Kola, though it does rock my face off. It is the floors. There are so many slippery floors here. (Now these are okay when you know they are slick and not wet and not playing tag, so don't think this has anything to do with my near-death experience.) Now we are talking slippery in flip-flops, not just socks: hours of entertainment.

May your day be bright and full of love and may your floors be slippery (but be careful)!

---

**Date:** 2/14/2004  
**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman  
**Journal Entry:**

February 14, 2004 Lima, Peru

For our team devotion this morning we had a time of meditation before eating breakfast and diving into our program-filled day. It was a lovely morning and I picked the garden for my meditation spot. I was surrounded by roses and all sorts of colorful, beautiful flowers. The birds were singing and I closed my eyes as a gentle breeze cooled my face. I heard the sound of Sugar, the family dog, happily trotting towards me. She seemed to be saying, "Good morning, Stephanie." I smiled and reached out to pet him. At the same moment, he lifted his leg to "mark his territory" on the chair I was sitting on. I shrieked and jumped out of the chair and decided to spend the rest of my quiet meditation time indoors.

Breakfast was next, followed by 3 programs at 2 different churches and lots of eating and hanging-out in between. At the end of our 1st program, we were all standing around and talking and enjoying each other's company. Two little boys were riding around in a two-seater tricycle having the time of their lives, laughing and screaming at the top of their lungs. Well, I decided to join in on the fun by



**Stephanie Kirkman**

riding along in the second seat as the other boy pushed us from behind. Good times were had, laughter and smiles abounding and I dismounted from the bike to let them continue their fun. As they were riding away I noticed my long, flowy, held-up-by-elastic skirt was caught on one of the screws so I had to run behind them trying to keep up so I wouldn't lose my skirt: they didn't seem to notice my frantic screams and kept on riding like nothing was wrong. Thankfully Matt took notice and came running to the rescue, saving me from further embarrassment. These are the ways I like to begin and end a very long and busy day. I'm left smiling at the embarrassing moments and a little more humble. Thanks God for giving us laughter.

---

**Date:** 2/16/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

February 16, 2004 Lima, Peru

After sharing our third program of the day on Saturday, I was enjoying some refreshments of crackers and Coca-Cola, reveling in the completion of our day's events, and yet trying to drum up enough energy to talk and interact with the families. Several kids were standing around me, boys wanting to shake my hand and girls waiting to kiss my cheek. At one point, I looked up across the dirt yard of the church just in time to see a young woman spill a little bit of cracker on herself, notice my eyes watching, and become embarrassed. In hopes of relieving her embarrassment, I later made my way over to her to introduce myself, knowing that my Spanish would likely embarrass me. This young woman, Iris, and I talked at length about Peru and the church, and she shared a piece of her life with me.



**Matthew Poock**

Iris is a single mom, age 23. Her son Sebastian is three years old, loves to play, and has a vivid imagination. Together they live with her brother, near her parents, in a small home on the edge of the city. Trained as an accountant, she is currently out of work and has decided to study English in hopes of furthering her career. Iris grew up Catholic, as is her family, which for her meant little more than an obligation of Sunday attendance. A year ago she met the pastor of this Lutheran congregation and soon after became active in her faith, studying scripture and experiencing new life. While her parents are supportive of the changes in her life, her friends do not understand and are unwilling to try. She expressed a passionate desire to live for God and to follow Jesus. That devotion brought her and her son an hour and a half from home to join us that evening.

I am inspired by the way Iris' faith affects her life, bringing about such concrete and daily struggles, and I am struck by how differently my faith has affected my life. Would I travel an hour and a half for worship? Would I risk the relationships in my life to follow Jesus so radically? I have never known such obstacles in my faith life. Yet Jesus promised us we would have troubles; the apostles warn us to expect struggles and persecution. In what ways have I avoided struggles to choose a more comfortable life? What kind of faith does it take to live an easy life, compared to the great faith needed to survive daily hardships and persecution? I envy her faith.

Iris also asked me a question I hope to ask myself the rest of my life: what is your purpose? I told her that we want to celebrate the love and grace of God, share this good news with all God's creation, and build bridges between Christians around the world. Afterward I couldn't help but wonder how I could have accomplished any of those goals that night. We were at that church for less than three hours, much like many churches we visit. What could happen in such brief an encounter? Yet God, not I, grows faith. I am but a fellow worker. "Therefore, dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" 1 Corinthians 15:58. Maybe this next analogy stems from a lack of these in Peru, but Christians should be much like road signs, pointing not to ourselves but to God. Even though we see road signs only in passing, they help us to know the way. As a road sign, what does my life say?

---

**Date:** 2/17/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

## Journal Entry:

February 17, 2004 Lima Airport, Peru

Not everyday in Peru is a life-changing experience. Today, for example, is one of those days. We are currently waiting in the Lima airport for our flight to Arequipa which has been delayed. I'm not talking with any of the other passengers about how Jesus has changed their lives, I'm not playing my guitar on the street corner while I wait, and I'm not even praying. As a matter of fact, I just finished a game of UNO with my teammates.



**Amber Rislow**

One of my dear friends wrote me an email a while back and said how she felt her life was pretty mundane in comparison to what I was doing. For her and all of you reading this who may feel like what you're doing isn't as thrilling or life-changing as being in Peru, let me offer you the following thoughts...

Before coming to Peru, I thought everyday would be a whirlwind of memories and experiences. I thought that God would reveal amazing things to me and that I would grow in leaps and bounds as a person. What I have been foolishly realizing is that I am the same in the states as I am here; more importantly, God is the same in the states as here in Peru. I don't have to travel 11 hours by plane to understand God more, or serve God more. Being in Peru is only a different way to experience the God I know and a different way to serve God's creation. I am enthused about the ways that you all are experiencing God and serving God in your corners of the world. What you are doing is no better or worse than what I am doing here. The soup you cook for a friend, the letters you write (Grandma), the smiles you send, the classes you teach, the youth you work with in your church...all of these are just as valid and important ways to serve as singing 'Lord I Lift Your Name on High' in Spanish to 30 kids in a church courtyard in Lima.

Not everyday is spectacular here - yesterday I ate at Pizza Hut and went to the mall for my day off. Today I am eating Doritos and hanging out in the airport. Sometimes I like to think of our team as 'professional hanger-outers' because so many times we find ourselves just shootin' the breeze with people! :)

I am well-known for thinking outloud, and perhaps this is an example of that, but I want to make it known that while there are great moments that are perhaps Best-Seller worthy, there are also mundane moments here.

Wishing you many mundane moments today,  
Amber

---

**Date:** 2/18/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

## Journal Entry:

Arequipa, Peru

What is the most dangerous thing to be aware of while driving in a bus in Arequipa, Peru? Now that I have all the moms of Kindred concerned, let me reassure you. The answer to that question is not as you might think, terrorists with guns. It is "carneval." The word, when spoken, makes people of all ages light up, but it is not Mardi Gras. Let me show you.

Today we piled into the bus to head into town. Content to watch the scenery pass, we talk of little. Then we see the snow capped Andes and are thoroughly distracted. WHAM! WATER EVERYWHERE! What we have just experienced was an expert marks-man of carnaval. As we drove through Arequipa a man took a water balloon and threw it through the door of the moving bus! Most participants don't shoot for such difficult targets. The afternoons are filled with screams of vacationing school children dousing each other by any means possible. In front of our window today, We saw a girl completely drenched by two little boys. Most times the war is men against women,



**Sarah Twito**

boys against girls. What else do you do in the heat of the summer?

We have been seeing these goings on since sometime in January in Chiclayo, but it didn't officially begin until now (February 15-22).

I finally asked today where it originated. Our contact here told me that it comes from the cleansing of the Old Testament. He said it is always before the season of Lent. How neat to see that even crazy traditions that have no meaning anymore God works to prepare our hearts for the greatest gift the world has ever received: Eternal life through Jesus Christ. God: thanks for working in the hearts of people everyday. Continue to show me your glory in the little things. Amen.

Then I asked again to see if I understood. It turns out that carnaval comes from the festivals of Baal of the Old Testament where the people were free to do whatever they wanted. Here the religious meaning comes from the priests saying that people have the freedom to sin as much as they want. During Lent they will repent for all their sins for 40 days. (Translation: Fat Tuesday)

When he was explaining it the first time, I wanted to think that it had some beautiful meaning. It turns out, I was just hearing what he was saying through my own filter. So this journal ends with my own cultural moment during the writing. I guess it goes to show that I am human and make mistakes. Welcome to my world. I hope you enjoyed the trip, 'cuz my teammates sure did!

---

**Date:** 2/19/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

February 19, 2004 Arequipa, Peru

Looking back on last week's entry, and also looking at the clock, I will be brief today. Fortunately, no previous journals have been written about the joy that is Arequipa: at least for me. Then add in a brief summary of the day, and that's my journal.

So, our flight was delayed a couple of hours, but that's alright with me. I would rather fly an hour than spend 14 on a bus. We left Lima, all 85 degrees of it, spent some time on a flight with about 3 dozen people, then stepped off into the cool mountain air you can only experience at 6500 feet. Being 6 of only 11 passengers in an airport also speeds up the process of claiming luggage. We were in the car 10 minutes after leaving the plane. We get dropped off with our hosts, native Peruvians, and get to know them before going to bed. The next morning, I step outside to see several peaks which reach about 20,000 feet. Quite amazing. I thought corn was tall. That night, we did a short program in our hosts' living room for them and 15 or 20 neighbors. It was an amazing time to share God's love with them.

Today we had the opportunity to record 7 songs. We also had a good meeting about our programs and how to use that ministry to most effectively communicate God's love and sacrifice for us. We are all very excited to make the changes that have been laid on our hearts. We also got to see some of downtown, and on the way back, I almost got left at the wrong place because Sarah told me to get off at that stop. Got a little confused amidst the 44 other people on the 20 foot vehicle.

Let me quickly tell you about our hosts too. Awesome. So loving and caring, providing more than we could want. And tomorrow we may get moved. They have shown so much love by serving us even during a time when they don't know how long we will be with them. We talk a lot about love and serving as a team, and I hope we continue to see beyond the talk to the examples all around us. The people doing far more than they are paid for to help a few traveling musicians share their music with others. The young man on the bus standing for the elderly lady to sit, the 2 young children who give up their rooms for 6 strangers to move in for an unknown amount of time. The love is all around. I just need to see it more.



**Deron Vaupel**

---

**Date:** 2/20/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

February 20, 2004 Arequipa, Peru

Let me just settle the question I know everyone is asking. Yes, we are remaining with our host family in Arequipa. I'm sure you were very curious after Deron's journal



(2/19).

Life was fairly uneventful today. We rehearsed, worked on finding new Spanish songs, wrote shares (messages) in Spanish and spent some time at the internet café. We also met with four pastors who are the leaders of the churches we will be visiting. They are very excited to have us here and we are looking forward to our time with them.

That's really all there is to say. Nothing earth-shattering or even mildly amusing to talk about. But, honestly, it is nice to have some of those days.



**Jennifer Jarvis**

---

**Date:** 2/21/2004

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

**Journal Entry:**

Feb.21, 2003 Arequipa, Peru

Our day started early with a breakfast of bread and butter and jam and hot tea. For the morning and early afternoon we went on an outing with a group of neighborhood kids and families and fit 24 of us into one van (or small bus). I sat cozily between Sarah and Amber with a small child on my lap the whole way, enjoying the Arequipan scenery- snowcapped mountains, fields of round-flat-clustered cactus (cacti?), green valleys, and vast stretches of desert. As I was lost in thought and staring out the window I heard some screams and turned my head in time to see water coming in the driver's side window and soaking almost all 24 of us. Just moments later another bucket-full of water was thrown in the right side window, drenching my whole back and the surrounding passengers. Luckily the person behind me had enough sense to shut the window, warding off any further water attacks. A bitter sweet surprise. Bitter because we got soaked and felt like the butt of a practical joke, but sweet because we were all really hot squeezed in that tiny bus in the Peruvian summer heat- and it was just a funny situation.

On we continued, but to get to our destination we had to all file out of the vehicle and hike the last leg of our journey on a winding trail through a forest following a stream along the way. We spent the next hours swimming in spring fed pools, lounging in the sun, eating good food, playing soccer and volleyball (with a portable net held up by 2 large pieces of wood, rope, and 4 rocks- I was impressed) and just sitting and talking with fun people. I kind of feel like my job title should be something like Professional Hanger Outer- we get to do a lot of it. Later on we packed up and hiked back to our cozy van, all a little tired and sun-kissed.

We got back from our outing with just enough time to change clothes and head out for our evening program with a youth group. I remember looking out into this group of young people during some of the songs and seeing tears. I wonder what cool things God is doing in their hearts and I'm so thankful that I'm here in Arequipa, Peru, singing about God's awesome love and hanging out with God's beautiful children. The final song of our program translates "From the rising of the sun until the time it sets, I will praise the name of the Lord" and as we all sang these lines together we could see out the window the last rays of the sun pouring over the tops of the mountains and lighting up the clouds with splashes of red and purple.

"I will thank the Lord with all my heart as I meet with his people."

-Psalm 111:1



**Stephanie Kirkman**

---

**Date:** 2/23/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Pooch

**Journal Entry:**

February 23, 2004

Today I was a Peruvian. I went where only Peruvians go, I did what Peruvians do, and I saw what usually only Peruvians see. Let me explain.

Beginning with a program last week, I have become friends with one of our neighbors.

Edwin George and his family, including four siblings, live just across the street. George is **Matthew Pooch**



18 years old and has just completed high school. In August he will relocate to Lima and join the military for five years as a means to further his education. In preparation for that training George swims daily. Finding this common passtime, we made plans to go swimming together this morning, the two of us, withOUT my teammates (a Peruvian first for me).

After a long but fulfilling Sunday, beginning at 8am and ending after 9pm, and including three programs for intensely grateful people, I eagerly anticipated diving into a cool pool. Having decided to leave at 10am, by 11am, George was ready to go. We set out on foot; the pool was "not far". My Peruvian friend is quite a curious fellow, never at a loss for quesitons. Although we both had to work pretty hard (and only occasionally give up), we talked about religion, school, family, and our respective countries. While the converstaions were ongoing throughout the morning and afternoon, our plans were initially interrupted. Learning that that pool is closed on Mondays, we backtracked half an hour and set off for a different pool, this time by bus.

We wound up in a small neighboring town at a small but respectable outdoor pool. I put on my armor of sunscreen, and we swam, talked, lounged, and played catch in the frigid water. I could only have felt more Peruvian had I not needed sunscreen or had everyone's eyes not been fixed upon me. But neither bothered me for long. Foregoing the bus, George decided we would walk back by a different route. This journey took us into the country, passed cows, llamas (my first!), pastures, 500 year old lodges, over hills, across streams, and through the mud, all surrounded by mountains. The day was warm with a fresh breeze, the sun was brilliant, and the sky dotted by a few puffy clouds. Our conversation was as enjoyable as our view was breath-taking. What a site we must have been to the ranchers and rural residents! A blond-haired, red-skinned Iowan and a dark-haired Peruvian stranger trouncing all over God's backyard. The apostle Paul says simply at the end of his second letter the the Corinthians "live in peace". While I can only guess what the neighbors thought, I do believe God was smiling.

Peace.

---

**Date:** 2/24/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

February 24, 2003 Arequipa, Peru

Today as I was showering, I heard our final song from our program, Desde que sale el sol, playing. Did my teammates get up early to rehearse without me? After playing it so much on the guitar was I beginning to hear it in my head? No! The lyrics were floating up to me from the neighbor's house across the street. While in Chiclayo, we recorded 20 of our Spanish songs and made over 50 copies of the CD. This neighbor in particular loves our music, and at 8:30 in the morning, she was dancin' with Kindred! What a joy it is to have the opportunity to leave our music with the people here. I met one woman who still has her tape from Kindred '91. I am grateful for the chances we have had to record, and as a matter of fact, tomorrow morning we are going to record more songs in the small radio station at the main office building of all the Lutheran churches in Arequipa.

One of our freinds, Renan, is going to meet us there. I had a chance to talk with him a lot today, as we spent time with his youth group. He is 23 and is finishing his studies here in Arequipa. He wants to go to Mexico in 2006 to attend a music school and then form a Christian rock band. He wants to be excellent at what he does so that people outside of the church will respect his music and be drawn in, afterward appreciating the Christian lyrics and perhaps knowing the Lord a little more because of his music.

It was so refreshing to talk with him; he has such vision! He desires to draw youth outside of the church in so that they too can walk with the Lord. God bless his ministry! May I find that passion and vision for my life, especially as I begin to contemplate my options for next year.



**Amber Rislow**

---

**Date:** 2/25/2004  
**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito  
**Journal Entry:**



**Sarah Twito**

February 25, 2004 Arequipa, Peru

Life has been a series of ups and downs for me lately. I feel that to be real with myself I must share this with our readers. I want to say first and foremost that I continue to trust my ups and down, my good days and bad days to God.

I love Peru. I love the people. I love new foods (although an occasional chocolate fix is necessary once in a while). I love our new program. I love having people sing with us. I enjoy the opportunity I have every day to praise the Lord.

There are things that I struggle with, and I must confess that I can't always put them all into words. My role has changed in the team, and I am ready to give the responsibility back to those who had it previously. I liked being along for the ride, and now I must be in the know or try. I guess perhaps I need to allow my teammates to go for it language-wise. I also struggle with loneliness, which seems ridiculous even as I write because almost always we are together (all six of us), and you'd think that I would never feel alone. It's similar to being in a crowd and feeling alone.

I hope that you will not read this and feel sad for me, but read it with the knowledge that in several days I may not struggle with these things at all. God is cool like that. Constantly changing me and helping me through one area of my life, so we can deal with another. Please pray instead that God will take each of us through our time in Peru and Bolivia as a time of refinement. I want to take each struggle as a time to be stretched. May God stretch you today, and may we thank Him for refining us today.

When He has tested me, I will come forth as gold; Job 23:10

---

**Date:** 2/26/2004  
**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel  
**Journal Entry:**



**Deron Vaupel**

February 26, 2004 Arequipa, Peru

I gotta strat out with some mad props to the guys from the 4 de Octubre bus line. When everything else in Arequipa is running amuck, they're still coming by every 3 minutes. If it means risking life and limb to make it on time, they'll do it. Serious. I saw one of the guys jump out of a bus slowing down from 30 mph to punch in on time. It was awesome. Even though our bus ran out of gas today, it's still the coolest bus line in the city.

Why are we superstars? Sometimes, that's what it feels like. We come into town, are treated to unbelievable housing, given the opportunity to record 19 songs with the only expense being blank CD's, and somehow got a following, dare I say groupies, of 15-20 people who came to 3 of our 6 programs. All in a week. And I also did not yet mention the mini-fiesta they had for us tonight. They were all so thankful for us being here, for spending time with them, for sharing God's love with them. And I can't remember any names. I don't know what their lives are like, I don't know about their families, and I barely speak their language. I feel like garbage.

Try as I might to resolve this all in my head, it seems all too common of an occurence. I know I won't always understand how I reach people. Just feels really overwhelming right now.

---

**Date:** 2/27/2004  
**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

## Journal Entry:

February 27, 2004 Arequipa, Peru

7:30am We are going to Mollendo, Peru.

9:30am No, we aren't. There are roadblocks because transportation workers are upset about tax increases, so we won't be able to get out of Arequipa.

2:30pm Yes, we are going to Mollendo. There is a man who is a friend of the mission and he is willing to take us in his combi. We will need to leave at 6:00am tomorrow.

3:30pm Carnival in the street (2/18 journal entry). Every single person is completely drenched as they leave/ return to the house. Freezing cold water...wettest I have ever been in my life...so fun.

5:30pm We aren't going to Mollendo. We can't get ahold of our contact in Mollendo and we don't know what the roadblock situation looks like on his side. So we aren't sure if it is safe for 6 Gringos and all their stuff to attempt to cross the roadblocks.

7:00pm We are going to Mollendo. We are sure it is safe and we will likely get through and if we can't there shouldn't be any problems because we can just turn around and go back.

7:30pm We decided to go to dinner and ice cream. We climbed a MOUNTAIN (biggest hill of my life) because walking is fun. By the way, you know things are steep when you can reach straight out in front of you and touch the ground, while you are standing up. We earned our ice cream.

11:45pm "Stupid o'clock" on the roof. (Stupid o'clock is when you are laughing and things aren't really that funny but they seem a lot funnier all of a sudden—often brought on by spending too much time together and extreme tiredness.) We pray, watching shooting stars, laugh and bond together.

Our host has been unable to contact our driver who is at a party. We aren't going to Mollendo?

