

SOPHIE'S TRIP WITH YWAM TO AUSTRALIA, INDIA AND MOLOCCA ISLANDS

The Beginning . . .

It's hard to believe that in the morning I start my journey to YWAM Perth!

I am going to update this blog while I'm away- and I've never done one before so it will probably be short and sweet with lots of spelling mistakes..

6 years ago I experienced God in a new way. I discovered a simple truth- God is alive! I had grown up in a church and read bible stories, but it took a long time for me to realise the Gospel isn't a 'story', it is life changing and vital. Over the years since I have grown to love the God who saved me more and more and want to live to fulfil the purpose I now have; to tell others about this life giving news.

I decided to take a gap year to do a Discipleship Training School to commit the next 6 months to getting to know God better and learning how to glorify Him best. The first 3 months in Australia will be the lecture phase and the next 3 months will be elsewhere in the world for the outreach phase.

I'm not too sure what to expect over this time, or where God will have me this time next year, but I am excited for Him to have His way and use me.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," **Matthew 28:19**

Please pray for all that God is doing in Perth and that I will arrive in the right country!

The First Few Days

Sorry this post took so long coming, I have been told off already for it!

I landed in Perth on Friday 3rd after 20 hours of travel. This and the first few days here were a lot tougher than I expected as I trusted God for what lay ahead and tried to settle in.

Thankfully feel so much happier here in Perth now and feel God has reassured me I am at the right place at the right time.

I share a house with 10 other girls doing the Frontline DTS and it is a 15 minute walk from the YWAM Perth base. There are 21 students doing the DTS and 4 staff.

During our first few days here I have been learning (and forgetting) soo many names and getting to know others better. There are lots of really great people here and such a friendly atmosphere. We also have been getting to know the area better and a few of us went to try a local church on Sunday.

The lectures start today, so I am excited to see what we will learn and get into our routine. 6 am morning exercise doesn't start until next week though thankfully!

I have been blown away by the messages I have got over the past while and I know so many are praying. So thank you so, so much, it is really encouraging and so humbling.

12 Days On

It feels like months have past, not days. There has so much going on in the past week; people to meet, stuff to learn and things to do!

The first week of lectures were on the topic of Hearing Gods Voice. I really enjoyed thinking about how God spoke to His people throughout the bible and how He chooses to speak today. We talked about how important it is to set time aside to listen to God and empty our own thoughts as we do so.

As we tried to put what we learnt into practice, I struggled to hear something (that I thought was) significant from God. However I have realised that I have busied my life over the past couple of years so much that I lost some of my humility before such an awesome God. Spending more time in Gods word and lifting high His name as I always should have has blessed my intimacy with Him. I feel He has reminded me of a gift He blessed me with years ago but I didn't nurture. This led to me doubting God ever gave me anything useful to use for His glory, but really my laziness has led to me feeling useless!

This week our lectures are on The Nature and Character of God. I have loved how bible based this week has been as we started from Genesis and worked through the bible to see what we can tell about Gods character through it all. The speaker challenged us not to let our circumstances determine our view of God, but let what we know of God's nature determine how we view our circumstances.

Our schedule starts with morning exercise at 6am and the day is filled with quiet time with God, lectures, prayer, worship, work duties (for which I spend 2 hours cleaning in the kitchen), one on ones and small groups.

I have a saviour who gives life in all its fullness. He has been faithful and led me through lonely, homesick times and I am learning to trust Him more every day.

I am excited about being in Perth right now — and if you know me you will know my excitement doesn't come easily!

[Week 3](#)

The weeks here are starting to fly by!

This week our lectures were on the subject of Repentance and forgiveness. We talked about the significance of sin and how our thoughts lead to actions and habits which then defines our destiny.

Friday was application day so we all wrote lists of what we felt we needed to repent for and a list of those we felt we had to forgive. We prayed out our lists in front of the rest of the school who acted as witnesses and support. It took something like 10/11 hours, but we realised how significant it was as bringing things to the light replaces shame with freedom. God never intended us to carry the weight of our sin.

