

JD Van Hook

My faith journey has been changed for the better the past couple of semesters as I have learned more and more about Spanish. Spanish is a different language than I have grown up learning and the cultures involved were normally out of my comfort zone. Learning Spanish has helped me grow as a person and most importantly in my faith by learning to love others that come from different backgrounds than me and from looking at biblical passages through the eyes of someone else.

Recently I got to take a trip with my baseball team to the Dominican Republic to go on a baseball styled mission trip to help spread the Gospel. While on the trip I got to experience a lot of cool things such as playing games with them, going to kids baseball clinics, and even going and playing with kids at orphanages. This hands-on experience enriched my life by showing me people with different backgrounds than I am used to and learning how to show them love even though I wasn't perfect at Spanish yet. John 15:12 says, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you." God calls us to love others no matter where they come from. During this trip I got to show my love by my effort to be involved in their lives and in their language. With this effort many appreciated what I had to say and knew that I cared for them as Christ calls us to. Another cool experience on this trip was when I got to pray for someone in need as I learned the Lord's prayer in class beforehand. I was prepared for the situation through my work in class and God got to use what I learned to help bless someone else through me in prayer.

In Spanish class we have also gotten to do many devotions before class and gotten to hear many different verses in a different light. Some of the verses have different meanings than English because of the lack of the right words to say so getting to hear more of who God is through his scriptures is always a great experience. Even if I didn't fully comprehend all of the devotions and prayers I have learned that you can feel the spirit even if you don't understand the words to the fullest extent. Experiencing Christ I have learned does not always come directly from the word that you hear but more about the experience of what you are listening to with reverence with classmates around you, this has enriched my faith journey everyday.

As I go on now for the rest of my life, I know not to look down on other Cultures or give up on other people just because they have different backgrounds than I do. I have learned lots about a language and know enough to be able to make an effort to get to know those around me and love others who come from a different background than I do. I can go on with the Christian faith knowing that I have connected with more people and my Christian family is deeper and more broad because of the people I can now connect with through the love of Christ and knowledge of the language of Spanish.