PLAN OF ACTION: Get up at 5:00am and see what happens. : )



**Jennifer Jarvis**

---

**Date:** 2/28/2004

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

## Journal Entry:

February 28, 2004 Arequipa, Peru

On our original schedule we would have been waking up in Mollendo this morning. But, alas, here we are again in the beautiful city of Arequipa, surrounded by 3 very impressive mountain peaks and friends and neighbors that are surprised and very happy to see us still here. I woke up shortly after 5:00am to pack up my bag and be ready to head out at 6:00 for Mollendo, but due to some miscommunications and the "huelga" (or strike) happening throughout Peru where the roads between provinces are being blocked, our departure was pushed back again. I have to admit, I wasn't very sad to hear the news because I've come to really like it here. Our neighbors are always chilling and having fun together outside, and they like us and want to hang out with us. That's always fun.

Our first night in Arequipa we did a neighborhood program for this fun group of people in our host family's house and afterwards they kept wanting to sing 2 of our programs songs over and over. We gave out 3 or 4 cds that we had been able to record back in Chiclayo- with our top 20 Spanish hits (or all the Spanish songs we know as a team). Throughout our week and a half here, we haven't stopped hearing those songs played from our neighbors' homes and sung along to with gusto. Often we woke up to the sounds of our two little neighbor boys singing along to "I've got peace like a river" in Spanish- I could just stick my head out the window and do the actions and sing along with them. So precious.



**Stephanie Kirkman**

Well, if you were wondering, the miscommunications got cleared up and we managed to make it through the road block and arrive safely in Mollendo by mid-afternoon. So, we were blessed with a few more hours to spend with our friendly neighbors before saying tearful good-byes. As we were loading all our stuff into the van, the kids were bringing out junior sized boulders in the the road to keep us from leaving. Silly kids. And, as is custom, everyone waved and blew kisses until we couldn't see each other any more.

---

**Date:** 3/1/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

March 1, 2004 Mollendo, Peru

Last night was certainly a first for Kindred. After the sun had set upon the small, coastal, tourist city of Mollendo, we arrived at the site of our evening program. Sprawling in front of us was a bustling marketplace. On one of the street corners was parked a large flat bed truck. A back wall had been created from bedsheets, speakers sat upon either end to amplify a single microphone, and a bare lightbulb illuminated the makeshift stage. From this height we shared a message of God's love through word and song to the shoppers passing by and to those who stayed to listen. While this new venue was certainly exciting and even thrilling, I couldn't help better wonder why we were there and what we were accomplishing. Throughout the program I prayed for the people I saw in front of me, those close by and those further off. Later in the evening one of the church elders thanked me for the program and told me that several people had come to faith and also joined their church. In our humble offering of worship and song, God again shows Himself faithful.

Today we chose to spend the afternoon of our scheduled day off with a dozen high school-age youth for their first day of Bible camp. The camp is owned by the Lutheran church and is located just outside the city on the beach of the Pacific. Most of the youth had joined us for programs and games on Saturday, and we were blessed to continue building those friendships. We played volleyball together and swam in the ocean. What fellowship we enjoyed in the midst of God's creation! The water was cold and the waves were strong, reflecting only a fragment of God's greatness and power. God's Spirit was also magnified in the laughter and smiles through which we communicated most effectively. I wouldn't have rather spent my day otherwise.

God's grace is abundant around me, yet at moments I am blinded to that truth and become frustrated by details. I struggle to maintain perspective on what is and is not important. This Lenten season, rather than give something up (like pop or elevators), I have decided to do a daily discipline of service, to constantly try and turn my focus to serving others. Loving and serving others is far more meaningful and important than my own comfort or pride. I want to align the purpose of my life with that of Jesus: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) Amazing how the act and attitude of service benefits the servant more than the served. Peace.



**Matthew Poock**

---

**Date:** 3/2/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

March 2, 2004 Mollendo, Peru

Team is such a unique lifestyle; it affords us precious memories of close friendship while being an entirely new environment everyday. This morning Sarah and I went running together on the beach. As we tied our shoelaces and stretched, my mind jumped back to the time we went running together in New Mexico, and the many mornings she and I would wake up at Luther Dell during our training to venture out along the gravel road, praying, chatting, and running. I am so thankful for her beautiful friendship, and the moments we snatch together.



**Amber Rislow**



Last night Deron and I were scheduled to have a one-on-one, a time where weekly each teammate spends time with only one other teammate to build relationships. Well, Monday was Deron and my day, and as he came over to the girls room he had 2 guitars in his hands! He knows that one of the things I want to do before I die is to play guitar in a public park, or on a street corner, and he was there to make it happen! I ended up convincing him that it would be more fun to play guitar on the beach, since it was one block from where we were staying, so he and I trekked down to worship God under the stars with the dark waves rolling in. What a memory!

These beautiful moments of friendship are sprinkled throughout uncertainty, language barriers, and crazy bus rides as gifts from God to get us through. When we woke up today, we didn't quite know how we were going to get from Mollendo to Tacna, but we ended up taking one bus to Arequipa for 2 ½ hours, then one bus from Arequipa to Tacna for 6 hours. The bus rides were honestly the next best thing to Disneyland because of all the jostling and swaying back and forth along the curviest roads I have ever seen. Sometimes the driver took the corners so fast that I thought I was going to be sucked out of the bus, but alas, I write you now so we are just fine and have found our way to Tacna.

One of the songs Deron and I played on the beach comes to mind right now. It's "Lead of Love" by Caedmon's Call. The chorus goes...

Looking back I know you had to bring me through  
All that I was so afraid of  
Though I questioned the sky, now I see why  
I had to walk the rocks to see the mountain view  
Looking back I see the lead of love.

While there are tough days here in Peru where I simply can't communicate (I have to pay you 50 centimos to use the bathroom? I'm supposed to go in now? I can't use the bathroom?) God is bringing me through, ever so gently by His love. There are many days when I "question the sky" and if you were to look in my daily journal you would find many days ending with, "Why, God? Why are you doing this to me?" but I know that the sweet moments wouldn't be so sweet if everything was perfect. God is leading me this year by His love, and part of the way He loves on me is by giving me five friends to travel and create memories with.

---

**Date:** 3/3/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

My ode to the gringo missionaries:

Missionaries are cool  
Missionaries are sweet  
Missionaries give us good  
Food to eat.

When we are tired,  
They hook us up  
They open their homes  
And give us a cup...  
(of coffee or tea)

Willing hearts and willing hands  
Who likes us?  
We're just a band  
(of crazy kids)

Thanks for advice, laughter and love  
Your words of wisdom were



**Sarah Twito**

Sent from above

Danes, Sweds, Germans and Norse  
So many, it's impossible  
To choose a favorite of course

So three cheers for phone calls,  
Laundry and YoMost  
For almuerzo, pancakes and  
Cheese on toast!

We love you all...  
You really are the best  
And now all our friends know  
From north, south, east and west

---

**Date:** 3/4/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

March 4, 2004 Tacna, Peru

Sometimes journal days are way too close together. Seems like just yesterday we were trying to leave Arequipa, I felt like garbage, and life wasn't all too swell. Well, things haven't taken a magical turn, but it's still going better than last week at this time. I've felt much more comfortable with my Spanish the past couple days, had news come through that I'm now an uncle, we might get to make chocolate chip cookies in the next couple days, and speaking of tastes of home, I got to call home for really cheap today.

We've done 4 outdoor programs in the past week, and despite the extra effort needed to be really loud, I really enjoy them. We can never know what seed will be planted as a person stops by and listens after their trip to the market. We can never know who is listening. At least 300 people have had the chance to hear our message of God's love over the past week, and that goes far beyond any feelings of confusion or regret or whatever else can come up with the ministry we're doing. Any confusion, please look back to my journal from last week. I should help in understanding.



**Deron Vaupel**

---

**Date:** 3/5/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

March 5, 2004 Tacna, Peru

Right now I am sitting in the living room of a mission house with Amber, Sarah and Deron. We are listening to Dave Matthews and Aimee Lou Harris- a live recording of "Long Black Veil."; Maybe you are thinking, "And..." but let me tell you, right now, chillin' with my friends is the perfect thing; and God knows. Thanks, God.

So tonight was something else. We had a pretty unusual program. It was kind of like a parade. We grabbed the guitars and the drum and went out to help promote the church and just evangelize in general. First we went with our entourage (about 7 people from the church) and stopped at a huge slide (kind of like a skateboarding ramp but with kids of all ages sliding down it) and played music and did puppets. It was pretty sweet. Then we walked to our second venue about 20 minutes away in the main plaza. When we got there, they were preparing for a cultural festival; they had a stage and a bunch of people standing around in the middle of the square. (Amazingly enough, all of this preparation was not because we were there.) So we walked down to the far end of the plaza and started singing. Puppets, more singing, skit, singing; we had a pretty good sized crowd around by the 3rd song, most of them were people who just happened to be passing by.



**Jennifer Jarvis**

Some of those random people were law enforcement officials from various organizations. Did I mention we weren't sure if it was okay to play in the plaza? But we decided to just keep going until they made us stop. First we had a couple of security guards come up; they watched for a few minutes and then walked away. Then the police showed up, there were about 5 scattered throughout the crowd. So we started singing "Cantaría sin parar"; (Sing without stopping/ the Happy Song), I mean, obviously, what else would you sing then? Seriously just waiting for them to break through the crowd and make us leave. Then this really official-looking guy shows up and I was thinking, this is it, we are done now, but he just watched for a minute and then left. Then the other police left too. Along during this time, there is a police SUV about 30 feet away. So through all of this, I was just waiting to be told to leave and nothing. We played a couple more songs and then we visited with the people who were still standing around.

Such an incredible opportunity (you can also see Deron's journal from 3-4)! There were so many things that could have prevented us from playing but other than 2 broken guitar strings (Deron), we didn't have any problems at all. I think it was even better than the chicken truck program (Matt's journal 3-1). God, use us, may your word rest on the hearts of those people. Amen.

---

**Date:** 3/6/2004

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

**Journal Entry:**

March 6, 2004 Tacna, Peru

This morning we had a children's program, full of songs, puppets, skits, snacks, games and good times. Last night we had the opportunity to do two outreach-type programs- one at the city plaza where we just set up by a fountain and started singing. We were able to talk to a lot of people there and invite them to the kid's program the next morning. And, what do you know, a lot of those people showed up. Yeah God!

This afternoon we had some free time to rest and hang out as a team and make chocolate chip cookies! Oh, the excitement. So, we got all the ingredients we needed- well, we THINK we got baking soda- it was at least white and powdery. And we couldn't find chocolate chips, so we thought we'd make do and chop up a chocolate bar. The cookies actually ended up tasting more like chocolate chip pancakes- but, those are good too. A little taste of home.

After our restful afternoon we went to hang out with a youth group at a church nearby, where there were a lot of familiar faces. It was awesome to be able to reconnect with some cool friends. More songs, games, skits, and fun-hanging-out time followed.



**Stephanie Kirkman**

---

**Date:** 3/8/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

March 8, 2004

The last couple days have been a whirlwind of travel. We woke up yesterday in Tacna (on the coastal plain; temperately warm, sunny, dry, dusty) and joined a small Lutheran church for worship. The service was joyous and refreshing to my spirit. During our time in Tacna we became friends with a young man named David. Over the course of the week I taught him to play several different beats and rhythms on the drum. By Sunday morning he was well prepared to play and joined us on several of the songs we shared with the congregation. What a blessing for me to share with him and equip him for future music ministry with the church. Before our final departure we exchanged wrist watches with each other in friendship. After extended fellowship following the worship service, we rushed home, packed, scarfed down some Chinese take-out, raced to the bus station, and climbed aboard.



**Matthew Poock**

After six restless hours of travel we returned to the familiarity of Arequipa (cool temperatures, in the mountains) and of our previous host family. While it was joyous to see them, our time there was short lived, less than 12 hours. This morning we woke at 6am to eat breakfast with the family before grabbing taxis to the airport. A flight delay resulted in three hours in a small airport. This, followed by a mere half hour flight (saving us over ten hours on a bus), and we found ourselves in the city of Cusco.

Upon locating the tall, Norwegian missionary in the crowd, we met his family and were blessed by their generosity and hospitality. Several hours later we shared a program with the young Lutheran church in Cusco. From such intense travels I felt physically, mentally, and relationally exhausted, but God's power is made perfect in weakness. The evening was a celebration for all. For only the second time in its history, the church was packed full, and with some 80% non-believers! May God continue to grow the ministry here and reach the hearts and minds of these people with His love and salvation.

As for our new location, Cusco is unlike any Peruvian city we have yet visited. Near the edge of the rainforest, it is located ON the mountains. And not just any mountains, but lush, green, snow-capped, smoky mountains. I don't think I've ever seen so many different shades of green in nature before, or appreciated rain so much. Truly it feels like a paradise of life here. The difference water makes to the land is as remarkable as the difference Christ, the living water, makes in our hearts. "I pray...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Ephesians 3:17). Peace.

---

**Date:** 3/9/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

March 9, 2004 Cusco, Peru

...do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live.

Deuteronomy 4:9b

Words fail me to explain the things I have seen today. I wish God had gifted me with the ability to paint exactly what I have seen today in words so that as you read you could stand with me in the mountains, but God has given me other gifts so I will do the best I can with what I have.

We were going to visit Machu Picchu today, but after much contemplation we decided against it because of money and time (it takes 8 hours by train in one day to get there and back!) Instead, a man from the church accompanied our group as well as our Norwegian missionary friend to two other Inca ruins sites.

The first sight we saw still has much yet to be discovered. There is not enough money and so a large part of the city is still buried underground. What we did see was pretty impressive, but even more breathtaking than the ancient man-made city was the God-made backdrop. I sat on a rock under the overcast sky and just stared in front of me. There, in the valley between two steep mountains, was a thin white cloud rising up from the valley. It was just thick enough to hide the mountain behind it and make you wonder how tall it really was. I stayed there watching something so majestic that I could scarcely believe it indeed existed.

A similar experience occurred at our second site. I stood on a grassy terrace where the Incas once grew crops and listened as the small freshwater stream rushed below me. All around me green mountains sprung into the sky with hardly a warning to the flat valley in the middle. These mountains had a crown of clouds encircling the peaks that remained there the whole time we were exploring. All was so still- it had been raining and so the green seemed that much greener and the air was full of life. Life seemed to pause for me as I was caught in the beauty that has existed for



**Amber Rislow**

many pairs of eyes to see.  
Lord, may I not forget the things my eyes have seen today.

---

**Date:** 3/10/2004  
**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito  
**Journal Entry:**

March 10, 2004 Juliaca, Peru

I have been reading through the Psalms, and I think that David writes right to where I am. I would like to share some of the verses I have read lately with a little explanation of how that applies to me.

"Shout with joy to God, all the earth!  
Sing the glory of his name;  
Make his praise glorious!  
Say to God, 'How awesome are your deeds.' "  
Ps 66:1, 2a

"Proclaim the power of God  
whose majesty is over [the world]  
whose power is in the skies.  
You are awesome, O God, in your sanctuary."  
Ps 68: 34-35a

These verses are a continuation of the themes of journals 03/08 and 03/09. Our bus ride today from Cusco to Juliaca was amazing. The mountains rose around the road, green and impressive. The sky was so blue that when the two met it took your breath away. We past farms and small villages. Llamas! Cows and sheep. So much beauty that never seemed to end. Best bus ride ever, I dare say.

"Save me, O God  
for the waters have come up  
to my neck...  
I am worn out calling for help;  
my throat is parched.  
My eyes fail, looking for my God."  
Ps 69: 1, 3

The Lord has definitely taken me through some difficult times since being in Peru, especially in the past few weeks. But, I know where to go for my help, and David didn't end there (at least not in the Psalms I am reading), "For you, O God, tested [me]; you refined [me] like silver." Ps 66:10.

"God has surely listened  
and heard my voice in prayer.  
Praise be to God  
who has not rejected my prayer  
or withheld his love from me!"  
Ps 66:19, 20

"Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior,  
who daily bears our burdens."  
Ps 67:19

"In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge;  
Be my rock of refuge,  
to which I can always go."  
Ps 71:1, 3

I love the verse that says God "daily bears our burdens" God knows my heart and knows how I feel.



**Sarah Twito**



He cares and takes the weights that I put on myself on his shoulders. In my struggles and in my weariness, God hears my prayers and takes me in his arms, his refuge. Praise God that through his Word, he reminds me of all that he has for me!

---

**Date:** 3/11/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

Location: Juliaca, Peru

Puppets really do draw a crowd. We walked along, ended up at a place that looked kinda like a parking area for the stores next to us, stopped, and were told that's where we were playing. So, after all the cars and bikes were moved out of the way, we started playing. Now, there was already a large number of people staring at us, hanging out of bus windows, gathering at the 2nd and 3rd story balconies. But, as soon as those puppets came out, in the people came. Before long, we were in the middle of a crowd of about 200 people singing about God's love, forgiveness, and his gift of sending Christ for our sins. Then the students from the Bible institute where we are staying presented a drama about forgiveness and reconciliation with each other and with God. I always love to see those messages being spread, even when I show up wondering how we're possibly going to do a program in a parking lot.

So, out there about two hours, program tonight with a folk-music group, we still have not quite adapted to the altitude, and we have an early morning tomorrow. I can't remember the other things I wanted to write about, but that's ok. I'm tired and don't want to think too much. Good night.



**Deron Vaupel**

---

**Date:** 3/12/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

March 12, 2004 Juilaca/ Puno, Peru

I don't know how many of ou have seen the cartoon "Animaniacs,"; but in that cartoon they had a song about Lake Titicaca. Now Lake Titicaca is right between Bolivia and Peru, it just so happens that Puno is on Lake Titicaca. For anyone who knows the song, you can appreciate the fact that Deron and I sang it while standing on one of the floating islands in the middle of the lake. "Floating islands?" you ask. Yep, they are made by continually piling reeds into the lake. They are kind of wet and squooshy to walk on. The word on the boat (meaning our guide told us on the boat- oh, the boat) is that the people who live on the islands are the pure-blooded Incans. Now, about the boat. Did we take a "touristy" boat? Nope, we took the boat the locals take. The trip from Puno to 3 of the islands takes about 2 hours. The journey isn't that far but when you restart a boat with 20 horse power motor on a 15ft boat with 20 people, 12 times...it isn't exactly like cruising around.

So after the lake we had lunch and did some internet cafe and shopping for gifts for friends and family. We went to one store that had a baby Alpaca in front of it; the softest thing I have ever touched in my life and SO cute! I totally want to get one and bring it with us on return tour. We definitely have the room in the trailer, we just need to potty train it to go every 2 hours when we stop to change drivers.

We also did a program in Puno that evening. It went really well (great acoustics) and the people were really great. All in all, a pretty sweet day.

POST SCRIPT Sunday, March 14

So Matt usually writes about Sunday/Monday, but he wasn't there for this so I will share. We did a program in Huancane, which is about an hour away from Juliaca. Sarah and Matt decided to stay



**Jennifer Jarvis**

there with some of our missionary friends and spend time at the Lake on their day off. So we dropped them off after the program and Amber and I decided it might be a good idea to use the bathroom before we began our "drive" back home. When we got back to the Land Cruiser (yep) there were 2 slightly drunk guys trying to get a ride down the road with us. Pastor took pity on them and told them he would take them to the next pueblito. It was amusing to watch Deron, coiled and ready to spring at any sign of movement towards Steph or I. It wasn't a problem though. So we drop them off and proceed down the highway and when I say "highway" I mean war zone. Seriously, holes that are about 6 ft across and 4 ft deep. Just load your washing machine with softballs and hop on; you'll get a pretty good idea of our drive home in the back of a Land Cruiser that they use to transport sheep in. Of course, we also saw a cart full of about 16-20 live sheep, all piled on top of each other this morning, so they transport them that way too. Just another day...

---

**Date:** 3/13/2004

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

**Journal Entry:**

March 13, 2004 Juliaca, Peru

This week in Juliaca we've been staying at CLET (Center of Lutheran Theological Education), in dorm-like housing with 22 young Peruvians from the surrounding provinces. They are here for the summer (December-March) studying theology and getting to know other Christians their age. The past few days we've been having programs at nearby churches, but today was our day to share with the CLET community.

In the morning, we walked across the lawn to the campus radio station (broadcast throughout Juliaca) where they interviewed us live for about a half hour with questions for each of us interspersed with songs we'd been able to record while in Arequipa. The objective of the interview was for the young people listening to get an idea of who Kindred is and what we are doing in Juliaca all the way from the U.S., and to invite whoever wanted to come to the afternoon program here at 4:00.

Now, programs in Juliaca have tended to be longer than we might have first imagined them to be. Not that the program WE share changes in length (it usually lasts a little over an hour) but there have been other musical groups and church services in addition to our songs, skits and such. The afternoon program at CLET today was no exception. Don't get me wrong- just because the programs are longer does not mean I haven't thoroughly enjoyed them. Anyway, things didn't get started until about half past 4 when a worship team shared some "alabanzas" - or worship songs, and then a pastor shared a message about how Christ wants to change us from within, and that from the deepest part of our heart God renews us. Kindred was up next, and we did half of our program before a group of four young Peruvian men dressed in long panchos sang and played traditional music from the province of Puno with a guitar, a charango (kind of like a mandolin), pan flutes, a quena (a type of flute), a huge bass drum, and awesome vocals. We then did the rest of our program and the whole event ended at 8:00 (yes, we were there 4 hours) with a few more songs from that talented group from Puno.

