

I believe that from the very moment the Lord met me, He placed eternity in my heart. He not only showed me the cost of following Him, but also the incomparable joy in gaining Christ and being found in Him. It all started in 2023 during my sophomore year of college that the Lord began to place in me a burden for the lost and a desire to go to the nations. 2023 was the year that I found SOON through an instagram post on my explore page. I came to the first event, shy and timid, but as I met the members, I saw something different in them. I saw authentic, sacrificial love that I've never seen before. Though God is unseen, I believe He was making Himself known to me through them. A few months after joining SOON, the Lord convicted me to go on my first mission trip to Southeast Asia, challenging me to lay down idols of money, success, and control by saying, "Jess, do you trust me, not just with this summer, but with your life?" When the Lord speaks, how can we stay silent? So, I responded by trusting the Lord and saying "Yes" to missions, and man, the Lord completely transformed me from the inside out.

I always thought that being a follower of Christ meant just going to church and listening to worship songs here and there, but what He showed me on missions was so much deeper and more intimate than that. It was on this trip that I began to fall in love with God and His Word. Our team went through the book of Acts, and I began to see that the Bible stories I once thought were inapplicable to me actually revealed the glory of God through Christ and all point to the coming of the Messiah. I started to recognize that the same God who was with Paul and the apostles is the same God who breathed life into me and has given me His Holy Spirit that I may be a testament of who He is and what He has done on the cross. I made it a prayer of mine to live for Him who died for me, and I prayed earnestly that the Lord would show me more of Himself and fill me each and every day with His Spirit.

Since that summer, the Lord has faithfully kept His promises and answered my prayers in ways unexpected. During my last year of undergrad, the Lord once again presented me with an invitation to pick up my cross and follow Him, reminding me that to be his disciple is costly. He led me to Asia Minor during my last year of college on another short term mission trip, but in order for me to go, I had to miss my graduation and turn down an internship that I was really hoping to get. I was pretty distraught, but I ended up sharing with my small group. The Lord was so gracious in showing me great comfort and encouragement, and I felt assured when my small group leader brought up the story of Abraham and Isaac. She mentioned how in Hebrews it says that Abraham had faith that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead, and likewise, she had faith that God would remain faithful amidst the circumstances. I'm thankful that through this, God allowed me to take heart knowing that He doesn't withhold any good for the sake of His people and that he works all things together for good for those who love Him.

Though it was initially so unclear to me why God placed Asia Minor on my heart, the Lord eventually made it known to me why exactly He led me there. It was on this trip that He gave me many convictions regarding the nations. The Lord placed two specific verses on my heart, Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:18-20, which talk about going to the *ends of the earth* and to *all nations*. Though I felt a strong sense of urgency for the lost, I couldn't help but cling so tightly to my fleshly desires... I wanted to start my post-grad year just like the rest of my peers, trying to find a good job that would provide for myself and my parents. Despite this, the Lord placed a desire

in me to yearn for things eternal, reminding me once again that I will never be satisfied in the things of this world, but only in Him.

I continued praying for discernment and wisdom regarding where God was leading me, and toward the end of my trip, I wound up reading Romans 10. Paul says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news." I love how a few verses later, it says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." Actually, on this mission trip the Lord showed me very clearly that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. It's not about how eloquent, convincing, or loving I am that will save someone, but it is the message of Christ and Christ crucified for us. I saw this as I was reading Acts 10, where a man named Cornelius, and his entire household were saved as Peter preached the good news of peace through Christ. I just love how through this passage, the Lord reminds me that He hasn't just come for one people group or nation, but that He is a God of the nations, and one day every nation, tribe, and tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

I am so excited for the Lord to mold me into someone who seeks first His Kingdom and righteousness, trusting that all will be added to me. I pray that just as Mary who recognized the beauty of Jesus and poured her alabaster jar on Him, while everyone around her considered it a waste... I pray that the Lord would look and say, "you have done a beautiful thing to me." I trust that it is not by my own strength or might, or even my faith that the Lord will move – rather, it is the *object* of my faith (that being Christ), in which I believe wholeheartedly that He will do great things through me and all of the others who are going on INT INT. I pray that it will be Christ in us that allows us to be rooted and grounded in love. I pray that it will be the love of Christ that compels us as we go, and that no other name but the name of Jesus be lifted high.

Thank you all for your prayers and your support. I pray that the Lord would continue to reveal to each one of you the hope to which he has called us, the riches of his glorious inheritance, and the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.