

After two and a half months in Ecuador, I could have told you a thousand stories. If we were in Quito and I was getting to preach for a several-hours service of mostly sermon, maybe I'd get a fraction of them relayed. And one of the reasons I was just getting around to typing this all out last night is that I took most of my three weeks' notice about today just to sort through a summer of memories and experiences with God and process what it was exactly that I had to say.

And while I'll never be able to get across even a small percentage of my growth since May in just the next few minutes, I do want to focus on the opportunity around us each day, what we can take advantage of in Quito or Shell or Toñamparé or Elizabeth City North Carolina.

But first, just a little background.

My official job title this summer was a Quito Quest Host. What I signed up to do was host short-term teams for their entire stay and missionary journey, taking care of their food and housing and helping with their ministry and being able to process the whole experience and take it all home with them. I expected to give lots of orientations and lead around many a group of wide-eyed gringos and visit tons of ministry sites.

I did not expect to spend eight days in the middle of the jungle with the other interns.

We found out about midway through our week-and-a-half of training that instead of hosting teams for the first of the four blocks of the summer, all ten hosts and our leaders or Maestros would be going to Toñamparé. Toñamparé is a Hauorani community. In fact, it is the same community from which the men came who killed the

five missionaries in January, 1956. It has changed a lot from when Jim Eliot, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Roger Youderian and Pete Flemming first tried to connect with the Hauorani culture. But it is still so deep in the jungle that you have to fly from Shell or Arahuno

We had to wake up pretty early each morning in the jungle. The Huaorani rise and set with the sun, and Palabra de Vida's VBS was no different. And with the kids ready for breakfast at 7:00 at the latest, that meant the kitchen crew had all the food prepared and the eating area set up at an hour that none of us were happy to see.

Each morning, the roosters would start crowing sometime before 4:00. We would all have rolled over several times by then, semi-conscious and dreading the wake-up call. At quarter of six, we would all hear Chet whisper Bryan's name. That meant "wake the boys up, Mr. Maestro." Before Bryan had even rolled out of bed and began to say "Wake up, Danny. Wake up, Jerry. Wake up, Teddy..." We would all be bolted to life by Fabian's voice.

Aside from the roosters, the jungle community would be nearly silent, very still in the morning. And everything seems ten times louder when there is no other noise around. At seemingly eardrum-shattering levels, Fabian would belt out songs, our favorite of which began "BUENOS DÍAS, SEÑOR JESÚS!" That's good morning, Lord Jesus, if you had any trouble translating.

Lane and I were usually the first two hosts out from under our mosquito nets. And we might have looked pretty functional as we slowly changed from one of our sets of clothes to the other (yeah, *the* other) and put on sunscreen, bug spray and rubber

boots. But truth be told, we were total zombies, praying that Chet or Bryan would say “Just kidding, sleep another hour or five.” And all the while Fabian would be dancing around, belting out Ecuadorian children’s songs, grinning, ready for the day and trying to get us to crack a smile, or say something in a language other than mere grunts.

I never truly recognized this then, but Fabian embodied- through his incredibly obnoxious wake-up call- exactly the attitude that we all needed for our day, our work, our relationships, and our walk with God.

He worked all day with us every day, sweaty and exhausted in the kitchen. He might disappear for a while, but always to find a new project on which to work. He got up at the same ridiculously early hour and went to bed at the end of the same energy draining day as the rest of us. And yet, not only was he enthusiastic, but he was focused on God.

“Buenos dias, Senor Jesus.” He greeted the Lord with enthusiasm before he’d even totally risen from his bed. And we could hear the enjoyment of his song in his voice. The girls could hear it across the field. Yet what I did not even consider until weeks later was that he wasn’t just excited to be *despertar, o cantar*- waking up or singing- he was excited about Jesus. He was greeting not just another sunrise (that would come around in what felt like another three hours or so), but he was greeting the opportunity to serve the Lord by serving His people. He was uncontrollably happy to be headed off to a day of devotions, service, and community with other Believers and some who might need just the push of his enthusiasm to *be* Believers.