I really like not being the only group to "present" or share songs, messages, or dramas about God's love for us. I find it delightfully pleasant and nice to hear traditional Peruvian music and share in how the people here worship our loving God. It's beautiful to see God working here, where His love is abounding in his precious and beloved children.



**Stephanie Kirkman**

---

**Date:** 3/15/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

March 15, 2004 Juliaca, Peru

I think I can safely say that I went on safari this morning. Independent of my team, I joined a Norwegian missionary and a young Peruvian seminarian in the South American version of an SUV. The experience reminded me of the Indiana Jones ride at Disneyland:



over hills, across rock piles, through narrow spaces, sometimes going where no (or very **Matthew Poock** few) vehicles have tread before. For hours we took in the breath-taking scenery around Lake Titicaca at over 11,000ft elevation. At one point the three of us stood on a hill, completely surrounded by mountains and pastures, overlooking a village and the highest navigable lake in the world, hearing only the sounds of birds and sheep. The sun was bright, the clouds puffy, and the sky majestic blue. Although our quick departure this morning left little time for personal devotions, I read the beauty of God's creation instead.

Yesterday was another busy Sunday with three programs. Sadly, because of location and scheduling, we were unable to spend much time in fellowship with any congregation. Nonetheless, I pray that our time together brought joy and encouragement. I mustn't limit God's power based on my expectations. We shared our final program in the evening with an overly packed church, including many children who brought their families for the first time. Also for the first time, although with great hesitation and anxiety, I shared with them in Spanish a message of God's tremendous love. May God allow for understanding and communication beyond my own means.

Just last week I commented on the life giving power of water. Now, in the past two days, I have witnessed the destruction caused by flooding. Houses appear as islands in a vast lake. Thousands of animals stand on the side of the road where the ground is higher, eating their meal on the dirt shoulder. Residents live in government provided tents next to the animals' new pasture. Loving God, heal their land. Although our present location of Juliaca lacks many of the comforts to which we have been accustomed, this recent perspective has changed my tune. Instead of grumbling about no running water, I am thankful for the barrel of water we have to use. Rather than complain about the dust and the altitude, or the rough roads and the interesting meals, I rejoice in God's provision and love. Dare I even say that the people for whom I grieve also have reason to give thanks? "Always give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20). Peace.

---

**Date:** 3/16/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

March 16, 2004 Juliaca, Peru

(To be read in a superhero voice)...To go where no Kindred team has gone before! While it has been an honor to be a part of the last legacy the previous Kindreds have left, tonight we were privileged to visit a congregation that has never seen Kindred.



**Amber Rislow**

This congregation, we were told, has been forgotten by the surrounding communities. Therefore, it's a big deal when somebody comes to visit--especially six somebodies from the US. To get there, we all piled once again into the sheep-hauling Toyota Land Cruiser. It was a good thing we had this vehicle because the last few miles of the road were a little rough. The dirt road was only 3 months old and a good rain had taken its toll, making the road lumpy and bumpy. There were a few trenches in the road 2 feet deep and 2 feet wide. One of these trenches had sticks piled up in 2 places so a car's tires could pass over the delicate bridge. One of our friends had to hop out and make sure that we were right on course so we didn't fall in.

While the sub-par road jostled us quite a bit, the view along the way and our experience at the church were worth every bump. Once on the way, we stumbled upon a huge canyon that honestly came out of nowhere. It was breathtaking to not only view the canyon but the multiple mountain ranges behind it.

At the village we were greeted by a few people who came out of one of the three small adobe houses with straw roofs. Behind the small cluster were miles of untouched land. When the service began, we learned that they spoke Quechua there, but they also understand Spanish.

Each person was so friendly and wanted to greet everyone when he/she walked in. Many people came late because they had to walk a long way to get there, and after entering, they proceeded to make their way around the church, shaking hands with everyone. They even shook hands with us

while we were up front playing--women and men made their way through our group and greeted us regardless of if we were playing guitar, drum, or singing. One woman came in just as we were about to do our puppet show, and she reached her hand over the puppet curtain to greet us. She wouldn't leave until all of us behind the curtain shook her hand!

It was such a privilege to share with this community. We played into the night by lantern and as I looked over the dimly-lit smiles, my heart overflowed with compassion and love. Who am I to be in this place where the people speak Quechua and the land is untouched? Who am I to be standing up front leading songs (for the first time tonight!)? Who am I, Lord, that you would bring me to this country to see these things, to greet these people, and to worship you together?

My heart is reluctant to leave for Bolivia tomorrow. Peru was my first experience abroad and I have learned a lot about myself while here. I think that while my backpack and guitar will go with me on the bus, part of my heart will remain here...here with the people who have helped me speak Spanish, here with the children I have played with, here with the mountains I have walked on, and here with the trials I have faced. Praise be to God...praise be to God.

---

**Date:** 3/17/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

March 17, 2004 Juliaca, Peru and La Paz, Bolivia

Bolivia here we come! Well, actually we have already arrived. This day is brought to you by Choco Soda and Sublime (two of our ways to still the chocolate cravings).

Today was a big travel day for us as we left Peru to go to Bolivia. Our time in Peru has been rather eventful. In case you missed it, lost track or have just jumped on the Kindred train let me review quickly our last two months and three days. Follow along on your maps at home. We arrived in Lima then went to Chiclayo. A weekend in Trujillo and back to Chiclayo. We went from there back to Lima. Lima to Arequipa. Arequipa to Mejia and Mollendo. (Don't try to hard to find them on the map. Just think coastal cities.) Mollendo to Tacna via Arequipa. Tacna to Cusco via...yep, Arequipa. Cusco to Juliaca. One day in Puno during our stay in Juliaca. Whew. From Juliaca we took off this morning for La Paz.

Good thing I am just getting started. We got up at "o'dark o'clock" (to steal the phrase) and said good-bye to our Juliaca friends. We jumped in our combi (mini van sized bus thing) and went to Puno with our friend and guide, Maribel. We got on the touristy bus to La Paz after hugs and promises to keep in touch. At this point we are on a bus filled with foreigners (like us) from maybe a dozen countries. Almost culture shock to fit in that much.

We arrived at the border of Bolivia after a few hours and were told to get off the bus. Immigration and an exit stamp later we WALKED across the border to Bolivia. That is right folks at home: we watched the bus with our stuff drive across and we walked over to Bolivia. More immigration fun time including working my magic to get us enough time in Bolivia. Yay for entering Bolivia without too many problems. So long, Peru. Watch out, Bolivia.

Our adventures in travel were far from over. We stopped in a tourist town called Copacabana, which wasn't the one from the song. Hung out. Ate. Put our stuff on a different bus and took off for La Paz. I must interject that much of our travel today was around Lake Titicaca, and it was amazing. The mountains, the lake, the farms. It was all beautiful to watch go by. The best part of the lake was it got in the way. We had to get in a boat and watch our bus go across the lake on a ferry. The bus had its own little wooden boat to take it to the other side. Not exactly what I was expecting, but that is South America to expect the unexpected.

Besides looking at the snow capped Andes mountains the rest of the trip was relatively quiet. I am grateful that we have a wonderful place to go after our touristy day. God has brought us to do things here, and I am excited to jump into them. I cannot wait to see what our new contacts have in store!



**Sarah Twito**

I hope you have enjoyed your journey through the mountains of Bolivia ,the land of unreal landscapes.(They just put up the backdrops for us.) Please join me again next week as there will surely be more things to tell. Until then good night...

---

**Date:** 3/18/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

March 18, 2004 The Road

So if you've been reading chronologically, the past two journal entries have been from Amber and Sarah, concerning the 3 month old road and the joys of crossing the Bolivian boarder, respectively. I now present to you part 3 in the Kindred Travelling Adventure series...THE ROAD!!!



**Deron Vaupel**

I awake at 7am in the missionary house in La Paz. Another travel day, so I apologize for not being profound. I proceed to take my first hot shower in 11 days. Cold showers are quite invigorating and good for waking up, but I really do prefer the warm shower, especially when it's 50 degrees. Journal some, proceed downstairs for breakfast with our contacts. Stories about Minnesota. Not really surprised at that. Seems most of the people we've met on the road this year have some tie to Minnesota. Being the only one on my team who has never lived there for more than a couple weeks, I zone out.

When it comes to finding time to go get a bus, I perk back up. Nope, not getting tickets. Just showing up. We get there and there's a fun time trying to find a bus. See, they don't leave until they are full. One guy has 2 seats for us, right next to the driver, but the other guy has a cheaper price. The first guy says that the 2nd guys bus isn't as safe and is dirty. The 2nd guy has movies. The 1st guy wants our stuff on top, but our guitars can come on. Hit each other's clipboards, push each other out of the way, blah, blah. It really didn't matter either way, so since our names were already down for the first guy, we went with him. The 2nd bus left later and passed us twice, but the second time was only because they had to stop and put a tarp on the baggage on the roof during a sudden down pour. 1st bus was an o.k. decision.

So we leave. Drive through the mountains a lot and come to a toll booth. Do the toll thing, then drive by the bus that was in front of us. The driver then tells Amber and Steph, who were sitting right next to him and sharing their sack lunches with him, that that bus had to stop so people could get their yellow fever shots. Good thing we're immunized. Stop an hour later, my teammates all get off to use the restroom, I wait on the bus. Then 3 camouflage-clad Bolivian soldiers board the bus to do some checking. After looking at my passport and questioning me about my age and time in Bolivia, they want to check the guitars. Take them down from the overhead rack, open up the cases, pull them out, one of them plays Amber's for a minute, put them back, and leave. Quite interesting.

How many of you can say you've driven on a 70 mile long one-lane gravel road? Well, our team can. It's only 53 miles on a map from La Paz to Caranavi, but factor in the terrain and the funniness of that road, and you have a 102 mile, 5-7 hour trip that is sure to entertain. Especially the one-lane part. It's almost always wider than 8 feet, you never get closer than a couple of inches to the vertical drop off, and they saved so much money by not using guard rails or pavement. And we can't forget about the construction traffic. Several times we met large Volvo 12-cylinder Turbo diesel trucks and had to back up to a spot wide enough for both vehicles to pass. At one point we had to drive through a shallow part in a river, another we drove through a flooded part from the heavy rain. Oh yeah, we're in the jungle now. Heavy rain for 20 minutes. It was glorious. I love rain and haven't gotten to see much of it since August. All in all, the road was quite an experience. Following a river through the mountains, seeing such a large amount of untouched creation, lots of green and blue, it was beautiful. Leaving the 50 degree weather, driving through the cloud-capped mountains, descending through thousands of vertical feet to see such a contrast of creation in one day. All that helped me hardly notice that we drove on the left side of the road so the driver could see just how close the edge he was. Breathtaking.



So we arrive, make some phone calls from the bus station, are taken to the radio station where our contacts work, treated to some ice cream, (I opted for the coke float instead), and before we get taken to our homes, we are asked to do a quick TV interview. A'ight. Do that, leave, come back for some pizza, side note: Pablo's is the place, actually owned by Paul who is a second generation missionary in Bolivia. Lived in Minnesota for awhile, big surprise. The restaurant helps to fund the radio station which broadcasts to most of Northern Bolivia, and when we arrive they are editing our TV interview. Oh yeah, we're also doing a live kid's show on Saturday morning. Steph will probably have more information for you about that. So we'll be here for a week, lots of time working with the youth leaders here in town.

So, it's been an awesome day, even though I left my Bible on the bus. If it doesn't turn up, it's had a good run. Just need to find a new one. I'll keep you posted. For now, I have to cool off because we are back in 85% humidity and 90 degree days. In the jungle! Yeah!

---

**Date:** 3/19/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

March 19, 2004 Caranavi, Bolivia

After the excitement of the road yesterday, today was nothing special. Except for the view. It is incredibly beautiful here. Yesterday in the bus I thought about how most people will never experience the beauty here and I prayed that God would keep it in my heart forever. It is such a privilege to be here, even on the less exciting days.

Now, I had an incredibly elaborate story about how all six of us were staying in a mud home and were awakened really early by the demand to do a program on the fly because the native people didn't like us. Some meals with bugs and an adventurous ride through a river in the back of a truck. However, I just typed Deron's journal and realized that no one would buy it so I will have to settle for the truth.

We had some meetings and Steph ate all of her lunch (this is a major Kindred happening). We did a program in the park for Bolivian Father's Day, but that is really about it. So even though I didn't get to tell my story, at least all of our mothers still love me.



**Jennifer Jarvis**

---

**Date:** 3/20/2004

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

**Journal Entry:**

March 20, 2004 Caranavi, Bolivia

Our third day in Bolivia- and it's absolutely beautiful! The city of Caranavi is in a valley surrounded by four mountains full of thick green vegetation. We're in the jungle!! The climate is hot and humid pretty much all year round with rain every couple days, and as you can probably imagine a LOT more insects and biting crawling and flying things. But, I don't mind all the itchy bites so much because whenever I stop to look around, I'm surprised by the rich beauty of the tropical flowers, the variety of trees, the immense mountains with a few misty clouds at the tops, and a river flowing down below. God really knows how to make things beautiful.

We had the chance this morning to spend time with about 60 of God's beautiful creations on a local television kid's show called "Cebollita" (little onion) named after the clown who is the star of the show. Kids come every week to be in the studio as a live audience and this week Kindred was honored to take part in the fun. We did our normal kids program with lots of sing-a-longs and puppet shows and craziness. The only part that was different was that there were two wacky clowns dancing and prancing about making the children laugh more AND the whole thing was broadcast live to any Caranaveño who might be tuning in during that hour and a half. A new experience for us,



**Stephanie Kirkman**

and maybe a fun video to share with friends when we get back home.

---

**Date:** 3/22/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

March 22, 2004 Caranavi, Bolivia

The language may be officially the same as that in Peru, but the culture of Bolivia provides us some new challenges nonetheless. The first of such challenges is realizing that we ARE in a different culture. Some words have an entirely different meaning and some words no longer hold any meaning. (Imagine the strange looks we received to figure that out.) The culture is more indigenous, and two native languages (Aymara and Quechua) are also very popular. The traditional greeting of a kiss on the cheek is not so predictable either. Instead, many people use a greeting that, to us, seems almost like a dance. First, you shake right hands. Then, your right hand pats their left shoulder, and your left hand touches their right elbow. The greeting ends once again shaking right hands. Try it; it'll make you smile.

Sunday afternoon we visited Casa de Esperanza (meaning House of Hope), a permanent residence for 68 children ages two months to 21 years. For the past 11 years, missionaries from Holland have owned and operated the home for orphaned children, raising them to know the love of God through Jesus Christ. We shared songs with them, played games, and put on the ever-popular puppet shows. Many children touched my head, pulled my arm hair, and assumed that I was a white-haired old man. While most of the children are openly affectionate, the staff spoke of their tremendous emotional needs and requested prayers for healing. Despite the pain and hardship of their past, the love of God and childlike trust shone from their faces and countless hugs. They knew no boundaries between us, only acceptance and curiosity and excitement. I have much to learn from them.

Overall, our change in scenery is refreshing. The sights, the schedule, and even the days have been upset since our arrival in Bolivia. I greatly appreciate the change from some of the monotony I was experiencing our last days in Peru. Still, my mind is tired from all that I am doing, experience, and learning. Some days I'm living in the moment, and other times I'm counting the days. I pray for gratitude and trust to explode from my heart, as well as endurance for the race. As the author of Hebrews writes, "consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Hebrews 12:3). Peace.



**Matthew Poock**

---

**Date:** 3/23/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

March 23, 2004 Caranavi, Bolivia

Today in Bolivia is Dia Del Mar, or Day of the Sea where Bolivians remember their lost coastline which Chile stole from them exactly 125 years ago. The story goes that while the Bolivians were celebrating Carnavales, they got drunk and while they were drunk, the Chileans got them to give Chile the coastline they had. Well, it's 125 years later, and Bolivia wants its mar.

The children didn't have school today because of the holiday, and in the town plaza there were informational displays about the event. There was even a parade through town! The girls and I were near the plaza when the parade began, and a mom that I have gotten to know fairly well invited me to sit and watch the parade with her and her three kids.

I should probably state here that up until this point, Bolivia hasn't been my favorite place. I can't put my finger on what it is, but I just don't feel comfortable here. There are different words that they use for things that I knew the words for in Peru, and the scenery is quite different than Peru (we went from desert to jungle). As I sat and watched the parade with



**Amber Rislow**

Rosmery and her children, I began getting flashbacks from parades that I marched in during high school, and parades that I watched when I was little.

God used this event to reach me and help me find common ground between where I came from and where I am now. Also, as I sat with Rosmery, she conversed with me and explained anything that I didn't understand. God blessed me with a friend ... He didn't need to do it, but He chose to put her in my life. I praise God today for the ways He takes care of us and loves us through the friends we have in our lives.

---

**Date:** 3/24/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

March 24, 2004 Caranavi, Bolivia

Green, lush, jungle like, mountainous. I am sitting on a hill looking down at the valley below and the green mountains surrounding us. The air is humid. Wind blows through the many trees. Birds chirping (or whatever you call the sound they make here). A 4x4 rumbles by our door on the bumpy dirt road. The faint sound of life down the hill floats up. This is Caranavi.



**Sarah Twito**

When I imagined Peru and Bolivia, Caranavi was it. Green- a million and one shades of green. I feel like I am in the jungle. I guess they don't consider it jungle, but it is close enough for me. I have seen amazing flora and fauna. Beautiful butterflies and huge bugs have been the most exciting animal encounters. The exotic feel to this place almost makes me think I have gone to another world all together. All I am missing is a monkey sighting and this would totally be the jungle.

We are here to serve an amazing mission, Radio Television Caranavi. This organization is non-profit, non-denominational ministry to a large portion of Bolivia by television and several countries by radio. They sent out the love of Jesus through the air waves in three languages including two native South American languages, Quechua and Aymara. They desire to encourage people in their walk with the Lord.

My heart has been blessed by the work of the people here who see their target audience as everyone within listening range. The importance of the ministry is not over-shadowed by denominational lines. As in the United States that cannot be said to be the norm here. What an incredible testimony to God's work in this place. He is glorified in the middle of the Bolivian "jungle" with a radio signal that reaches all over South America. Praise God for the work that we have seen and participated in this week!

---

**Date:** 3/25/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

March 25, 2004 Caranavi, Bolivia

Want to write a quick store before I forget. There was a man that lived in Caranavi for a couple years, and he only walked backwards. Interesting man. Then he disappeared. A while later, our contacts were in some other town eating breakfast, and they saw the guy. Really nicely dressed now and walking forwards. He saw them (because caucasian people stand out in Bolivia for some reason), smiled, and started walking backwards. Have to take care of some team stuff, but I'll be back in a minute. Talk amongst yourselves.



**Deron Vaupel**

Alright. I'm back. 6AM, alarm goes off. Really tired. Roll out of bed at 6:27. Breakfast, then on the road at 7ish. Seems I always get to write about the really long one-lane roads. We're going to country schools!!!!

1st one at 9ish. Oops. The teacher is sick. No school.

2nd one at 10ish. 7th to 12th grade? It's raining a little, but we do a half hour program outside, anyways. A couple people from the TV station came along, including the clown and a camera man. 150 students. After the program some students played a game with Matt where the only goal was to discretely keep him in the middle of a big circle. About 40 people played. 41 if you count Matt, but he didn't realize it at first. He caught on and then grabbed a friend. Amber got mobbed for stickers. But the best part was the chance to openly share the gospel in a setting like that. I believe somebody mentioned it was a public school.

3rd one at 11:30 or so. Grade school? 200 students, no more rain, still have the clown. He danced some. Same format. Public school where we are free to share the gospel. Pretty sweet.

4th one is a ways down the road. 1:00 probably. We gave a lady and her 2 kids a ride. It was cool. The last place is hard to describe. Wide range of ages, more than just school kids. It took awhile to start because people had to walk from their houses (half hour plus sometimes) after hearing the bell rung. They probably didn't know what was going on, just that there was some sort of gathering. While we waited for people to arrive, somebody went and picked a bunch of oranges for us. Many spoke a language other than Spanish, but knew enough to join in on songs if they felt comfortable. Again, we had a great opportunity to share God's love with those that have rarely, if ever, heard that message before. Totally awesome. And after the program we were served some freshly squeezed OJ from the extra oranges.

Get in the cars and drive back. Stop along the way because a guy wants a ride into town (at least a day's walk). No room inside, but we've got a roof rack. So he hopped on, rode up there for a little over an hour. Quite interesting.