But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His son, purifies us from all sin. – 1 John 1:7

Matthew 6:15

but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

I have been struggling to hear Gods opinion on my outreach choice, but the decision has made me seek His voice more. I feel my intimacy with Him has really been blessed because of all this, so Gods timing really is perfect!

I can't really think of any fun spare time things from this week, but it has been great to see wild parrots and other wildlife. I struggle to predict the weather for the day; I thought Australia was always hot!

Hopefully I will have more stories soon.

Thanks for all your support and prayers, Love Sophie

[Week 5 – Perth, Australia](#)

Days are flying here with the crazy routine, which is both a blessing and a pain.

Everyone is great, we have such a diverse group of people in our DTS which is a huge blessing as there is little friction.

Perth has surprised me, I still have to tell myself I am in Australia; the city is sooo diverse that there is no culture at all. It is a very easy city to live in, not too busy and a good train system, but I can't imagine living here. Plus, unless you work here it is sooo pricey! Saying this I do think it is a perfect place to do DTS as there aren't many sights to

see, which is great cause we have little time to see them! And YWAM here is very well established with teaching and all.

There is a beautiful beach, Cottesloe, not too far from the city that we get the train to sometimes. It is such a clean place with beautiful sand and very salty water. This will probably take up most weekends as the November heat comes in.

This week we are doing about Intercession and worship, which I thought would be a 'wishy washy' subject, but I was wrong. The speaker Whitney did a DTS here in 2009 and now works with YWAM Cambodia. She is shooting so much out of the bible and tying so many connections, I love it! She also speaks very fast though. I feel for those with English as their 2nd language.

I am realising how blessed I have been with growing up in such a solid, supportive home. I am in a serious minority to have both parents alive, still married and know God! So I am very grateful for that! It's heartbreaking what some people have went through in such a short time within family issues.

We are camping all next week and having our lectures while away. We leave on Monday though, so we still get a weekend thankfully!

Week 8 – Mission India

We have been in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) a week now, and I feel like I am beginning to really enjoy the crazy, busy culture as tiring as it is!

We arrived in India at midnight and travelled to our accommodation. We had not been able to get somewhere to stay in the region of Kolkata we are working in, so have had to travel a lot by train, bus, auto, taxi... these have been amazing experiences! People squeeze on where there aren't any spaces and jump on and off trains and buses whether they are moving or not. It took a while for me to realise what side of the road they legally drive on, but I still haven't seen any accidents. So to me, drivers here are great!

We have grown really fond of the place we are staying at the moment. We have started to recognise directions, build relationships with a few locals and even gained a new team member - Benny the rat. But tomorrow we are moving to our new accommodation in our region which will make ministry so much easier.

There are constantly horns blasting, and people shouting. How loud it is and the lack of fresh air have been the hardest thing to adjust to so far.

We have done bible reading around the area we are working in, aiming to read the whole bible aloud between all our team members. While doing this we have met locals and got the opportunity to share with them why we are in Kolkata.

I have also been shocked at how many idols there are everywhere here. It's hard to avoid them as you walk down the street. People are also so honest and hospitable here. We have already been invited into homes and for some chai tea at the side of the street - I am loving this!

Week 12 - Watching God move, even in the dark places

Over the past week we have lead more church services and gone into our region to do evangelism – including open airs. We pray and stop in areas that we feel God has lead us to. We then start singing worship songs and crowds of 50+ people just appear! We explain who we are and share the gospel and a testimony of what God has done in our lives. We then have the opportunity to talk to those in the crowd. This can be very frustrating as it is mostly only the school children who can speak English, but God has provided translators every time!

We are the first foreigners a lot of people here have seen. They can't understand why we want to live in Agarpara and not on Park Street which is the slightly more westernized area, and the only place I have seen other white people! This gives us a lot of responsibility to break any assumptions that our God is only a western God and also

live out a way different to those white people they see on American TV who are presumed Christian as they have white skin.

