

Chicago Mission Trip Questions.

1. What did you do on your mission trip down in Chicago?

We arrived in Chicago, on Sunday July 6th, that night we went to an ethnic restaurant for dinner and a prayer walk to learn more about the community & to pray for the community. From Monday to Friday every morning from 9am-2pm our team volunteered at a local children community camp. The camp is located at a park called Jackson's Park by Lake Michigan. The kids range from the ages 6-13 and come from rough backgrounds. We get to have recreational time with the kids and just talk to them to understand them more. Our goal as a team for this mission trip was to show our love to everyone we meet on our trip and I believe we achieved our goal at this camp. We gave our full and undivided attention to all the kids and group leaders. We participated in all their camp activities and gave them the quality time that they deserve. Everyday after camp we do different things to learn more and help out the community. Such as local soup kitchens, seniors home, and talking to people along the streets of Chicago to learn more about them and their lives.

2. Did you experience God working during your trip? If yes, how?

I honestly thought, I wouldn't experience God on this short mission trip. Luckily, Pastor Tanya, Brennan and our city host Erin reminded me to experience God with an open heart and mind. My opinion definitely changed when we went on our prayer walk the first night. There as this country club where it only allowed white people and no other race back in the 1900's. Slowly there were more African-American moving into the community and a lot of white people leaving. Now, the country club has a majority of African-American but it allows any kind of race to join. There is still segregation and racism happening everywhere and in that community, but God worked through the people in Chicago. The problem is not solved yet but it improved so much in the past 100 years. In those two hours I felt God's presence around us. God works in miraculous ways and I'm glad I saw God's work right in front of my eyes. I felt God right beside me and my teammates, guiding us through the prayer walk every step along the way.

3. What did you learn from your mission trip?

This mission trip was an amazing experience for me personally. The most important lesson I learned was to always keep an open mind when I'm stepping outside of my comfort zone. This mission trip challenged me in many ways and we did certain activities I didn't feel comfortable doing. On Tuesday night, we had something called Immersion Night. We were split into two groups, so each group had 5 members. We got different locations in the city of Chicago, and had

to take the subway to our destinations. Our goal was to experience the feeling of being homeless. We only had \$2 for dinner per person, so each group had a total of \$10. So once we reached our destinations, we had to go up to people along the streets and ask them some questions about Chicago. For example, we had to find out room prices, what they think a big problem in Chicago is, what their favourite part of Chicago is and many others. I didn't feel comfortable talking to random people along the streets at all, but once I realized this task wasn't as hard as I thought it was, I started enjoying myself, even though I was out of my comfort zone. I learned that to experience God, I might have to make sacrifices but if I never step out of my comfort zone, I will never know what God has in store for me.

4. What was your best experience from the trip? What was your most challenging experience?

The best experience from the trip for me was helping out at the soup kitchen because we got to put a smile on the homeless people by simply giving them a plate of food. They walked into the soup kitchen hungry, but walked out with a smile and very appreciated. We got to start conversations with some of them, and they kept thanking us for volunteering at the soup kitchen. I think the feeling you get when you help someone out, and just put a smile on their face is beyond words to describe. At the soup kitchen, we served food, poured drinks, swept the floors, wash the floors and many others but it didn't feel like work to me. I wanted to help those in need and I thought every minute at the soup kitchen was enjoyable.

My most challenging experience would have to be Meet a Need. We were again split into two groups of five members. Each team went in different directions but our goal was the same. We had shampoo, conditions, soap, razors, toiletries and \$2 a group to meet a need. We had two hours to talk to homeless people along the streets, and see if we could help them out in any way with the supplies we had. Before we started, our city host Erin read us a poem written by a homeless person, and the last line was "dignity outlasts dollars" and that stuck with me throughout the whole trip. In my group, none of the people we talked to asked for anything, but they just wanted the time of day, where they can be the center of attention. We learned about their lives, and their daily routines and just things about them. It was challenging for me because in Toronto, I wouldn't just walk up to someone on the streets and talk to them but after doing this challenge I realized that the people on the streets just want someone to talk to and that were the quote "dignity outlasts dollars" come in.

- Bianca M.