Tomorrow we hit the road for LaPaz again. Lots to do there. Feels weird leaving so much behind. Many of those we shared with today may not hear this message again. Please pray for the ministry of Radio Television Caranave (RTC) as they have an amazing opportunity to reach thousands of people across the jungle of Central Bolivia. Pray that those who have heard the message of God's love could continue to be fed and that, like today, many new people can hear that message of hope through the ministry of RTC.

deron

PS Our contacts had an extra Gideon's Bible straight out of a hotel room for me. It's quite sweet.

---

**Date:** 3/26/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

March 26, 2004 The Road (the continuing saga)

(Sing along, you know the tune.)

On The Road again, that's right, we took The Road again.  
The life I love is sharing bus seats with my friends,  
There we were on the road again...

Now, you may recall that we took a very special road into Caranani (Deron's 3/18 journal). Well, since it is the only road between La Paz and Caranavi, we went that way again. This time was even better, if you can imagine that. First of all in addition to Sarah's 3/24 journal, we saw a monkey, it is officially the jungle. We were driving out of town and there was a monkey on this guy's back on the side of the road, we all almost fell out of the truck looking at it.

You have probably heard the phrase, "two birds with one stone," well, Kindred has a new version of that statement, "two old ladies with one guitar case." See, we like to keep our guitars with us,



**Jennifer Jarvis**

understandable enough, so we put them in the overhead rack on the bus. We have done this several times and never had any trouble. Well, this time was a little different. We were driving along, we had probably only been in the bus for about 15 minutes and we hit a good-sized bump. Well, one of the guitars fell off of the shelf. There were two older ladies sitting in the aisle (no more seats, but they were going to La Paz too). It totally fell on them. Luckily, Deron and I caught it fairly well in order to prevent injury to anyone. The Matt and I rigged up a sort of cargo net with the 4 girls' sweatshirts. (Daddy, you would be proud, the part I rigged up didn't move the whole rest of the trip.)

I should also tell you that Deron's wish came true (3/18), we took the old road back to La Paz. Turns out that the new road is for going to Caranavi (and points beyond) and the old road is for going to La Paz. Let me just tell you, the gorgeous scenery didn't change, it just improved. We drove under no less than 5 waterfalls on the way back. Now that is pretty sweet—especially when you are roast-toasty from being in the jungle. It is so fun to stick your hand out the window and have a waterfall raining down on it.

Along the way we picked up people in several different towns. Remember how the ladies were sitting on the floor because there were no more seats? Well, the bus didn't magically grow more seats, that meant more people in the aisles. I tend to get a little unhappy when in small spaces with many people, this was not a happy time for me. Everytime someone else got on the bus I had to have an attitude adjustment. I swung between feeling like I should give them my seat and "get away from me, if you touch me I am going to puke." But, in the end, I was fine, I made it to La Paz and so did everyone else. When you pray for patience, God gives you plenty of chances to practice.

One more quick adventure upon arrival. We got off the bus and saw Carl, one of our contacts waiting with the jeep (Thank you, Jesus!). This is great because we don't have to worry about all of our stuff and cab drivers, etc. So we pile in our stuff and there is room for 2 to go with Carl back to the house. The rest of us (Matt, Deron, Steph and I) will take a combi that will take within 2 blocks of the house. Remember how we were only here for one day before Caranavi? We can do it. Jump in the combi, the driver actually tells us when to get out...so we are at an intersection...four roads to choose from...a little dizzy from altitude change...we go the way the boys and I feel fairly confident in. Well, amazingly enough we were only one block out of the way and we got there just fine. (Natural sense of direction is my pedestrian super-power.) So they only worried for about 10 minutes and everything turned out just fine. You have to love travel days.

---

**Date:** 3/27/2004

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

**Journal Entry:**

March 27, 2004 La Paz, Bolivia

This morning we got to do a puppet workshop with a group of about 15 young people. Their youth group has a music team that does drama and puppets as well, but they wanted us to share any tips we might have for them. We had a lot of fun with them- first singing some worship songs together as we waited for the whole group to arrive. They picked up our drum and the other hand percussion instruments and jammed along with us, singing praises to our awesome and loving God. Then we shared some laughs talking about and practicing puppet voices and techniques together. They cooked lunch for us and gave us gringo portions because they know we eat much less than the locals- especially for lunch which is the biggest meal of the day. I STILL couldn't finish my helping, though.

After some free time in the afternoon we had a family night program in a large church with stained-glassed windows and pews. It felt like we stepped off the Bolivian sidewalk, right into a Lutheran church in the heart of the U.S. I was reminded of our many family night programs we shared along the way on our U.S. tour- except for the part where we sang and spoke all in Spanish. But, that's become very normal and almost comfortable for us now. To eat afterwards we had hot tea, bread and crackers; a common supper here. Very nice.

My best favorite part of today was that we were able to ATTEND a concert at a huge auditorium in



**Stephanie Kirkman**



down-town La Paz. It started off with a high school marching band sharing some tunes in a style like that of the marching bands I've heard and seen in the U.S. But, THEN, came marching in a huge group of young musicians, each wearing a long poncho, with their zampoña in hand, and a bag of other traditional instruments strung across their shoulder. Two of the musicians beat huge bass drums with one hand, and held their zampoña to their mouth with the other. They all switched instruments about 5 times and marched/pranced/jogged around the floor in many different formations. They also had flag girls and baton girls twirling and dancing all about. But this group wasn't even the main attraction. Next, an orchestra made up of 25 professional musicians came out on stage to share their amazing talent and beautiful music. They played mandolins, guitars, a cello, violins, a charango (kind of like a mandolin), all sizes of zampoñas (some bigger than me), french horns, quenás and other types of flutes, an accordion, percussion, and their voices. A group of 16 dancers- 8 men and 8 women- dressed in all different colorful and traditional Inca costumes, danced along to the melodies and harmonies and rhythms performed by the orchestra. My eyes were glued on the dancers and musicians as they shared their talents, and I couldn't wipe the goofy grin of amazement off my face. My heart was dancing and singing along with them. I feel deeply blessed by the events of this day. Thanks, God.

---

**Date:** 3/29/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

March 29, 2004 La Paz, Bolivia

Traveling with eight people in a small jeep may not seem like a challenge, but sore legs and backsides testify to the contrary. Add to the situation some confusion over directions, potholes and speed-bumps frequenting the roads, unexpected delays and detours due to marching school children, and a duration of three hours throughout the day, and I found myself hard-pressed not to long for the comforts of our team van back in the states. However, our only alternative being public transportation which would have taken two or three times longer, I am grateful for our comparative efficiency and safety. Nonetheless, I think we deserve our rest today after 11 hours straight of music and relational ministry one of the capitals of Bolivia.



**Matthew Poock**

Our Sunday began joining an Aymaran Lutheran congregation for their morning worship. The service was beautiful and sincere and included the celebration of the Lord's Supper. One of the hymns we sang called us to love all people despite nationalities and differences and apparent boundaries. During our program, following the service, the congregation eagerly joined us in praise, song, and movement. Knowing that the Aymara people are generally reserved, I was encouraged to see their active and joyous participation. To complete our visit, women of the congregation prepared a potluck in our honor, consisting of mostly potato and rice dishes and several kinds of bananas. All of it was unfamiliar to my eye or to my tastes, but I did thoroughly enjoy some homemade noodle soup. During lunch I noticed four young men eating off to the side and felt God leading me to meet them. They themselves are a young team of music ministers, and we talked and laughed trying to come up with a name for their group. I was blessed to encourage and by encouraged by our conversation.

In the afternoon we found ourselves attending the All District Youth Gathering for the Lutheran churches of La Paz. Well into the evening we played games, sang songs, shared a program, answered questions, and built friendships. I signed my name on numerous CD jackets and Bible pages. Again, through the leading of God's Spirit, I found myself reaching out to several youth sitting alone, seemingly isolated. Come to find out afterward from our missionary contact that one of these was a girl who is being abused and needs God's loving touch right now. Our conversation was not profound, but I trust in God and pray for healing in her life and heart. To end the evening, two of my new friends, a young couple I first met on Saturday, presented me with the gift of a musical instrument, a quena (like a pipe flute). Unexpected. Undeserved. Like God's love. And just what my heart needed after a long day.

I write about the leading of God's Spirit on a day when I myself felt weak. The altitude of La Paz is over 12,000ft, and as the day progressed, I became more lightheaded, dizzy, and exhausted. My

prayer lately has been to be fully present in the now and engaged in what is before me. To my surprise, in this weakness, I found myself living in the moment, attuned to God's voice. Only by God's grace did I do anything, or say any words, or go any place. I look back and am amazed at the life God led me into yesterday. "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). Peace.

---

**Date:** 3/30/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

March 30, 2004 La Paz

Today Bolivia's honor was at stake. Today Bolivia played Chile in soccer in La Paz, and Kindred was there to see it all. By nothing short of a miracle, we obtained 6 valid tickets located together while in line 20 minutes before the tickets went off sale. What a great way to take in the culture of Bolivia by witnessing a soccer game against their most-hated rival...Chile (see my journal from last Tuesday). Bolivia simply had to win.



**Amber Rislow**

Kindred decked ourselves out with all the red, yellow, and green clothing we could find, and when we were seated together, we looked exactly like the Bolivian flag. While we were preparing to leave for the game, it began to rain but we were not to be deterred...we had to see the event of the year.

To give you an idea how big this event was, let me tell you that workers had permission to leave their jobs to watch the game. Bolivian flags were flying high all across town, and many people were sporting red, yellow and green with faces painted at 10AM (the game didn't start until 4PM).

We saw many vendors as we proceeded with the sea of people towards the stadium, which was within walking distance from our house. We bought ribbons with red, yellow and green stripes which we tied around our foreheads, and we even got the Bolivian flag painted on our faces.

I can't remember the last time I was so full of anticipation! We went into the stadium where we were promptly checked by guards for weapons, were handed red balloons, then made our way to our seats. We were in the red section of the stadium. The other sections (you guessed it) had yellow balloons and green balloons.

We quickly were initiated into one of the popular cheers which began with our section. We changed Bo-bo-bo, then the yellow section yelled Li-li-li, and then the green section Via-via-via after which the entire stadium yelled VIVA BOLIVIA!

I might have failed to mention that we bought four small Bolivian flags as well as one big one to wave during the game! It was amazing to be a part of such a united group. When they sang the Bolivian national anthem, the stadium was filled with deep, loud voices belting out lyrics about patriotism and their beloved Bolivia.

I felt close to the strangers next to me as we sat through a cold rain to watch the Bolivian team with anticipation. I felt even closer to these people when we realized we were in the wrong seats and had to move through the two inches of space between the rows grabbing shoulders, stepping on toes, and sitting on laps to move 50 seats over.

The game was well worth the water dripping down my forehead. Even though Bolivia lost 0-2 to Chile, I praise God for the opportunity to have attended a soccer game in La Paz. I also find it amazing how badly my teammates and I wanted Bolivia to win...we have only been here two weeks, yet somehow Bolivia has wiggled its way into our hearts enough for us to spend a rainy afternoon screaming and cheering for the guys on the field. Viva Bolivia!

---

**Date:** 4/1/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

## Journal Entry:

April 1, 2004 La Paz, Bolivia: Miraflores District Police Station

Yep. You may think we were doing a program, evangelizing to hundreds, but not quite. Turns out if you catch a cop on a bad day and he's trying to give your contact a ticket and you forgot your passport, things can be quite a hassle to get sorted out. But we got out in time for our program.

Pretty lame April Fool's story. Sorry. It was actually a slow day. Two school programs and lunch with some cool Bolivians. The kids were great. One even suggested "play with Barbies" during the ever famous, "I like to chew my gum with God." Yep, its been successfully translated. I did get mobbed afterwards by kids wanting to play with the hand percussion and get an autograph. Even on a hat.

I guess for the sake of being a bit more profound, I will look past today. There are so many things I can write about, but none seem complete on their own. So I will try to combine them. Being overseas for 2 ½ months can take its toll but lead to awesome chances, too. Yeah, we are all ready at times to be home right away, but I don't really realize what I would lose with that. I have had so much time to read these past 3 months. I made it through all the books I brought by late February, went back and re-read some, read through a book on prayer last weekend, and have so far been following through with a commitment to get through the Bible by August. One month down so far, and ahead of pace. Leviticus is more bearable when done in a day. Anyways, I never realized how much of a gift I've had at my disposal and neglected. So much I haven't read, and when I get back to the states, the time might not be there. It's so easy to see that we just miss pizza and bratwurst and cheap phone calls and miss all that we have here. Don't be so short-sighted to miss the gifts.

So that's my profoundness. For now, I must go wash my water bottle and continue enjoying my new vintage 80s Reese's Peanut Butter Cups shirt. See some of you in a couple of weeks, but I don't want to count. There's too much I would miss.



**Deron Vaupel**

---

**Date:** 4/2/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

## Journal Entry:

April 2, 2004 La Paz, Bolivia

She had a malignant tumour on her face, she was a five-year-old orphan. She has rheumatoid arthritis, probably aggravated by a broken leg that wasn't set properly, she is under 30 and has a 2 year-old. They were abandoned by their parents, they were all under 15. Physical, mental and spiritual injuries abounding, improper care and lack of money, they sit on the street trying to make a living in a place where there are more vendors than buyers.



**Jennifer Jarvis**

Today in the car I was looking at the amazing view that can be seen no matter which direction you choose to look. As I was gazing out the window I wondered if all those people selling things on the street even had time to look at the incredible vista. Being here has afforded me amazing opportunities to look at my life and what I think is important. It is hard to be in love with the place and the people while being heart-broken because I see people who lack very basic medical care because they cannot afford it. In La Paz, the hospital is a place that you go to die, not to recover. In my life, you go to the hospital, they treat you and you go home, maybe not always, but surely, most of the time. I cannot imagine living in house with most of your extended family for your entire life. I can't fathom the pain that is experienced daily by these people in one of the most beautiful settings in the world.

Still, despite the pain that wretches my heart, I am happy here for the most part. Oh, there are days when I would do anything to get home to my Mommy and Daddy and a toilet that you can throw your paper in and my very own bed. Then I look around me and think, "My time is so short here, am I making the most of it?" The answer is usually no, but I am working on that too. In a few

short weeks I will be home and I will have luxuries abounding...please don't let me forget what I have seen and experienced here.

---

**Date:** 4/3/2004

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

**Journal Entry:**

April 3, 2004 La Paz, Bolivia

Our programs were quite different today. We had the chance to hang out with children in the hospital and children who live on the streets of La Paz. We did our same old singing, puppets, and skits, but the situation, the place and the state of my heart were different from that of average kids programs. Some of the kids in the hospital couldn't even sit up in their beds, but their little mouths would be singing along with us and smiling at all the goofiness. Some of the street kids were tattered from head to toe with their skin a few shades darker from the dirt, and looked tired from malnutrition- but they would not be held back from bustin' a move and singing along con gusto, and laughing like crazy at the puppets.

At the end of today I can't help wondering what each one of those children's lives is really like. They may very well have been through more struggles in their 9 years on this earth than I will experience in my whole life. I think of an exhausted mother sitting at her sick child's bedside, and I think of a little brother and sister huddling together on the street trying to keep warm on a frigid night; and my heart breaks for them. I don't know any pain like that in my life and I wonder what we're doing coming into these children's lives and singing happy songs for an hour? Their problems are so big and their hurts so deep. I feel helpless seeing such a great need and only being able to talk a few moments, hand out stickers, and have them sing along with us.

But, I know that what God has to offer these children is so much greater than my limitations- his love stretches farther and lasts longer than the hour we were able to spend with them. I trust His heart for them, and His gentle voice calling out to them and His loving arms wrapping around each one of His precious children. I am so thankful for God's heart- that the ministry we're doing is not all about the cool, fun things WE do. I'm thankful that the only reason we can love is because He loved us first. The most important thing is that at the center of it all, God's love is shared. He's the one who does the loving and the healing and the comforting- He is big enough.



**Stephanie Kirkman**

---

**Date:** 4/5/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

April 5, 2004 La Paz, Bolivia

An electronic keyboard played a lyric melody in the background. The voice of the pastor sounded strong and welcoming as he called the people forward, declaring God's grace, goodness, and invitation. He stood at a small glass pulpit situated in the center of the front of the small sanctuary. Behind him sat the drum set, above which declared the words Jesus Christ in bold red letters on a warm yellow wall. Youth and adults of all ages reverently responded to the call and formed a half circle in front of the pulpit. The pastor continued to offer prayers and thanksgiving as two ushers administered the elements of the Lord's Supper. The atmosphere in this vibrant Lutheran church echoed the voice of the pastor in gratitude and praise. While standing there with team mates, missionaries, and a host of beautiful new faces, I breathed in the moment, and my heart filled with awe and peace. We may trust God's promise to us, that "where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20).

We departed La Paz today by bus to Potosi. Five friends of ours came to say farewell and see us off. Not only did they offer us small gifts by which to remember them, they sang to us a song they wrote specifically for us. A mix between Bolivian folk music and barber shop, their aim was to



**Matthew Poock**

replicate Kindred's style of music. The six of us huddled around our encouraging friends, our faces ablaze with smiles and ears attuned to the sincerity of their words. "Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness" (Psalm 115:1). Peace.

---

**Date:** 4/6/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

April 6, 2004 The road from La Paz to Potosí

Today you have the privilege of actually getting into my head and seeing all the crazy thoughts that run around in There. Buckle up.

12:01am

Why am I not sleeping? Everyone seems to be sleeping.

1:18am

Even Deron's sleeping. Why can't I?

3:36am

I hate this cursed bus ride. Why did we think a 10 hour bus ride was a good idea?

4:20am

Oh my goodness! Jennifer is even laying down...Jennifer Jarvis is resting on the bus. Why am I still awake?

5:10am

Is this road paved? I don't think this road is paved. Is the bus supposed to be rocking like this?

6:30am

So this is Potosí. I don't want to talk to anybody, meet anyone. I wonder if my eyes look puffy, they feel puffy. No, I don't want to ride in your taxi, sir. No I don't need a taxi. I am going to punch the next person who asks me if I need a taxi!

7:37am

I finally get to sleep. I wonder if I could go home yet. If I wanted to go home would I have to take the 10-hour bus ride back to La Paz? How did I get to our house? Did I walk here? I don't remember walking here. Where's the bed? I have to share a bed...again? When will I get my own bed? When will I get my own room? I don't want to eat anything. I just want to go to bed? Corn flakes? OK. 3 1/2 more weeks...not like I am counting. Amber! Don't count down your days—you love it here, you are just overtired. Go to bed. I want my own bed! Go to bed, Amber.



**Amber Rislow**

---

**Date:** 4/7/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

April 7, 2004 Potosi, Bolivia

We are the highest team in the world. I think that 14,000 feet constitutes "highest." Yesterday we arrived in Potosi, which is considered the highest (or one of the highest) cities in the world. I am willing to hear otherwise... It is a city of around 100,000 people who live in a basin in the "altiplano." This area of the world is all high altitude, but it appears to have mountains. We have been well warned to take care of ourselves as the ones who have gone before us got sick at this point in their journey. Being 2.5 miles in the air definitely is reason to take it easy—let's just not do too many jumping songs.

Besides out comfortable accommodations and hit-and-miss programs we have all hit a difficult point



**Sarah Twito**



in our journey. One of my many wonderful host families e-mailed me and asked how they can help besides prayer. It gave me the idea that perhaps I can pass along a few specific prayer requests to you our loving journal audience. Some of these may apply more to me, but most apply to the whole team.

1. For energy and continued strength for our last few weeks in South America. Also for continued good health and healing for those with sniffles and minor ailments.
2. For overflowing love for the people we meet and for each other.
3. For a renewed calling to be here.
4. Peace about plans for next year.
5. That God would be so very real to us that we would rest in His love and trust Him above all else.

Thank you each and everyone for your prayers for us. We appreciate them, and I know that God has carried us and will continue to do so.

---

**Date:** 4/8/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

April 8, 2004 Potosí, Bolivia

To start, yesterday wasn't too great. But today we saw a monkey. Not sure what else will happen. We have a program to go do. Be back in a couple hours.

Alright, I'm back. 7:30 program, we left at 7:35, got there about 7:50, they had a 45 minute service, then our program went well. No broken strings.

All in all, it was a pretty brief day. Sorry I can't put a lot of my thoughts into words. Maybe next week.



**Deron Vaupel**

---

**Date:** 4/8/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

A little out of order but...

March 31, 2004 La Paz, Bolivia

My friend asked me online today if I was liking my year overall. I could honestly say yes. Sometimes I have moments when I wonder who would put themselves through a year like this. (This same friend had been on team and gave me a very realistic picture of what it would be like.) My reasons for being able to say "yes, I am glad that I am on team" are sometimes the littlest things. Today was full of those.