We have had the opportunity to visit two slums so far. During our first visit, we were praying for a baby when a lady approached us shouting. She was angry as foreigners had come to her slum before and made promises to help but just left and forgot about them. This broke my heart to hear because I know there is truth in what she says. A local lady we are working with was with us and talked to her in Bengali. She calmed her down and told her she was Bengali and was going no where, she would always stay with her.

Short term mission is great and I think so necessary, but God has challenged me that more people are needed to stay and commit to those they make these life changing promises to. Even through my own life I know the difference of the impact of those who have flown in like the super hero and out again and those who have continued to steadily support me. Jesus commanded us to make disciples and that takes a lot of continual encouragement, not just a conversion. Taking up this responsibility isn't an easy thing to do but I have seen from a few locals in ministry here that it is possible for God to sustain you and give you joy even in the darkest of places.

We ended up visiting the lady's home and leading her husband to Christ and seeing her son's leg healed. We sang with them and saw the lady soften in such a short time. She made us chai and invited us to her daughter's wedding. She told us she usually never speaks, so her actions were very out of character. She said she thanked Jesus first and then us. She left her home and immediately told her neighbours who Jesus was and what he had just done. What a great response to the gospel. Thankfully there is going to be a prayer meeting every Tuesday held in her home and we are planning to go!

During our second slum visit we did an open air and prayed for physical and emotional healings. I have never prayed for so many people in one day! 10 of us ended up squeezed onto one bed in a home in the slum being served chai and Indian sweets (have to love Indian hospitality!) And we prayed for hours for the family members.

This is just a little of what God has been doing in Kolkata.

As the majority of people here are Hindu they accept what we say about Jesus easily but not that He is the only God. Their parents worshipped the many idols there are and it did them no harm so they see no reason to question that. Family is a huge thing here. This is a really hard thing to speak into when telling people the gospel and I regret knowing so little about their religion. Please pray the Holy Spirit will bring wisdom to our team and speak truth through us.

Week 18 - Leaving Kolkata

We are mid travel to Maluku Islands to begin ministry for the next 5 weeks of our outreach. I am excited to experience the culture here and to understand how God is moving through the Indonesian church a little better. I hope we can form great relationships there and be used by God in the areas we are working.

Leaving Kolkata was sad for us as we said goodbye to many friends who have been an incredible support to us and shown us so much hospitality. I know I have said it before, but I do feel encouraged as we leave the city. God has some amazing fired up workers there who are so hungry to take part in any evangelism opportunities available. It was overwhelming at first to see the number of people who need so much support and the number of people who need to understand the gospel.

We can't change a nation alone, but we can change the lives of individuals... and if this continues you can't help but transform a nation. I believe God is stirring up great work in India, and He will send more workers to fulfil this.

One thing that has shocked us is the news of persecution of Christians and Muslims in India under the new strongly Hindu government. They offer large sums of money to those who convert to Hinduism which I'm sure is hard for those in poverty to ignore. There are also reports of more violent attacks when believers refuse to renounce their faith, even beheadings. We have been praying over some of the churches and individuals we have worked with for protection and courage. Many have told us they aren't afraid as they know Jesus is their strength.

Please pray protection over the Christian's in India and that they will stand firm in their faith no matter what the cost. Thank God that they have already received the best thing this life has to offer- the promise of a life and reward in heaven.

We managed to hold kids programmes in multiple parts of our region and at a girl's orphanage. This was government run, so all the girls were Hindu. It was great to see their excitement to play with us and learn our action songs. We shared the gospel message and taught the girls how to pray, telling the story of Daniel in the Lions Den to explain the importance of prayer and how God protects those who love and obey Him.

Thank you for all your encouragement and prayers, please remember us in Indonesia - we want to see God move! Also we have been warned about the heat and humidity there, so please pray for our energy, that this won't keep us back from applying ourselves during ministry.

Sophie (6 February 2015)

Life as a 'Bule

Hi there!