1. We went to a school today. There was a sweet little girl who was seven-years-old who just wanted to put her arms around me. I had just shown up.
2. Sometimes when you are overseas, meals can be scary. Today lunch was so good that I couldn't stop eating chicken curry with rice until I was stuffed.
3. I was exhausted because we are at a high altitude, and we've been busy the past few days. I got to rest this afternoon, and it was the most delicious thing.
4. We ended our rehearsal with worship. I have the opportunity to worship everyday with five amazing people. What a gift.
5. I have friends around me that keep me humble and teach me so much everyday.



**Sarah Twito**

6. Spent sometime talking with some people on the internet who encouraged me. What a blessing to have supportive people at home praying for me. If you are one of those people, thanks.

Life isn't always one hugely profound God moment after another, but God can reveal Himself in the excitement of children to sing a song that is the oldest in our line-up. He shows Himself in a missionary couple carting us all over La Paz. It is the little things. Thank You, Lord, for perspective. Help me always be thankful in all circumstances. (Phil 4:4) Peace be with you.

---

**Date:** 4/9/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

April 9, 2004 Potosí to Tinquipaya

We missed the bus. Not the most promising start to a travel day. It wasn't our fault though, the bus just filled up and left. So we hired a combi—well, a "mini" because they aren't called combis in Bolivia. So that turned out to be okay because since we hired it, there weren't 90-100 people packed in there. The drive here was something. Started on a paved road then we turned off onto a not-so-paved road. Twisty, turny and an incredible view—we crossed no fewer than 10 streams/ creeks/ irrigation channels. I especially liked the "bridges," basically, you pave over the stream bed and let the water run over the concrete. So after 4 hours, 10 streams, 1 flat tire and all the beautiful scenery you could ask for, we arrived in Tinquipaya.



**Jennifer Jarvis**

We were shown to our rooms in the boarding school (1 for the girls and a shared room for the boys with 3 of the students). They fed us lunch, which we couldn't finish—the story of our South American lives. At this juncture, I need to share a Kindred thing with you. We (well, it was Matt's theory to start with) have several different stomachs. For example: Your Bolivian stomach could be completely full and you can't eat any more BUT, your Pizza Hut stomach could hold a little something more. Tonight at dinner, our Bolivian stomachs were completely full but Amber's Reese's Peanut Butter Cup stomach is running on empty. (Please send any sympathy candy to Kindred c/o Youth Encounter 3490 Lexington Ave. N. Shoreview, MN 55126) ((Please remember that Jennifer is allergic to peanuts and coconut)).

So we just kind of hung out all afternoon because they are having a big festival here and we are like the guest band. We went over for prayer right before dinner and the Spirit there was incredible. I have no idea what they were saying but my heart cried out with them. (Did I mention that most of the speaking and singing are in Quechua—kind of makes it hard to follow along with the 5 words of Quechua that I know.) We came back to the school for dinner and then headed over to the tent constructed out of blue tarps on a basketball court. While we were waiting outside for our turn, I stood there looking at the stars. They were so clear and so bright. They were even twinkling (this may be because I took my glasses off before we went over—it was dark, there wasn't really anything to see). The Presence of God was just so overwhelming in that moment. He whispered in my ear, "I am here."

Now just to prove that God has a sense of humor in addition to being creator of the universe, let me tell you about our program. So there was a dog who sort of became the team dog (turns out he belongs to the missionaries there), he just kept hanging around us. During our 4th song, he found his way into the tent and laid down in the middle of the six of us. Though Deron refutes this—the dog totally sniffed him in the middle of the song. Then there was the kid. Now this little boy was probably about 1 and he sort of wondered around during a couple of songs—always maintaining his distance (we are kind of scary). Okay, whatever. Then during "Canataría sin parar," he stopped about a foot away from me and just started to pee—he left a pretty good sized puddle too.

So while this Good Friday is far different from others I've experienced in my life, I really felt God today. He was very really and very present even though I didn't fast and I even ate red meat and church wasn't exactly in a language that I speak. I guess that just proves He is bigger than any language barrier or tradition.

---

**Date:** 4/10/2004  
**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman  
**Journal Entry:**

April 10, 2004 Tinquipaya, Bolivia

Easter weekend way out in the country of Bolivia with lots of friends who speak Quechua, and not so much Spanish, and almost no English (but that's not new). Every year in Tinquipaya, a pueblo of about 200 inhabitants, they hold a weekend Christian fiesta at the town basketball court under a big blue tent. Around 100 people come from the smaller surrounding pueblos by foot, or from farther cities by bus. We heard that some people even walked 12 hours to get there! There aren't any roads that reach their town—only foot paths. (And I thought our 4 hour bumpy bus ride was intense. Woh!) This morning I woke up to the sound of high nasal voices singing in Quechua accompanied by the mandolins following the melody line and a guitar strumming along, keeping the beat. All that goes on in the big blue tent is microphoned and boomed out across the whole town so everyone can hear. I sat up on my mattress and saw my other 3 female teammates still sleeping on the mattresses like mine lined up across the floor. Not too much later, we were served bread and Bolivian hot chocolate (I like to add about 4 scoops of sugar) for breakfast. We walked to the big blue tent and greeted people along the way with an "Hola" or "Buenos Dias" (Good morning). Some people responded, some people just stare and look frightened. We led a workshop on leaders in the church (when I say "we," I mean Sarah, because she knows the most Spanish) with the help of a translator who communicated most of what we were saying or acting out in Quechua. There was a quick tea break, and then Deron and Jennifer continued the workshop by sharing some of their experiences as leaders in the church. Now Deron doesn't feel comfortable sharing in Spanish, so it was just easier for him to share in English, then Sarah translated to Spanish, and then our friend translated to Quechua. Deron's sharing was 3 times as long—but I think everyone in the tent could understand what he was saying and no one was left out.

Here's a little insight about how the schedule works at the Big Blue Tent: we never really know what time things will start, how long they'll go, or where they will be (sometimes, the events happen at the town plaza). So we just have to be around where things are happening and wait to hear the word "Kindred" among the other Quechua words we don't understand, then we know it's time to do our thing. A lot of hanging out happened throughout the day, and we had time to talk with the people there; sometimes in very simple Spanish. As the day went on, I got the feeling that they're getting more used to us Gringos, starting to smile at us and greet us, and sometimes just laugh at us. That's okay too.

We did another program in the evening with translations here and there. Judging solely from the expressions on their faces, I would say that, by far, they liked the puppets the most. From the 2-year-olds to the 90-year-olds, everyone's smiling eyes were glued to those puppets. I remember looking out at the crowd and seeing old men with their jaws dropped in awe for the whole 5 minute show. Crazy stuff. So after we finished, they had kind of a "share your talent" time in the blue tent. Music groups from the different towns, all dressed up, would share their songs, one after the other, and a group of young ones acted out the Good Samaritan parable. We just got to sit among the crowd and take it all in ~ a quality cultural moment, evening, day and weekend.



**Stephanie Kirkman**

---

**Date:** 4/12/2004  
**Submitted by:** Matthew Pooch  
**Journal Entry:**

April 12, 2004 Potosí, Bolivia

Happy Easter! Although the Lenten season is not part of Bolivian church tradition, Holy Week and Easter Sunday are celebrated with vigor. Along with hundreds of holiday visitors (some who walked 12 hours to get there), we spent the weekend in a small country village of some 200 residents. The team stayed at a boarding school for high



**Matthew Pooch**

school age boys, and Deron and I shared a dorm room with three students (Isidrio, Sylvestor, and Julian). Beginning the first evening and by God's grace, I quickly built friendships with them and a dozen of their friends. Throughout the weekend I taught them some English, and they taught me some Quechua (a native language). We talked about our families, about our lives, and about music, laughing often with and at each other. Saturday afternoon they introduced me to a soccer-like game played with a small, heavy ball on a concrete court. Not surprisingly they played with much greater skill than I, but I held my own. Afterwards they quickly ushered me into a game of three on three basketball, which turned out to be more my sport. Here I have half a foot or more height on all the players, and this advantage allowed me to play rather competitively. In all, I played two hours of active sports for the first time in months at over a mile elevation. During our program that evening I thought I might fall over.

My Easter Sunday morning got off to a rough start. I awoke at too early of an hour to noisy voices, a cold draft, and sore legs. However, once I remembered what day it was, my joy was unstoppable. I soon found myself marching in a parade with all my new friends and teammates, clapping to the music of charrango (a small guitar) and voices singing praises in Quechua. I was IN a postcard! I wanted to drink in that moment and hold on to it forever. We paraded all over town, across streams and passed barnyard animals, and stopped at the town plaza. After the gospel reading (also in Quechua), Kindred offered a time of music and praises in the early morning sunlight. We began with a contemporary version of a popular hymn, All Creatures of Our God and King, sung in English and Spanish. I couldn't have felt any more joy or any more honored to be standing right there singing alleluia's to the Risen Christ.

Later that morning, after packing, giving many gifts, taking lots of pictures, and saying difficult goodbyes to all our new friends, we boarded the bus and traveled about 40 miles in four hours back to the city. Immediately we hunted the town for Easter dinner and finally found Jackie Chan's Chinese restaurant. Although we ate well, I missed the food and family at Grandma's farm. But looking around me God had given me my team family with whom to laugh and celebrate. Bless their hearts, they even let me talk them into an Easter egg hunt for candybars.

Throughout this Passion week God has been laying on my heart a new and deeper call to forgiveness. Too often I harbor insult and offense from my teammates and from others. God's forgiveness knows no limits, and as Christians neither should ours. Paul writes in Colossians 3:13, "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Life (and team) offers us countless opportunities to forgive, and forgiveness offers us a life of peace. Peace to you.

---

**Date:** 4/13/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

April 13, 2004 Sucre, Bolivia

I'm guessing you probably have had this happen to you because it has happened to me so many times. Remember in grade school how when you made a mistake on your paper and erased it the paper got thinner, and if you did it again it got even worse? Or sometimes how you made a pencil last really long, but the eraser was basically shot and so when you tried to erase something, the thin metal scraped the paper? That happened a lot to me. What does this have to do with being in Bolivia? Well, I feel like that thin, scraped-up paper.

I don't know when this all happened, but ever-so-slowly, my resources have been draining and I find myself these last few days feeling so completely empty in so many ways. I recall a photo taken of me during training that precisely depicts my current state; in this photo, I am laying down like I am about to make a snow angel in the grass except I am completely face down, burying my tired eyes in the grass.

I have been struggling through this feeling and praying through it when God revealed something grand to me...I ASKED for this. Well, not exactly specifically for trials of this kind, but I have been



**Amber Rislow**

praying for God to draw me nearer to Him so I may know Him more. How better can I draw closer to God than to be so empty that I simply have no other choice but to rely on Him for my strength and my sustenance?

I'm really glad that He knows what is going on; I simply can't imagine trying to figure out what's best for me! I guess I wouldn't have chosen the teammates God has given me (I probably would have chosen 5 quiet bookworms) but He also knew I needed them....we needed each other. Last night I crashed hard and shed some tears, but I wasn't alone. Deron was there to listen to me, pray with me, and give me a hug. This morning as my teammates and I shared where we were at, God used both Matt and Sarah to offer Biblical encouragement and words of wisdom from books they are reading to touch my heart. Sarah shared an excerpt about how we might feel far away from God sometimes, but that is an illusion. God is always near to us. When we feel far away from God, we need to continue worshipping Him and drawing near to Him, even if we don't feel the warm fuzzies. This is what I hope to do. When I look on the world maps, Bolivia seems so far from Minnesota, but God is near, and He alone can fill me and restore me. Oh Lord, do not tarry.

---

**Date:** 4/14/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

April 14, 2004 Sucre, Bolivia

Ever had one of those dreams where you sat around with a friend saying, "what if we..." and "then we could..."? The whole time you made plans and worked out details you knew that it was a far off dream with little chance of coming true. You knew in the depth of your being that it was a dream bigger than reality. I had a dream like that once... then I saw it visualized.



**Sarah Twito**

Yesterday we visited a coffee house for students that is run by missionaries. Granted this place does not fit all of the specifications I wrote into my "blue prints," but it has the important aspects of my dream. It is a Christian coffee house reaching out to college students by giving them a positive place to hang out. They provide opportunities for people to seek Christian guidance, which was also part of my dream. This all in a latinamerican country.

Where does this leave me in my world of dreaming? Well, at very least I can see what my vision could look like in reality. I can see how god uses a place like that. I also will not cut my dreams back. I want to dream like God dreams for me in bright colors with incredible detail and with more beauty than I could ever dare to dream. God, teach me to dream BIG because You are a BIG God! I am glad that you are dreaming up my future because I would never dream that up.

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." Ephesians 2:20, 21

Extra note: This coffee house has a website that tells a little more about it. The web site is [www.alfarero.org](http://www.alfarero.org).

---

**Date:** 4/15/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

April 15, 2004 Sucre, Bolivia

So, let's begin. Woke up. That's normal. Team meeting after I went to buy some bread and did some reading and journaling. Then there was a thunderstorm. A man that we met last night showed up, and we went to lunch at his house. The family is from



Ecuador, but has been living in Bolivia while the dad attends seminary. They've known other Kindred teams. Lunch was interesting. Some kind of soup that you put popcorn in. I think that the Peru word for popcorn is the same as the word for soccer field. After lunch we came home to change and leave for an orphanage. As we were leaving, a local boy dog climbed up the gate of the pastor's house to go visit what must be his girlfriend, when he tried to say "hello" in the tradition of this neighborhood, she quickly refused and bit him. They must have been having a disagreement. Then he tried to rapidly escape from his less-than-happy beau, but in the process, his leg got caught in the gate as he tried to climb back over. Somebody was nice enough to open the gate though, and that greatly eased his escape. I hope they make up.



**Deron Vaupel**

We then made our way to an orphanage. It was quite interesting seeing the kids involved, but much of the staff very withdrawn and uninvolved in the program. It was hard because at times I felt we may not be welcome there and they did not agree with the message of the Gospel which we were presenting, but it is not always our call to be welcome or well-received. We are simply called to share the fact that Christ died for our sins. I did get to talk some to Jonathan from Luxemburg afterwards. He's 19 and is in the middle of 5 months of volunteer work there. Having been to 5 continents and having a fluent understanding of 4 languages, I would say he is well-prepared for many endeavors in life. It seemed, though, that he was not really "into" what we were presenting. I would love to chat with him more, but since we are leaving tomorrow, that opportunity will not arise. Prayers for Jonathan that God would speak to him through what he heard and saw today.

After the orphanage, we went to the coffee shop that Sarah talked about yesterday. Got some good food and a chance to talk to Seth from Maryland. Between college and seminary, he has been volunteering with that college ministry since September. He returns to the US in 2 weeks, then will do a year of seminary before medical school. So many interesting people on the road.

Got back a couple of minutes after 7 for our 7pm program. It's okay because we didn't actually start until 7:40. Had a good program. Pastor Juan danced a lot. He's quite fun. Got to chat with some kids afterwards. One liked playing with my face. Another one looked at me for 10 seconds, then decided to hit me in the head with his CD case. Not sure why.

Got to check some e-mails, the Cubs are picking it up as the baseball season gets underway. Got locked out and, like the boy dog, had to climb the gate to get in. All in all a better day than last week. There are still struggles each day, but God is opening new doors for communication and ministry. Sometimes that's all I need to turn a day around.

---

**Date:** 4/16/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

April 16, 2004 On the road to Thiumayu, Bolivia

So one time in my life I thought—No bus ride will ever be as bad as the ride from Lima to Chiclayo—but I was wrong. When we arrived in Sucre, we found out that we would be spending the weekend in the "campo" (the country). That's cool—I like the campo. Then we found out it was a nine hour bus ride. Still thinking—we've done longer, they weren't that bad...except the ride from Lima to Chiclayo. So we spent the day just kind of doing whatever: meeting, lunch, errands—then we head to the bus station around 5:00. Get on the bus, go down the road, it is fine until it gets dark. Then Matt (my seat partner) fell asleep and I got bored. There was a little girl sitting in the aisle beside me (her mom was trying to encourage her to go to lay down and go to sleep) and I asked if she wanted to play with me. Now the only game I could think of to play in the dark—really dark—and about a foot of space was "Me gusta..." Basically, you list 5 things you like and then it is the other person's turn. So we play for awhile and she asks about the team and I ask about school and her friends. Then we stop for a potty/ dinner break. Get back on the bus and Erin wanted to sit with me again, that's cool, it isn't like I am really busy or anything...I mean I had a lot of sitting there to do. We play the game some more and then tell some stories. Then Grandma and Mom insist that she get some sleep. So I have to entertain myself at this point. So I throw on my headphones and rock out to Blink 182 and Cake



**Jennifer Jarvis**

for awhile...then, it happens. THE BATTERIES DIED! This would have been less annoying if they were old batteries, but I had just put them in that day—right before we left! (That's what you get for buying batteries in the street.) I stretch them as long as I can, but they died and we still had about 3 hours left to go. At this point Erin and her mom are laying in the aisle sleeping and Erin has worked her way under my seat. The box that was underneath my seat is now hanging out where my feet go. With Erin there, I can't kick the box back and I have no where to put my feet and it is HOT and the window is stuck shut. Now, if there is one thing that I really don't like, it is being hot in the car. So, I ended up standing up in my seat for the last 3 hours of the bus ride, crying (which I knew was making me hotter, but I couldn't stop) and praying that we would get there—NOW. We did end up getting there about an hour ahead of schedule. Thank you.

So what is the moral of the story? A#1: Don't buy batteries in the street. B#2: Kids are entertaining and in entertaining them, you can entertain yourself. C#3: Nine hour bus rides are a good time to think and pray (I did that too) D#4: Amos 5:16

That is actually from a previous bus ride where there was a guy in the aisle and he was "singing" and I was reading in Amos and that was the verse I read...if you take the time to look, it is funny. Who knew one of my favorite verses would come from Amos?

---

**Date:** 4/17/2004

**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman

**Journal Entry:**

April 17, 2004 Thiumayu, Bolivia

MONKEYS and holding hands: my hightlights of today- another Saturday in the "campo" (country) of Bolivia hours away from a city. Thiumayu is a charming and cozy little jungle town surrounded my misty green mountains. There's no electricity here, but if you happen to see a light on a dark night you can be pretty sure it's a candle, a battery powered light bulb or a flash light. (or, you know... stars or the moon).



**Stephanie Kirkman**

So, monkeys. The first monkey sighting was during our 3-hour kids program this morning. As we were singing "Who's the king of the jungle" (in Spanish) and making monkey noises, I looked out beyond the kids and saw a man standing in the doorway with his pet monkey just hangin out on his shoulder. Later on as we were walking to the town soccer field to have some community soccer/silly game time, we passed by a monkey in a tree. The kids with us explained that his name is Martin and he always hangs out in that particular tree. Deron fed him some gum, and I fed him some peanuts. I didn't want to get too close though because I remember doing a report on the Ebola virus in high school (it kills you in 24 hours) and I'm pretty sure monkeys are the carriers. Enough with the irrational fears. Anyways, I still love monkeys (many people know this about me) and it was my first time to see a real live one in real life and up close; but not too personal.

Along with monkey encounters came a lot of holding hands. Every where we went today, there were children walking along with us and holding on to our hands: to the church, back home, to the field and back, and to our evening open-air program (lit by two light bulbs powered by generators) and back home again. It was so cute. They wouldn't even necessarily be talking to us- they just wanted to walk and hold hands. I felt the love. My favorite encounter was holding 8-year-old Esteban's hand on the way back from our evening program. Here's how it happened: we were all walking in a large group, finding our way along the road in the dark with 3 flashlights, and saying goodbye to people along the way as we reached their houses. I noticed this cute little boy walking along with us and not really saying anything. It seemed like he wasn't with anyone so I asked if I could walk by him and hold his hand. We talked a little bit, but for the most part we just walked and he squeezed my hand s tight as he could. It was so sweet. I can't explain why, but my heart was so touched and I wanted to walk little Esteban all the way to his house so he wouldn't have to walk alone. When we reached home he said he still had a long way to walk, but he didn't seem a bit

scared or worried. He just smiled at me, waved good-bye and kept on walking down the unlit road. I said an extra prayer for Esteban tonight and thanked God for all the little ways he blesses me throughout each day. (complete with up-close monkey encounters)

---

**Date:** 4/19/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Pooock

**Journal Entry:**

April 19, 2004 Thiumayu, Bolivia

In the morning a chicken walked into my room. I ate it for lunch.

Our weekend in the rainforest out in the middle of nowhere was novel, to say the least. Given the remote location of the village of Tihumayu, it shouldn't be surprising that they don't get a lot of foreign visitors. More than ever before in all our travels, our presence was a visual and auditory spectacle. No matter what we did - eat, sit, filter water, breathe - we had an audience. Everywhere we went people of all ages came along. Their curiosity and eagerness was endearing. One such audience even enjoyed a blues session as I played guitar and taught the pastor (our guide and host) to sing along with me. Nothing makes you smile so much as a 50 year old, jolly, Bolivian pastor sing "I got da blues"! On Sunday afternoon I did manage to break away from sight and do a little exploring. Samuel, the 11 year old son of the pastor, and I climbed down a waterfall, through the forest, and over rocks as we explored both banks of the river. More than once I stopped to catch my breath and look up at the magnificent rolling hills of forest around me on every side.

Throughout the weekend, time and again, we saw answers to prayer on our behalf. A degree of weariness and apprehension, as well as a renewed confidence in the power of prayer, led us to call out to the Lord. Tihumayu is known to be infested with mosquitos, sending previous visitors to the hospital. Each of us returned from the country with barely a single bite. Usually hot and humid, God brought clouds and some rain to keep us cool. God supplied us with a safe place to sleep, beds for each of us, surprisingly tasty food (a miracle in itself), and energy and joy to spare. Although we did not see it ourselves, I trust that God is also answering our prayers for the church and people we met there. "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of him" (1 John 5:14-15). Peace.



**Matthew Pooock**

---

**Date:** 4/20/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

April 20, 2004 Cochabamba, Bolivia

...summer in the city, back of my neck's gettin' burned and pretty. Bend down isn't it a pity, doesn't seem to be a shadow in the city... Well, Dad, I don't know if I got all the words right, but I know one thing for sure - it feels like summer here!

We flew into Cochabamba today and when I stepped off the plane I had to take 2 of my 3 layers off it felt so much like summer. For some reason I just had a feeling we were going to have a great time here and banking off today, it looks like we are in for a treat.

I write to you from the Kindred Mansion as I like to call it. Somehow the Lord gave us a place without chickens flying around or children staring at us (see past 3 journals). We even have seats on the toilets...and 3 bathrooms! We walked into the apartment where we will be staying for the next 10 days with wide eyes and giggles. As we went exploring we found a stocked fridge and cupboards - the four of us girls were in the kitchen exclaiming about all the goodies we found and the guys were sitting in the living room laughing at us. The contact here said we looked like girls who had lived in the countryside our whole lives and just came to the city for the first time. The



**Amber Rislow**

blessings of a comfortable place to stay are amazing. I spent a few minutes laying on the carpet just remembering what carpet feels like because every other place we have been has tile. The girls were really gracious to me and gave me a little room that was off by itself with a balcony and the sun shines in there and bounces off the walls to make it one of the happiest places I have been.

If you read my journal from last week, you must be thinking, "Is this the same girl?" God has renewed my strength and my joy through much prayer on my part and much prayer on your part. The power of prayer is amazing and God has brought me to a place where I can recognize His blessings in my life. I love the feeling of walking barefoot (especially on carpet) and the warm breeze on my hands. Today we got our mail from friends and family and I was blessed to have a few pieces of mail in there. My friend Scott Schaffer even sent me a CD he mixed with a few special words of encouragement. What a joy it was to hear the voice of an old friend! I praise God today for the sweet surprises He has given me and I thank you all for your continued prayers.

---

**Date:** 4/21/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

April 21, 2004 Cochabamba, Bolivia

Should I be counting the days until we leave or should I be wishing we had more time? The things that I will miss are many, and I have found myself trying to soak it in as we drive through town. Some examples of things I will miss (in list form again):

1. Missionaries and other random foreigners we've met. I have had some cool conversations with a few missionaries this week, and they are so wise and cool to talk with. I had an especially inspiring discussion on a plane with a lady for whom I am grateful. God has blessed me with eye-opening insights and new dreams after talking with them Praise God for how He is working through them and in them to shine to His glory.
2. Public transportation. I remember missing public transportation when I went home from México because it offers a way to go places without having to drive or pay attention too much You can jump on the bus, give him your money and chat with your friend. I do like driving, but it is nice to be able to just watch the world (including street vendors, markets, people...) go by.
3. The price of fun jewelry, trinkets and clothes. Although it is hard to wrap your mind around the fact that 8 of something equals a dollar, I love to buy stuff in South America. When a hand made toy cost less than \$.50, it is hard for me to keep my purchases to a reasonable amount. The markets here have rows of vendors who are always willing to lower the price a little (or a lot). My advice: decide what you want then walk away...just tough if you really DON'T want it.
4. Affectionate people. As mentioned in previous journals people here are much more affectionate when greeting and saying good-bye. Kisses, hugs and hardy hand shakes are normal for most situations. When I go home, watch out if I come in for any kisses on the cheek. I just feel so welcomed here.

There are many things I will miss that I cannot guess while I am still here. But never fear folks at home because I am excited about seeing you people too. The short list of things that I am thinking about when I get home:

FAMILY! I miss you guys a lot! Food (pizza, fresh veggies from the garden, raspberries from the backyard, SKIM MILK by the gallon, any food my momma makes). Ice cold water. Chilling with my friends. Laying in the grass. Watching high school soccer games...You get the point.

So for now I will soak up the experiences and love on the people. I will live here and prepare for returning. Praise the Lord that He gives us so much to be thankful for that wherever we are is great. "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His love endures forever."

P.S. Thanks to you all who are praying for us and sending little notes of encouragement. You all



**Sarah Twito**

rock!

---

**Date:** 4/22/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

April 22, 2004 Cochabamba, Bolivia

Interesting cultural fact: The Cochabamba equivalent to a snow day is a transportation strike. Kids can't go to school because the public buses aren't running. That means no school programs. Which means the morning off. Good rehearsal, bad attempt at fried rice (which is actually rather popular in parts of South America), trip to the grocery store, hurried supper because our contact showed up on time to pick us up, then off to our evening program. It was a chance to revisit our school from yesterday. I would have seen some familiar faces, but with 600 kids yesterday, I was kind of overwhelmed with smiles. Got to play basketball with some kids, help some practice their English (even during Sarah's share), and mostly be someone to look at.

Despite being an acoustic team that was asked to use a sound system (always awkward), things came together. It was an enjoyable program for a good group, which was mostly composed of kids from yesterday, parents, and people from the neighborhood who heard us thumping to "Tengo Paz como un rio." I'm even talking to more people.

So, as we were welcomed home by the loving arms of the tallest Jesus in all of South America\*\* (seemingly just down the street), I remember we still had to do the dishes. The price of cooking for yourselves. Cochabamba has been great so far, and we still have 7ish more programs here, plus a weekend in the country. My next journal may not be until after all of our programming in South America has finished up...next Thursday. Hard to believe. Until then. -D

\*\*For dimensions of the Jesus, please e-mail me at: noredr2@hotmail.com



**Deron Vaupel**

---

**Date:** 4/23/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

April 23, 2004 Cochabamba, Bolivia

I tied shoes and opened bags today. You may be wondering why this is noteworthy. Well, in my previous life (the one before team), I was a preschool teacher. Today we did a program for 4 and 5-year-olds and I got to tie shoes and open bags—it was just fun to do again. Isn't funny the things that you miss when you don't do them anymore? For example, I used to tie 90-100 shoes a day and I wondered why on earth those kids couldn't keep their shoes tied, no matter how many knots I put in them—I mean, really. But now that I rarely do it, I love to tie little kids' shoes.

You can probably see where I am going with this...there are a lot of things that we do in a day while we are here that make me ask, "Why?!?" Like filtering water. But I know that when I get home and I don't need to hand filter water anymore, I might (eventually) be tempted to pull out the filter, just for old times' sake. (I mean, I won't do it, but I will think about it.) Isn't it amazing how God can use little things in your life to evoke memories? Granted, not all of them may be good, but each one is a part of you. It has shaped who you are, and you are a beloved child of God. I hope you can find a little time to remember today—even better—I hope you can find someone and start a discussion with, "Remember that one time..."



**Jennifer Jarvis**

---

**Date:** 4/24/2004





**Stephanie Kirkman**

April 24, 2004 Acacio, Bolivia

Animal Encounter- I feel like that should be our name today. We're back in the campo (country) of Bolivia again. Our taxis picked us up at 6:00am in Cochabamba and we took off from the bus station (all packed in nice and cozy) at 7:45 (scheduled to leave at 7:00, but you know, we're used to that by now). As I was getting settled in my aisle seat with Matt at my side and a book in my hand I looked across the aisle to see a chicken staring at me. He was just sitting in a bag on a woman's lap just hanging out, really chill. I didn't see much of him for the rest of the trip but once in a while I would hear a "buc-buc-buc-CAH!" from the bag.

The ride was pleasant enough- not too crazily bumpy- but it had its share of winding roads, jerky turns, and occasional rock slides to inch our way over (where you feel like the whole bus might go plunging down into the ravine). We're driving through the Andes Mountains though, so you have to expect these things. The amazing scenery makes up for the bumps and very close quarters. And I've come to forget about my own personal space- who needs it?

As I was reading my book, Matt pointed out the window at some huge bulls on the side of the road. I strained to see them but couldn't, and he couldn't see them anymore either. Then we realized they had started running in front of the bus, and our busdriver was honking the horn with great urgency trying to get them off the road- but they just kept right along running in front of us. So, today we got to run with the bulls. It was exhilarating!

Upon arrival at Acacio, a pueblo of about 300 inhabitants and surrounded by mountains, fields, and farms, we walked for about a mile to the church, where we would be staying for the next two nights. The cool thing about this particular trek was that Amber carried a live chicken upside down by his feet and our contact, Victor, was carrying the other 2 chickens (soon to be our next 3 meals). The chickens frantically flapped around for a few moments but quickly settled down for the rest of the ride, just dangling with their heads almost touching the ground. We thought it was hilarious, but for Victor it seemed like an everyday occurrence and he was a little confused by our reaction. Aaah, cultural differences.

Later on, Victor took us on a walk around the town and up the "cerro" (small, but VERY steep mountain) behind the church. After catching our breath from the ascent we were able to enjoy the amazing view of the valley across the way, the river flowing below, the Andes along the whole horizon, and the whole adorable town of Acacio. Victor's little boy and his friend were exploring the terrain and digging up and throwing rocks over the edge. Under one of the larger rocks they discovered a big black tarantula. Victor spit on the end of a stick and held it out in front of the large spider and he grabbed onto it and ate it. I guess tarantulas like saliva- you learn something new every day. I stayed a comfortable distance away from the spider and soon my attention went back to admiring the beauty of our surroundings. Then a flock of bright green parrots flew by- a bunch of parrots just flying around in the wild. It's fun to see those kinds of birds flying free- before I've only seen them in zoos or in cages.

After taking some pictures of the scenery, we made our way back down the "cerro" and in town had to wait at a cross way for a flock of sheep to pass by. There was a little lamb stumbling along on his way, and his protective mother warned us with an angry "BAAAAA!" (kind of more like grunting) to stay away from her baby. Two shepherdesses brought up the back of the train. Our last animal encounter of the day was with "burros"- or donkeys- but it wasn't just one encounter, more like a repeated-extended-whole-time-in-Acacio encounter. Almost everyone owns their own donkey here and they just walk the streets (sometimes on their own, they just KNOW where to go) with cargo strapped to them- not paying any attention to us or any other passerby. Many times, even with no donkey in sight, you could hear at first what sounded like a really loud baby cry, but then turned into the familiar "HEE-HAW!" They've got some powerful lungs, those donkeys.

So, what have I learned from all these animal encounters in the campo of Bolivia? I think it's cool how creative God is- He made all sorts of interesting and beautiful creatures- ALL of them unique. He put all that care and thought into the mountains, plants, and animals. How much more does he love and care for me- his own child? It's a baffling thought. I think it's awesome too that ALL of God's creation can praise him- He calls everything and everyone to praise him.

"For you created everything, And it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created."

Revelation 4:11

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!" Psalm 150:6

---

**Date:** 4/26/2004  
**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock  
**Journal Entry:**

April 26, 2004 Acacio, Bolivia

Rather than follow the winding road, we took a shortcut, right down the side of the cliff. After Sunday morning worship and a quick lunch, the team along with hosts and friends set off for the river. I stood in my flip flop sandals in disbelief of where my companions were headed. Slipping and sliding down the mountain I tread behind them trying not to land on my face. By the end of our almost half hour descent the path had leveled some, but my feet were sore, my legs tired, and my attitude less than pleasant. Upon seeing the mountain river paradise in front of me, much of that was forgotten. We waded and swam in the frigid pools of water for hours. In places the water was over my head, and every dozen feet the river fell over rocks creating small rapids and countless waterfalls of every shape and size. Towering above us on both sides, steep cliffs defined the shape of this lush valley, and incredibly smooth rock formations lined the sides of the bank. These rocks were as comfortable as lounge chairs, and at one point I lay down, stretched out, and gazed up at the sky in peace and reverence.

Climbing back up the mountain certainly was more tolerable given the treasure we had just enjoyed. We hurried back into the small village of Acacio, returned to the church, grabbed our instruments and puppets, and set up in the middle of (for lack of a better term) main street. Groups of people watched us from every direction, but never coming too close, always staying across the street or down the road or on top of a dump truck. Only for the puppet shows were small children unable to resist their curiosity. Although many people looked on as we shared the gospel, their distance from us was somewhat discouraging. But I trust in God's promise, that His word will accomplish its purpose and not return void (Isaiah 55:11).

As our days in South America draw to a close, God has drawn me into a deeper awareness of His presence. We repeat these truths over and over in our programs, that God is near, that He wants to be with us, and that we can do everything living in His presence. By God's grace and the working of the Holy Spirit I am living out these truths more and more, acknowledging His presence and love and company. I can't quite explain it. My awareness doesn't change the fact that God is, always was, and always will be right with me. But it does change my attitude and my heart. So when I'm descending a steep mountain, I'm descending it with God (and doing a little complaining to Him). And when I pull out the laundry and find pink khaki pants, I can hear with greater ease His voice of peace reminding me of all for which I have to be grateful. "I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. But us for me, it is good to be near God" (Psalm 73: 23, 28).  
Peace.



**Matthew Poock**

---

**Date:** 5/3/2004  
**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock  
**Journal Entry:**

May 3, 2004

I write this on our plane from Lima, Peru, to Atlanta, Georgia, sad to leave but very excited to come home. Our last week in South America has been a whirlwind of ministry, packing, goodbyes, and travel. On the 29th we celebrated my birthday, and my team went all out to surprise me: presents, decorations, and a party complete with friends and missionaries and UNO and a traditional Bolivian music group to sing to me. From Cochabamba we took a bus to La Paz and arrived to another surprise party: for our departure in general and again for my birthday. This time we ate chocolate cake, sang, and danced the night away at the home of our friends. Certainly this birthday was filled with more surprises than any other. In Bolivian fashion I felt loved and special (and at times, embarrassed). And how much more does God love us. "How great is the love the Father has lavished upon us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1). Incredible.

Early Saturday morning we flew from La Paz, Bolivia, to Lima and have spent the last day soaking up culture and doing some serious shopping. As our return to the U.S. has come closer, we as a



**Matthew Poock**

team have turned our hearts and our minds to prayer, reflecting over our journey and looking ahead to our return. We offer these prayers up to our faithful and loving God and invite you to join us.

Holy and Gracious God, You are good and mighty and loving toward all You have made. We give you praise and thanksgiving for the time we have spent in South America. Praises to You for Your work through and in us. All glory be to Your name. We thank You for safety and protection in our travels and in our days and for the tremendous health You have granted us. Thank You for opportunities to share Your gospel and love. Thank You for the lessons You are teaching each of us. We pray on behalf of all those people we have met, for the new friends we have made in Your name. Encourage them and lead them closer to You. Strengthen and equip missionaries and pastors in their service to You. Raise up leaders to build Your church and spread your fame. Bless the church in Peru and Bolivia with Your Holy Spirit. We offer up these last four months to You, Lord, trusting in Your power and love and faithfulness.

Dear Jesus, in our return to the states, grant us rest and sleep and renewal. Bless our time with family and friends. Give us words and opportunities to share about Your work in Peru and Bolivia. We pray similarly for the other teams, for New Dawn, Watermark-Denmark, Watermark-Germany, and Crossfire. Help us to learn about You, Your world, and ourselves as we readjust to U.S. culture. We pray this all in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Peace be with you.

---

**Date:** 5/4/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

HOME! Just wanted to let everyone know we are home, safe and sound one and all. Thank you for your prayers for our safety...more to come after our week off!



**Jennifer Jarvis**

---

**Date:** 5/11/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

May 11, 2004

Well, I can't help but feel that I am in college tonight as I write this. I am typing this journal on MY laptop while watching "That 70's Show." It's later at night than I want it to be, I am tired, and under pressure! To make it even more like college, Jen and I are staying in a host home where we are sleeping in bunk beds in the same room and there is a large desk across one entire wall; it is on this desk that the TV sits. I feel that if I look out the window I will see the rolling hills of green grass at Luther College!



**Amber Rislow**

The familiarity is a nice change, especially after being abroad for the last four months. It is good to be in the US again and to feel comfortable in my own culture. Today was our first day together after spending a week with our families after we returned to the country. When we gathered at Olive Garden last night to catch up, I couldn't help but smile as each person eagerly shared what had happened over break and the new news they had to share. At times it was strange to have new news to share because we had just spent every moment together for the previous four months! It felt like everything I had done was new news!

Overall, it's good to be back. I am thoroughly enjoying our host home, and just being in host homes again. I admit, I love the pink pieces of paper that Youth Encounter gives us to use when contacting churches before we go there, and I even love trying to get a hold of all those busy pastors! I enjoy checking our team's voicemail messages everyday, and delivering those messages to my

teammates. We even rode all together in the van today for the first time, and (you can quote me on this in three months) I liked it! It feels good to be around the familiar, and to do the familiar. I am thankful to be back and excited to get going again!

---

**Date:** 5/13/2004  
**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito  
**Journal Entry:**

May 13, 2004

Wow. Here we are back in the states. We have been working on processing our experiences in South America and preparing for our first return tour program tomorrow. The days here have been filled with a whole new set of difficulties for me because I have a number of things to think about. Not only am I trying to help the team choose the program, but also trying to figure out what I think about a lot of things. Future, return tour, my time in Peru and Bolivia... no big deal.

As much as the program has been weighing on my heart I have been grateful for the peace that the Lord has given me since yesterday. Three different sources reassured me that God would take care of the program, and I didn't have to worry. I heard the words from Matthew 6 twice where Jesus says not to worry about anything. Then I also heard that the most important thing to remember is that whatever we offer to God He will make perfect. Joseph says, "you meant it for evil, but God meant it for God." And we are meaning it for good, so God can definitely use that. For me it is important to remember that no matter what I do, whether it's program or plans for the rest of my life, God will make it perfect and use it to His glory.



**Sarah Twito**

---

**Date:** 5/15/2004  
**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman  
**Journal Entry:**

May 15, 2004

It's been a hectic and rather stressful week, but last night we made it through our first program back in the U.S. We've been busy preparing new english songs, new skits, a new puppet show and planning out which stories to share and which slides to use and how to portray our whole four-month experience in Peru and Bolivia in just 1 hour (it ended up being an hour and a half). We've also been working with a YE staff member to debrief our time in South America and kind of help our transition time back to team life in the U.S. I think we all breathed a sigh of relief after our last note was played or sung, and our first program had been completed and we made it through with not too many bumps and rough spots. It was fun being able to share some of our stories, how we'd been touched, and how much we learned from our travels out of the country. Since the songs were new and in English (it's now strange to not be singing and sharing all in Spanish), I thought extra hard about each word I was singing and was blessed by the message we were sharing. I'm excited to start up our travels again and share with many different churches and groups our experiences- what God's been doing in our hearts. He's so good, and I love sharing what He's done.



**Stephanie Kirkman**

---

**Date:** 5/18/2004  
**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel  
**Journal Entry:**

May 18, 2004

Welcome back to my little journal world. I know, it has been a long time. I had planned to write one last one while in Bolivia, but the hurried pace of our last couple days got

the better of me. So, I figured I'd give it to you after a brief update on how we're doing. The past week has been really crazy for us. It is kinda difficult to put together a completely new program (about an hour and a half long) complete with new songs, skits, and puppet shows. It's even harder when you have about 4 days to polish it all and try to sum up 4 months of overseas experience in that short period of time. And we needed to learn how to incorporate all of our new instruments. That led to our crazy past week. We are now getting back in the rhythm of being on the road again, even though we have been to the office about 9 times in the past 4 days. Eventually it will all be habit again. We were at a great church last night and it was a refreshing evening. We worked with many different groups for short periods of time, got to provide background music for the dinner they had, and of course, sing songs with kids. Even got to speak some Spanish. Pretty cool.



**Deron Vaupel**

And now, the lost Bolivian journal:

Cleaning out the fridge can be a fun experience. Especially when you've been wanting some good grilled cheese for several months. It was quite an experience that late evening in Cochabamba, so I would like to present you with this recipe for a really sweet sandwich.