I graduated DTS today after a week back in Perth for Report Back Week after finishing our Outreach phase.

I'm sorry I haven't been able to post an update until now, but I will give an overview of our time in the Maluku Islands, Indonesia.

We spent the first 4 weeks on the island Ambon- Maluku's capital city. We then spent a week on the island Seram which neighbours Ambon.

Landing on the beautiful, green, tropical island of Ambon was so exciting after a lot of travel and little sleep. I got a shock to feel the heat and humidity as we stepped off the plane. Always feeling sweaty is something we quickly got used to!

We had accomodation with a church there and shared it with a YWAM Bali team for a couple of weeks. It was so great to get to know them, worship with them, serve with them and learn from them.

During our time in Ambon, we lead church and youth services, worshipped and interceded in public areas- getting to know some locals at the same time. We also cleaned up rubbish in littered areas as a practical way to impact the area. It was great to see the local children help out as pollution is something that needs to be addressed there.

One day we had 1 hour to do some form of ministry, so we decided to stand outside the mall in Ambon and sing worship songs to see if anyone would approach us. We soon realised that it was different from India as people tend to just laugh from afar rather than talk to us! However one man did come, he was on the mall management team and invited us to play on the stage inside the mall. So we sang, explained why we were in Ambon and Margareta shared her testimony. It was so random all I could do was laugh looking at the crowd!

We also helped out a ministry that meets in a central park with street kids. There is a mix of Christian and Muslim kids that gather at the same time every week. We taught them some action songs and talked about having dreams to encourage them not to give up on the hope for a brighter future.

There has been a history of conflict between Muslim and Christians in Maluku and there is alot of healing needed. It has been so interesting to see the progress of peace in Ambon and compare that to back home

after the Troubles. Many were shocked as I shared about Northern Ireland's past – they couldn't understand why Christians would fight Christians.

It is illegal to have no religion in Indonesia. Your passport either says protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist. So many people call themselves Christians without applying biblical teaching to their lifestyles. It is also culturally expected for you to go to church every Sunday, but of course this has no value when your life is completely different during the week. Discipleship is important here.

There are also many unreached islands within Maluku, so we want the church here to be mission focused and take advantage of their prime geographical position.

These islands also have a history of ancestral worship which still carries on today, so we are praying against that here too.

We were so excited to have the opportunity to visit Hatu village in Seram for 7 days. We were hosted by local families who were such a blessing to us. It became normal to have 2 of every meal as we were fed wherever we went!

The village has electricity a few nights a week and is right on the shore of a beautiful bay. It is a Christian village and so the church is the centre of the community and part of the culture is for the churches to blast music through the area from 4-6am! It was such a chilled place to be as island culture often meant programmes beginning 2 hours after the arranged time!

We were shocked to have 180 children show up to the first English class we held! During our time there we worked with hundreds of children, held English classes in 4 schools as well as in the church at night and held a youth service on identity.

Seram also was affected by the conflicts which ended in 2003 resulting in a flee of many Christian villages higher into the mountains. ISIS have also targeted villages in Seram, converting the communities and murdering those who refuse.

I have been impressed to see the peace that has come in such a short time (comparing to back home!) Locals I talk to say it was political pressure and they now have peace. However thousands of people disappeared during that time, and family members will never get justice. I have been warned there is peace on the surface, but much deeper healing needed. I have noticed a mix of tolerance in with this peace. Christians don't seem to stand up for biblical values if there is a risk of it offending others.

I have really enjoyed our time in Maluku. Island culture is amazing as no one is in a rush and no photograph I took captured the beauty! We rarely saw other white people, which made us a bit of a novelty wherever we went. Walking down the street we would hear laughing and people shouting 'Bule' which means white person. We embraced this and renamed our team the Bule family. We also formed great relationships with those in the churches we worked with, they were such an encouragement to us.

Please pray for Ambon and for the those now leaving Perth.

Also shout out to Mrs Dynna, my new favourite reader!