Ingredients:

1 Small onion, diced

White Cheese (not sure of type, it didn't have a label)

"American Cheese" (at least that's what the label said)

Butter

Wheat bread

Butter up the bread on both sides. Yep. Both sides. While doing this, sauté the onions, too. Soon you'll have a bunch of thoroughly buttered bread and some tasty onions. Throw some bread in the frying pan, and when one side is browned, flip the bread and put on the cheeses and onions. The part that is browned is the inside of your sandwich. Put the browned sides together and cook until the outside is browned. Just like with grilled cheese because that's what it is. Make several sandwiches, gather some friends, and enjoy. Makes a really good snack after a full day of programming. Yummy.

---

**Date:** 5/20/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

May 20, 2004

This one time, I had to write a journal and I didn't know what to write about...it was today. So this will be "Journal of Jennifer's Random thoughts," I hope you enjoy them.

A#1: HAPPY BIRTHDAY AMBER!!!! That's right, today was Amber's birthday so we filled the trailer with balloons and her belly with Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. There were lots of surprises for the birthday girl throughout the day and I believe she enjoyed it all, based on the grin she sported all day. And if you know Amber's smile, then you know she manages to brighten the world with those pearly whites.

I also got to experience the joy of new host homes and old host homes this week. Last night we stayed with an old host home. Amber and I got to stay with a family who we met in December. It was great to catch up with them and to see how much their boys have grown in just 5 months. It was fun to know where things were and to be welcomed back. Tonight Steph and I stayed in a new host home. They were so excited to have us and our host dad was really interested in what we were doing because they never even saw us do a program—but they took us in anyway, it never ceases to amaze me when that happens.

Other random thoughts: I love popcorn and pickles! I miss speaking Spanish. Kids are funny. I like playing the bass—I know, I know, it is shocking but true. I'm glad people speak English and sad



**Jennifer Jarvis**



people don't speak Spanish. I really like cheese and crackers. I love rainy days. I miss the heat of Tennessee. I don't miss the pollen. I love my family and my team. I don't love forgetting my rari in the van. Hugs rock my world.

Hey Amber, IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY!

---

**Date:** 5/22/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

May 22, 2004

After sharing our first few programs in the metro area, yesterday we departed from the Twin Cities and officially hit the road. I am excited to begin this final leg of our year-long adventure. Many people have been inquiring about my plans for next fall, helping me realize that I'm not yet ready to be back at school. (I'll begin studies at Luther Seminary in St. Paul this September.) I'm thankful to be where I am and doing what I'm doing. God has three months to prepare my heart and mind for seminary, and I am confident that God will do this. As for now, I plan to make the most of these next few months, living for each day and enjoying this community and calling.

Thus far our tour has brought us to many familiar places and faces. The last few nights, and again tonight, I have had the pleasure of staying with families that hosted me on our previous travels. What a blessing it is in this kind of lifestyle to know where your bed is, how the shower works, and what to do with your dirty dishes. I have even remembered the names of some of the youth I got to know last fall and have enjoyed re-connecting with them. Praise God for these opportunities to continue to encourage families and to build relationships in the name of Christ.

Today we returned to the community of Lewiston, MN. Let me tell you, this small town has been in almost as much anticipation for our visit as the churches in South America. They certainly know how to make us feel special and appreciated. The local newspaper, as well as papers in four surrounding communities, announced our arrival. The cable access channel has been displaying our team photographs and biographies for the past month. Signs on Main Street and in front of the church publicize our programs and events for the weekend. And to top it off, the local grocery store has been placing fliers about Kindred in the grocery bags. Not one soul in this town has any excuse not to know about our events for the weekend. Thanks, Lewiston; what a welcome! May you serve as an example for me as to the kind of joy and enthusiasm I want to have for life, and for the church as to the kind of excitement we should have for Christ.

Peace.



**Matthew Poock**

---

**Date:** 5/25/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

May 25 2004

My day at the doctor's office. Today Kindred went to the doctor's office for return-to-the-country physicals. For those of you who know me, you know that this is not one of my favorite things to do, especially when it involves being poked. For some reason, my vivid imagination runs wild and I can just picture the needle going into my skin (sick!) even if the nurse is 20 feet away with no needle in sight.

Today I knew we had to get a TB test which involves them putting a needle right under your skin and injecting something or other which in 48-72 hours will magically tell them if you have tuberculosis. Well, even though the doctor was checking my heartbeat at the time, I started imagining the TB test process and became faint. My vision became smaller and smaller and the room was turning black so I decided that it might be a good time to lie down. You don't need to reread this paragraph, I did in fact just relay that as I was getting my heartbeat checked, I almost fainted. Can you believe it?



**Amber Rislow**

After this small episode, the doctor decided that maybe it would be okay if I just stayed in the room to have my blood drawn and get shots. They even said it would be okay if I wanted to lie down. I took her up on both of these options! As the wonderful nurse I had talked with me about everything in the world EXCEPT shots, I became more relaxed. I found it most helpful if I talked a lot so I wouldn't have to hear any sounds that might go with getting poked. I told her a lot of stories about Peru and Bolivia as well as my family and friends. It wasn't that I had a lot of time to talk so much as I just talked really fast so as to fill every second with a new memory to keep my mind off of what was happening to me.

For some reason, I don't like the thought of the liquid in shots entering my body. The way I figure, God put everything in my body for a reason, so what are these people doing putting more stuff in there? I don't want other things floating around in my body! Gross!

By God's good grace I made it through and got a juice box afterward. As I reflect on this tough time at the doctor's it makes me think of the tough times in our lives. A visit to the doctor was good because now I can get medicine if I am not healthy. It wasn't pleasant to go through, but it is for my own good that I am getting poked and examined. In our faith lives we have to travel through some tough times but it is for good; I know this full well. Sometimes when we are in the midst of tough times it seems overwhelming, but when we have walked through and look back we are able to see the benefit of the tough times...and I have a Tazmanian Devil band-aid to prove it.

---

**Date:** 5/27/2004  
**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito  
**Journal Entry:**

May 27, 2004

The past couple days we've been in my home area. I say area because the Waverly/Waterloo/Cedar Falls metroplex is quite the area. Matt is from Waverly, IA, and I am from Cedar Falls, IA (20 miles south). Both of our churches have graciously welcomed us into the area. We've even had some nursing homes and schools appear on the schedule. We had a wonderful time sharing our stories yesterday in Waverly. What an honor to know that so many people have been thinking and praying for us.



**Sarah Twito**

For me it is kind of weird to be home, especially since I was just here May 3-10. Life goes on in my crazy/awesome family. They are happy to have me home, but it is strange to be here. It seems to me that my team life exists on one planet and my home life on another. This fall I will most likely return to my home life for a time, and that transition will have its own challenges and learning opportunities.

I am grateful for God's presence in every transition we have throughout the year. Right now we transition to the U.S.-on-the-road-ness. Weird sometimes. This journey continues to teach me. I just pray that I will learn.

---

**Date:** 5/29/2004  
**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman  
**Journal Entry:**

May 29, 2004

We were in Amber's home town, then Matt's, and now in Sarah's. Their family and friends have provided many opportunities to sing and share with all ages about the love of Christ and what we learned and experienced while we were in Peru and Bolivia. Nursing homes, end-of-the-year chapels at schools, music for Sunday services, a puppet workshop, and of course family night programs complete with games beforehand and big potlucks. Yeah, we're back into the groove of things on our return tour;



**Stephanie Kirkman**

getting used to singing and presenting and relating in English.

Sometimes, when we're sharing a story or presenting our slides from South America, I'm taken back to a specific time and place there, and I really miss it. I miss speaking Spanish and hearing lots of different languages. I miss the kisses on the cheek and hugs. I miss crowded public transportation, bumpy dirt roads, and awkward cultural moments. I miss ladies with long black braids and their babies on their backs. I miss the suggested starting times for programs and extended hanging out time afterwards. And I miss their amazement at the strange creatures called puppets. I miss the Andes Mountains and getting out of breath from singing just one line of a sing-a-long.

Who know I liked all those things so much? I'm realizing how precious to me our time in Peru and Bolivia was. It makes me smile remembering what we experienced. I feel like my heart is bigger... It's hard to explain, but there's just something in me now that I love so much and it wasn't there before. I treasure it. I'm so thankful for the time we got to spend with the people in South America, and now for the opportunity we have to hang out and share some of those recollections and special moments with the people here in the U.S.

---

**Date:** 6/1/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

6-1-04

Hmm.....where to begin and what to remember. It was a day full of things to do and at times they all run one into the next. Chapel service at a local high school, couple songs for a fundraising dinner, first real drive of return tour, and the chance to share hope with those who are longing for that message. The organization's name is Youth Encounter, but I am glad that the name does not limit our bookings. We arrived in Sergeant Bluff, Iowa, a day early and our contact lined us up to visit a rehabilitation center. We have had the chance to visit several rehab centers and nursing homes in the past couple weeks, and every time it is a special experience. Sometimes it is difficult for me to communicate for one reason or another, other times it is a challenge to feel adequate for ministering with the individuals we meet. But God continues to provide the opportunities for us to share His love with people. I met a man who was so anxious for the day he would be able to go home and try to reach out more to his kids and my only response to his discouragement was to remind him that God can work in amazing ways. Some days that feels like such a casual response, others the words have real power, but God can always use them. It was an encouraging time spent with the people there, and for me it was a much needed time of refreshment after my own difficulties in previous similar opportunities.



**Deron Vaupel**

---

**Date:** 6/3/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

June 3, 2004

Well, first of all, I just want to tell you that you should always know what state you are going to. Sometimes it is tricky...Kansas City...Missouri?...Kansas?...Which one are we going to again?

Tonight we had the opportunity to do a bilingual program. This is honestly my favorite part of being on Kindred. We can do both! It isn't exactly the easiest thing (though it sure is a lot easier after four months in South America) but it is fun. I think, for me, it is a tangible example of what we have been doing the last four months. We are trying to bridge gaps to help unite people. "You speak English? Oh, me too, isn't that fun!"...or... "Oh, you speak Spanish? Me too, isn't that fun?" I don't think I have had that exact conversation but that is usually what I'm thinking (yes, I know it is nerdy). I just get a huge kick out of being able to speak with people in two different languages. It makes me think of God listening to prayers in every language and knowing them all. They might be different languages but they are united by hearts that love the Lord.



**Jennifer Jarvis**

---

**Date:** 6/5/2004  
**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock  
**Journal Entry:**



**Matthew Poock**

June 5, 2004

Although our drive from Wichita to Dallas was lengthy (six hours), the time passed easily as I read, slept, watched a movie, and finished out the driving into the city. The van serves somewhat as a home, a refuge from activity, and I have come to appreciate the community and personal time it provides. Sometimes the laptops and cell phones seem a bit extravagant to me, especially after returning from South America. But they do allow us to take care of some items of business and help provide those extra comforts that make daily travel more bearable.

Each congregation we visit is unique and blesses us in a different way, and I have enjoyed seeing the variety of gifts in the body of Christ. This afternoon we arrived at Hope Lutheran Church in Corinth, our first stop in the metro area. In the evening the church organized a barbecue and pool party with host families, friends, and youth. I swam and played games with many of the youth and had some great conversations with high school and college students. Our hosts were gracious, as always, and enormously generous. From meals and snacks to hygiene products to state flag and flower seeds, the abundance of their provision is evident all over the van. This church community truly is "small, but mighty," active in missions support, fervent in prayer, and filled with the Holy Spirit.

My heart was encouraged by the time I spent with them in fellowship and worship. I couldn't help but think how I didn't deserve their goodness and kindness. What did we do to earn their generosity? Why should they shower us with so much love? We can ask that same question of God: why should God love us so much to die for us? We certainly don't deserve the love that God pours out for us. Paul reminds us in his letter to the Romans that "we were God's enemies" (5:10), "but God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (5:8).

---

**Date:** 6/8/2004  
**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow  
**Journal Entry:**



**Amber Rislow**

6-8-04

Yesterday I learned the three most important rules in T-ball: You can run to field a ball even if one of your teammates hit it and you are supposed to be running from third base to home base, the kid who picked the longest piece of grass while in the outfield is the coolest, and while there are offensive players and defensive players the most popular position is the "roamer."

My 3-year-old host brother fell into the roamer category. While he did have some good hits and good base-running, a lot of the time he was going back and forth between the bench and Dad which were on opposite sides of the field. I delighted in him and his teammates so much. It was the cutest thing to watch these little tikes (ages 3-5) and how little they really understood.

I am just like them in my life. God has set me in the game, but I get distracted by trying to pick the biggest piece of grass or looking at the flowers in the outfield. I need people to steer me in the right direction, oftentimes again and again before I get it right. Sometimes in my wandering I knowingly walk into danger (like passing directly in front of the batter while she is swinging) but somehow God protects me. There are days when I know that I am supposed to be running, but I am not sure in which direction or even whose team I am on. In my confusion, though, God is there. He puts people in my life to encourage me, and delights in my efforts no matter how off-base they are.

---

**Date:** 6/10/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito  
**Journal Entry:**

June 10, 2004

Have you ever just looked around at the craziness that you are in the middle of and shake your head? Have you ever wondered what happened in the last hour and a half of your life? Well, we had quite the program last evening. We have decided to experiment with the new possibilities the LCD projector offers us in visual effects of our program. We have the option now to use power points with words and/or pictures. Ah, technology. It quickly became the bane of my existence as I had to juggle LCD, computer and slide projector. You can imagine what frustrating problems I may have encountered. Most of the program I was trying to get this new option to work properly. Back and forth between singing in front and clicking through power point slides.



**Sarah Twito**

After the program several people complimented the team on the blessing we had been to the youth group. What? I felt as though I had been running around the whole program, and that it was a disaster. I couldn't get past my own critical view of the evening until I was reminded with whom the importance lays. We don't do our programs to show how fancy our computer is. We don't do our program to show off what amazing singers we are. We do our programs to encourage churches, and in this case youth, in their faith and to turn their eyes to God.

The program itself was a testimony to how God works. We stopped at this church in the fall for a housing only and asked if they had any prayer requests. The church had a desire to start a youth group. What a blessing to see the prayers that we had prayed for eight months answered in this vibrant group that was only a month old. God has so much for that group and it is exciting to see God's hand as we return to some churches and share again with them.

So... amazingly enough God works through us and despite us. My eyes need to focus on Jesus and His work because my glory is not the reason. Perfection doesn't show up on the requirement list. God takes what I offer and does amazing things. Cool.

---

**Date:** 6/12/2004  
**Submitted by:** Stephanie Kirkman  
**Journal Entry:**

Saturday, June 12

Yesterday we traveled across the southern border of the U.S. into Juarez, México. When we first found out that we might be going to México my heart jumped and I couldn't help doing a happy dance. It was awesome to hear more Spanish spoken and to see it written on all the signs and just to be in a Latin American country again.



**Stephanie Kirkman**

So, in the morning our contacts in El Paso, Texas drove us to Juarez in their van along with a couple of youth from their Mariachi band and some other mission workers and we spent the whole day there. Our first stop was at a jail and we happened to come on the day when friends and family came to visit and bring food and gifts and things to their loved ones. After being searched, we walked through a courtyard area where lots of people were talking and looking very happy to be together. We were escorted to the chapel area where there were several men on their knees, praying earnestly. We set up our things, and as the time for the service neared, more and more men came in and filled up the seats. A worship band started off the service with 3 songs and there was incredible life and energy in that room. Everyone there was so excited and joyful and jumping around clapping and singing. We got up and sang and shared and did puppets in Spanish and they LOVED it: sang along, clapped, danced, shouted "AMEN!" every once in a while, and they thought the puppets were hilarious. And throughout the whole service, there were always at least four men, taking turns being on their knees praying.

I'm inspired by these men; by their joy and life and passion for God. I left that jail wanting to know God more, to love Him more. At first, I was intimidated at the thought of sharing in a jail, and a



little scared. I wish I hadn't been, and I'm ashamed to say I was. I feel like I was too quick to judge. But I'm so thankful God brought us there and that He stretches us, proves His faithfulness, and reveals His character to us more every day. I'm so glad He looks inside us, at our hearts and not at what the world sees. He sees each one of us as His precious child, forgiven and beloved. I want to love like God loves and look at people and see them in His eyes.

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" -Romans 3:23

"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" - Romans 5:8

---

**Date:** 6/15/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

6-15-04

Well, let me tell you about Nogales. Just a small community with a big wall. Actually, it's two cities: Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Mexico. They look like one big town, but there's just a wall between the two. We arrived Monday night and got to meet our contacts who have been missionaries there for about 42 years. Quite a wise and learned couple. Our plan was to take some time Tuesday and visit some of the mission sites on the Mexico side, then get back with plenty of time to prepare for our program at the church on the US side. There was a phone call early Tuesday morning that a couple members of the church had been in an auto accident and they were in the hospital. So, the first priority of the pastor was to visit those who were in the accident. It was hard to find parking at the first hospital, so we got to sit in the double-parked van while pastor went in to check on the first man. He needed some medical attention, but seemed somewhat ok despite some broken bones and a face that needed some stitches. At the other hospital we had the chance to go in, but the other man was getting some x-rays at the time. Pastor talked with the family some and we went back to the van. We soon found out that because of the accident, many people were going to be unable to attend the program that evening. 7PM came around, and we got to share with about 16 people that evening, but the program took a back seat to the other events of the day. About 20 other people who wanted to come did not because of their close relationships with those involved in the accident. The program was a fun time to share with people, but it was so much better to be able to be flexible enough to spend time with families who needed some support at the time. I want to continue learning to be that flexible and to recognize how to meet people where they are at.



**Deron Vaupel**

---

**Date:** 6/17/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

June 17, 2004

Actually, I need to start with yesterday...so ignore that date for right now.

June 16, 2004

Yuma. The word used to bring dread to my heart as the last time we were in Yuma, AZ, it was 119° by the bank's scrolling time and temperature when we pulled into town. Though as Sarah pointed out, "After 105°, it all feels the same." However, Yuma's redemption is the people, there are just fabulous people there! So we pull into town (only 105 on that bank sign today) and go to the church where we are greeted like old friends. We weren't doing a program at the church as most people don't live in Yuma in the summer time (all the "snow birds" had flocked home) so the church arranged for us to play an outdoor program at a mission. It was a Kindred first, we did the program in shorts and t-shirts...but when it is that warm, Matt's woolen poncho from Bolivia hardly seems appropriate. Despite the heat, it was a really cool program. Most of the



**Jennifer Jarvis**

audience were adult men in their 30s to 50s. They were really receptive though and they really got into the sing-alongs, it was really fun.

Okay, now back to the original date. We got to CA today. That was most of the day—well, the driving here. We did get to go hang out at the Santa Monica pier and that was pretty sweet. But during all that van time, I had a lot of time to sit and think and to read. I am actually working on 2 books right now, *Hinds Feet in High Places* and *Stupid White Men*. *Hinds Feet* is an allegory about following Jesus and *Stupid White Men* is more or less political commentary (pretty funny, by the way). Now, at first glance, these books don't really have anything in common, but today, during all that thinking time, I realized that they do. Both are about feeling discontent with how things are in life...knowing that there is more out there. The difference comes in that *Hinds Feet* takes that discontentment, that longing for more, and follows Christ. While the other is still raving about how unfair things are in the world. Now things don't become magically perfect for little Much-Afraid when she starts following the Shepherd, but she has to overcome struggles before she is ready to go to the High Places. Those struggles make us stronger. Yes, the world is unfair, people lie and hurt you but your hope is in Christ Jesus. He is Love. Fighting against the world isn't going to bring you contentment, it will likely just give you an ulcer. Changing political policies, while important, valuable, and in many cases necessary, isn't going to give you all the things your heart longs for—there is only one who can give you that. And he is waiting for you, because you are his beloved. "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." (Luke 20:25) Your heart belongs to God.

---

**Date:** 6/19/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

June 19, 2004

Our time at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Los Angeles brought back many fond memories of our time in South America. Last night we shared a program outdoors in the church courtyard. The weather was mild and accommodating. The atmosphere was comfortable and casual, with children running around us and people chatting as they finished eating supper. Everyone, men and women, children and seniors, sang along and joined in with clapping and dancing. Many of those who joined us spoke Spanish, giving us the opportunity to sing and speak in our second language. Accurately guessing that they would especially enjoy puppets, we added an extra special appearance. To complete the nostalgia, we even started later than what was scheduled. I was further encouraged to see the diversity among the people that gathered for the event, reflecting both the neighborhood and the mission focus of the congregation.

This morning two Salvadoran women from the church prepared a large breakfast for us, including tamales, refried beans, bagels, fried bananas, pastry, and orange juice. More than we could ever eat was served with the expectation that we would eat it all. Several individuals who frequent the free community meals that the church provides during the week passed by the courtyard and were enthusiastically invited to join the meal. After we finished eating, we sat and enjoyed each other's company. No rush, no hurry. Soon the pastor brought out a guitar and led us in praise songs in Spanish, many familiar to us. What a sweet couple days we enjoyed! I can't quite pinpoint all the distinctions and differences, but I know that I really enjoy the culture of Latin America. God showered the rest of my day with unexpected blessings as well. The team traveled to Whittier and spent the evening with spirited families and young adults. I enjoyed stimulating and encouraging conversation with two young church leaders, one ordained and one in higher education. We spent hours in a backyard swimming pool, jumping off the diving boards and throwing young kids in the air. Later, I demonstrated my lack of skill on the pool table. And I have a big fluffy bed to fall into momentarily. Ahhh.

I have struggled lately with striving too hard for perfection in our ministry. For some reason I want every detail to fall into the exact "right" place. Or, more accurately, the place I plan for it to fall into. My heart is in the right place, to faithfully labor for the Lord, but my trust is not. I errantly place that trust in myself and my own abilities. God does call us to be faithful, but not perfect, and to offer Him our five loaves and two fish and allow Him to multiply and grow His kingdom. "Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work



**Matthew Poock**

within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!" (Ephesians 3:20). Peace.

---

**Date:** 6/22/2004

**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow

**Journal Entry:**

6-22-04

Waiting. Why do we have to wait so much in this world? Coming back from visiting my sister yesterday, I waited in the plane on the runway for 15 minutes, just sitting in the plane until we could take off. Today we waited in traffic, stopping sometimes abruptly. I am waiting to hear about a job interview, I am waiting to know whether or not to apply for new jobs. I am waiting for a grand word from God to tell me where to be after team, and I am waiting for the perfect man God has for me to come and sweep me off my feet. I am waiting to know God's great purpose for my life, and waiting for the week when I will run every single day and not just roll over in bed instead. I am waiting for a full night of sleep, and waiting for the day when the van doesn't smell anymore. All this waiting...what a waiting place.

Sometimes the waiting is for a short time, like five minutes until traffic begins while other times the waiting is indefinite. I think God is encouraging me to trust in Him more. There are many unknowns in my life right now, but God knows, and He wants me to believe in His good intentions for my life. Waiting causes the "waiter" to surrender to the conditions around him/her, and I believe this is what God is calling me to do. God, You know what's best for me, and I ask for the courage to trust as I once again give you the unknowns of my life. Amen.



**Amber Rislow**

---

**Date:** 6/24/2004

**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito

**Journal Entry:**

June 24, 2004

We have been chillin' like villains in Los Angeles for a couple weeks or so... I am really not sure how long it's been... I lose track. I think of many different moments in that time to write about, but one woman had a profound impact on me.

For those reading who are teamers or alumni you will understand this journal better than most. We have been staying with people we've stayed with before and new people this summer, and each and every one has done their best to make our time enjoyable. Earlier this week the girls split up between the home of a lady we met and the home of a lady on a naval base that we hadn't met. I opted for the naval base, though not sure what to expect, and our contact drove me to meet my host mom.

In meeting my host mom I discovered that she was on team a number of years ago. She and I sat up late and talked both nights that I had the pleasure of staying with her. She made me feel so comfortable. We talked about many things, and I can compare it to staying with a relative. The second night she commented what a deep discussion we were having. I think for me it was just fun to connect with someone on the road in that way. What a wonderful lady.

As I reflect on having a month and a half left on the road I can honestly say that it has been incredible to meet the people we have encountered. Each has impacted me in a unique way, and I am grateful to each one. Not everyone has the opportunity to do what we do, and I hope I don't take it for granted as we continue through the southwest. Life on team goes faster than I imagined, except for the times that I thought it would never end.

In ending thanks to all of you who have said those words of wisdom that I needed to hear at just the right time: hosts, friends, fellow teamers, alumni and my family. God has used each one to



**Sarah Twito**

Speak to me and teach me throughout this year. Thanks for being willing to be a vessel for the hand of the Lord to work in my life.

---

**Date:** 6/29/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

6-29-04

My alarm sounds at 3:54AM, but that's ok because I'm already awake. Yeah, I was surprised, too. I crawl out of bed and take a quick shower. I am greeted by the sound of other alarm clocks as I exit the bathroom. The 6 of us are sleeping in a studio apartment in downtown LA. I step over Sarah as she rolls around to try and avoid the reality of waking up at 4AM on our day off. Why are we doing this? That's right. The only thing in LA worth getting up that early for. The Price is Right.



**Deron Vaupel**

We have no tickets. Just time, so we're chancing it and showing up to sit on the sidewalk with several hundred other people. Only thing is, they have tickets. As we walk to the end of the line, Stephanie starts asking if anybody has any tickets. That results in one admission to the 4:30 taping. After we sit down, some guy asks if we were the ones checking for tickets. Yep. He's got 5 extras for the 4:30 taping. Now we have tickets.

This all happens at 4:30 in the morning. Only 12 hours to wait, and we're not even guaranteed admission. 5:15, Matt and Jennifer show up after parking the van. We had made some phone calls because it was still considered "night" by the cell phone companies, so they were free. The line starts moving just before 6. We get in and get a number for our position in line. Right around 150. We then have to line up by number and around 7AM start the process of getting our admission number for our showing. By 7:30ish we have numbers 38-43 and are feeling pretty good about our chances of getting in. We need to be back by noon.

We get back with plenty of time to spare. Noon comes around, about 12:30 we start getting instructions for what to do next. Get in line again by numerical order. By this time we had gotten to know numbers 44 and 45. A Canadian couple on their honeymoon. Lots of fun. We get lots of instructions about the rules for being a contestant and all that stuff, and about 1:30 we start talking to the producers. Everybody who goes into the audience actually goes through a quick interview with the producers to see if you are interesting enough to be a contestant. It's not totally random. Only those who stand out a little will get called. Have to keep it interesting.

So we're in. Go through the metal detector, then wait for just over an hour. By now we've been awake for almost 12 hours and are running on about 5 hours of sleep. We file into the studio about 4PM (it's actually a lot smaller than it seems) and get our seats really close to the front. We got lots of camera time. Look for Matt's name tag a lot. The announcer comes out to warm up the crowd, but we really just want to get started. They give us the instructions to "not hurt Bob" if we get on stage because he's getting kinda old and is retiring soon. Don't want to break the man.

The show starts with the customary calling of names. The first 4 are already picked out and have their names written on cards so they can see their names written out in case the screaming is too loud to hear their names called. The third name called just happened to be a familiar one. Sarah has the cards with her name written on it stored in the trailer. We all were a little shocked as she ran to the front. A couple bad bids, a good joke cracked by Bob Barker and Sarah's expense (during a commercial break, though), one good bid, and she's up on stage and the proud new owner of a chest of drawers. She's playing a game ironically called "Side by Side" (it's a Youth Encounter summer missions project.....check it out). And has a 50/50 chance of winning a grand piano. We thought our trailer was cramped before.....now there's no room whatsoever. Not really. They didn't give it to us on the spot, but they will deliver her prizes at some point after she proves who she really is. Quite an exciting time for all us on the Kindred crew. One of our own winning a chest of drawers and a grand piano all in the same day. I hope I didn't spoil her chance of telling you all, but it is my journal day. Sorry Sarah.

Out for dinner afterwards and a good chance to wind down. It's been a long day, we got back to our

studio apartment at about 11ish and we all promptly fell into our beds. Or sleeping bags. Rides with strangers, sleeping on sidewalks, huge prizes.....quite a day.

Tuesday was not quite as eventful, but I have to tell you the highlight since that is within the jurisdiction of my journal as well. We got together to pray before our program, and some guy sitting in the sanctuary saw us circle up and shouted out "are you guys playing football?" We shouted out some play calls to humor him and gave a nice loud "Amen" break call when we were done. Fun, but not as fun as the autographed Bob Barker picture that's hanging in our van now.

---

**Date:** 7/1/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

July 1, 2004

We are at camp. For my four teammates who were camp counselors in their former lives (you know, the ones they had before team), it is a bunch of camp memories and they are kind of walking around with these nostalgic grins on their faces. It is great to see them so happy and to be able to see a glimpse of the past there. For Deron and I, who were never camp counselors, it is a little different. It is still pretty sweet though, hanging out with this super-cool staff and a bunch of fun kids too.



**Jennifer Jarvis**

Now, I must admit, I have never been a "camp girl." I mean, I did my weekend retreats and that was cool but I always wondered how people lived there for a whole summer. It was completely beyond me that living at camp for 2 months would be "fun." I have to admit, when I found out we were spending 3 nights at a camp, I wasn't too excited. However, somewhere along the way, I learned to be a "camp girl." (I think it might have something to do with 4 months in South America?) I didn't even know it had happened until I had a really good time. It was such a refreshing time for us here. We were blessed to have plenty of free time which we all used in various ways. We also had time to hang out with the staff. They are a neat group of people and it was great to see the community they have there.

I can't believe what a great time I have had here. I think that God changed me and I didn't even know it was happening...that's pretty sweet. It is like a plot twist in the middle of a movie. It makes me look twice and then think, "So, what am I being prepared for?" Well, I don't know what I am being prepared for...time will tell. All I can do is trust and be willing to let the Lord do His work in my life.

"The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power...and you will be changed into a new person." 1 Samuel 10:6

---

**Date:** 7/3/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

July 3, 2004

Mt. Cross Bible Camp is located in the Santa Cruz Mountains only minutes from the Pacific Ocean just south of the San Francisco Bay area. The sight of the enormous Redwood trees that line the hillsides is magnificent, and the smell of nature and creation is almost intoxicating. On the first evening, after a tour of the site and supper, we shared a program with the campers, sang songs together, and told a few stories of our time in Peru and Bolivia. The boys' cabins invited me on a hiking and camping trip, so I joined them for the night, sleeping next to campers up on the hill in the dirt. I loved it. Several counselors and I stayed up late talking and encouraging each other. Over the next couple days I participated in camp life, joining in with games, songs, and activities. I felt like a camp counselor again. Yesterday, after the campers had gone home, we shared a time of prayer and praise with the staff. Understanding the strains of camp



**Matthew Poock**



counseling, we offered up a time to come before God, sing His praises, and receive His love and goodness. This morning I went on one last hike with a counselor from Illinois named Carl. He and I enjoyed nature and good conversation as we marched passed the California Redwoods, up hills, and passed streams. I praise God for the ministry of Mt. Cross, for bringing us there, and for the friendships we built with campers and staff.

While camp was refreshing in many ways, my soul began to long for home – for family, friends, and especially my camp back in Iowa. Nostalgia often swept over me, and I was reluctant to leave. I wanted to transport back in time to my summers on Lake Okoboji with my old staff friends. My heart is conflicted, glad to be here in California with my team, but weary from daily strains. Through these struggles, I delight that God is growing my character, teaching me to persevere, and leading me to greater trust and dependence. "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18). Peace.

---

**Date:** 7/15/2004

**Submitted by:** Jennifer Jarvis

**Journal Entry:**

*July 15, 2004*

*So this week we are the band for a Vacation Bible School in California. It is something new for us, as an international team, we don't really do very many VBSs. Let me just say, this rules! We hang out with the kids all morning, singing and playing games and then we hang out with our super-cool host families all afternoon and maybe do some youth group stuff in the evening. The coolest part of the week is that we are plugged-in. That's right, Kindred has gone electric. (We took some pictures to prove it too.) Matt has even become the designated drummer for the week. He has been doing a great job playing kit—he even has a Brittany Spears mic. Deron rocks out on guitar and we have all been singing into mics—a huge deal for Amber and I. We have all been enjoying the whole experience and if seeing 230 screaming, jumping kids doesn't make you smile, I don't know what will. I think that at first, we were a little nervous. Since, we have been set up as an acoustic team, so we don't really even know how to be electric. However, with some help from our wonderful "sound tech," for the week, we have been doing pretty well. It has been an adventure for us. We have also been leading games for the different classes. I love them all but I think the littlest kids are my favorite. It reminds me of being a preschool teacher and I find myself saying things like, "1-2-3, eyes on me!" and "Let me see your listening ears," all week long. It has been fun to remember those days and how much I loved those kids.*



**Jennifer Jarvis**

*I think that getting to know the kids and the host families a little more than I would normally get to has been the best part of the week for me. We get to spend a whole week with our host families! Steph and I have had a blast playing Pictionary with our host siblings almost daily. It has been such a blessing for me to spend time with these people. I think that my favorite thing about this year is that while we are trying to minister to the people we meet, we are often ministered to by them. To spend the time and to get to know each other, to hang out, to just be together as brothers and sisters, is such a blessing. That fellowship of knowing that we all love and praise the same God, what a great connection.*

---

**Date:** 7/17/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Pock

**Journal Entry:**

*July 17, 2004*

Saying good-bye really never gets easier. The longer we stay in one place the more difficult it is to do. One minute we're strangers, the next minute we're family. After an exciting, fun-filled week of Vacation Bible School in Santa Clarita, about 20 of



**Matthew Pock**

our new friends and family gathered to wish us farewell this morning. And what a great week we had: hundreds of kids each day, gracious hosts, welcoming and energetic youth, delicious food, pool parties, water fights, amplification (I played the drum set!), and even sno-cones. The congregation and host coordinators were so grateful for us and so eager to care for all our needs. They didn't send us on the road empty handed, either. We're nearly outfitted for a camping trip. Throughout this year I've really come to love and appreciate the family of God. Despite our differences and disagreements, God's family extends all across the nations and all around the world. The apostle Paul often reminds us that we are called to love and serve each other because "in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Romans 12:5).

Just in time for supper we pulled into Las Vegas, NV. The youth group and host families all congregated at the pastors' residence for a BBQ and pool party. This type of event has become so popular in recent months that I'm beginning to anticipate it at every church we visit. I always enjoy these times of fellowship, and tonight was no exception. While pool parties and BBQ's might be expected in a typical week, a night on the "strip" in Vegas is a little more out of the ordinary. That's right, we went gambling with our hosts and doubled our money. Risking only \$1.25 we came out with a whopping \$2.50! I especially enjoyed the choreographed water show in front of the Bellagio. However, all the lights and casinos and people made my head spin. In one way it was exciting to be there, but in many other ways I couldn't help but be saddened by the extravagance and recklessness of it all. The highlight of my evening was randomly running into an old high school friend on vacation from Minnesota. What are the odds! God is good. Peace.

---

**Date:** 7/18/2004  
**Submitted by:** Sarah Twito  
**Journal Entry:**

July 18, 2004

On the side of the road in western Arizona

(This journal was started by me, but it was a team effort.)



**Sarah Twito**

Man, it's hot. I think we could've picked up some water, but, hey, hindsight is 20-20.

So here we are in the middle of northwestern Arizona a.k.a. middle of the desert! We had some smoke coming out of our vents, so we figured we'd better pull over. Him... is it bad when there's no coolant left in the whole engine? (Yes, yes, it is.)

Funny moments of this adventure:

- Matt came back and said that we needed to chew some gum so we could get something out from behind the engine.
- A few people decided the situation was desperate. And we all know that desperate times call for desperate measures, (Jennifer had poster board and markers) so they made a sign that said "Got coolant? Water?" One person stopped.
- (*Jennifer*) This one time our van broke down and it was over 110°. It was hot.
- (*Amber*) I took some fun pictures of the rocky landscape around us as well as Deron working on the van. Then Sarah found a bee in her shirt!

All I keep thinking about is the fact that all of our water from our Nalgenes is in the engine right now.

By the way the tow truck is going to take 30 minutes to get here.

(Deron) There's a bunch of plants with little needles. I accidentally kicked a couple and got needles in my feet.

(Jennifer) I thought if we would have showed some more leg, more people would have stopped.

We found a pretty white bug. It looks like a white tick. Then there was a psycho dragonfly! AGH! Stephanie yelled on the office's voice mail because it landed on her foot.

(Amber) A nice man named Ken stopped to help us with his wife. You can say thank you prayers for Ken and his kindness to us.

Yay for cell phones!

Showtunes with Kindred!

Bored, bored, bored... what do you do in a broken down van for several hours? Oh, and by the way the way the tow truck is more like an hour in coming.

(Amber) I think that the coolest thing about today is reflecting on how we dealt with a tough situation. We could have gotten mad, or stressed out, but instead we laughed... a lot. We took silly pictures, made road signs, talked, called friends, ate candy and we even played "name that tune." I am thankful for my teammates attitudes in the hot desert afternoon, and especially their friendship. I wouldn't want to be stranded with anyone else!

---

**Date:** 7/21/2004  
**Submitted by:** Amber Rislow  
**Journal Entry:**

July 21, 2004

Two and a half weeks left and I can hardly fathom it. This year has been pretty incredible overall. I have grown immensely in my relational abilities and communication



skills. I have learned what I want to do in life, or more importantly, what I don't want to do. I have had the opportunity to see the beauty in the Southwestern United States as well as Peru and Bolivia, and I had the chance to get to know five people REALLY WELL. **Amber Rislow**

I feel sad thinking about leaving this rag-tag bunch. Only a few times in my life have I known somebody else as well as I know my teammates. I know when one of them is sad, or when one of them is frustrated. I know what makes them smile and laugh, and we manage to communicate often without words using merely gestures or looks. It blows me away that while I know them fairly well in some areas, there are still many untapped parts of their life.

What a privilege to get to know somebody else this well over the course of 11.5 months. Reversing the situation, what a privilege it is to be known this well. While my teammates know when to give me a hug, and when to give me space, God knows even better. God knows when I need a flower to brighten my day, and when to use one of his creations to give me a hug. God knows what makes me tick more than my teammates know, or even more than I know. God knows the ins and outs of my entire being. Wow! I am pretty complex, and God knows it all; not only does God know me, but God knows each person this well. How great Thou art.

---

**Date:** 7/24/2004

**Submitted by:** Deron Vaupel

**Journal Entry:**

7-27-04

Got a quick story to start with. VBS, playing games with kids, playing a variation of duck, duck, goose that goes by the name drip, drip, splash. It involves a cup of water. Kinda fun. We're playing with the preschool – 1<sup>st</sup> grade group. One little boy was very insistent that it was always his turn. Stephanie, after her second time being splashed, asked him if he wanted to help her. So he agreed, then he told her that he didn't want help....instead he wanted to splash her. Steph said "But I've already been splashed twice." He replied "No you haven't" and he threw the cup of water on her. Quite hilarious. Little kids always surprise you like that.



**Deron Vaupel**

I think the best other thing I can write about is my anticipation for seeing growth this coming week. Last night was our first evening for VBS in the small town of Yuma, Colorado. I don't think I've ever been 55 miles away from the closest Wal-Mart before, but now I am. We started with the 45ish kids at about 6PM, and right away I noticed a couple that seemed "too cool for school." You remember those. The ones that won't sing or do actions or anything because they don't want to appear anything less than their coolest. Fortunately, our God has many more things to be concerned with than how "cool" we are, and that is the lesson I'm excited to see those kids learn this week. Actually, it's already been happening. We had a time of songs and games a little bit later with a smaller group, and with a little prodding, the kids started opening up a little more and by the end of the time, they were actually singing and doing some actions. Such an encouragement. 4 nights left and plenty more chances ahead to talk with those kids, find out more about them, and help them understand more about God. It's pretty cool to be able to stay in the same place for a week. It actually gives me a chance to learn some names. So if you could maybe say a quick prayer for those kids in Yuma. They're lots of fun.

---

**Date:** 7/31/2004

**Submitted by:** Matthew Poock

**Journal Entry:**

July 31, 2004



Last night we concluded our week of Vacation Bible School in Yuma, CO. The church was full with family and friends of the 50 children, pre-school through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, who attended each evening this week. This congregation has never hosted a Youth Encounter team before, and we could read the surprise and novelty on their faces. We sang several of the kids' favorite songs and then shared a brief program ourselves. Only afterward during conversation was I reassured of their gratitude and appreciation for our **Matthew Poock** contribution to the week and evening. The children had come home everyday excited and singing the brand new songs we taught them. I received thanks for the energy, enthusiasm, love, and joy we shared with the whole community. All glory to God for His work through us. I have enjoyed playing and singing with these kids; I know them all by name. Everyday I looked forward to spending our evenings together. Even with only two weeks left on the road with Kindred, I wouldn't rather be doing anything else.

Today we drove ten hours from Colorado, across Nebraska, to Sloan, Iowa. Nothing too exciting, just a big interstate and lots of flat land. It's beautiful, in a Nebraskan way. Despite the length of our drive we still had fun as a team playing games, listening to music, and hanging out. I know we're not able or called to continue much longer in this ministry, but that doesn't make it easier to think about saying good-bye to each other. We're a team; we know each other, really know each other. We've been through so much together. I can't keep going too much longer, but I also can't believe – don't want to think – that our year is almost over. I'm filled with animosity and mixed feelings. I thank God for this community of friends who have daily encouraged and spurred me on in my faith.

In everyday life it's so easy to just keep moving, just keep going, and forget what we're living for. In Psalm 16 David writes "I set the Lord always before me." As an act of his will, he chose to place God first in his life, at all times. I want to always choose the same. Peace.

---