

Coming into Internship

I have known about the Book of Mormon Internship for several years and have always appreciated the program. In early high school I developed an interest in the Mayan languages and felt that God was calling me to study them, and I became even more excited to apply to the Internship on an out-of-country year. Belize has speakers of a variety of languages including three different Mayan languages. During the trip I was able to talk with the same Mayan man whom some of the previous years' interns had met and given a Book of Mormon at the Lamanai ruins. As a result of the trip, my desire to study these languages has increased not only because the languages fascinate me, but also because of the opportunities to minister to the indigenous people both physically and spiritually.

Not getting sick

One of my friends at college spent the first seven years of his life in Honduras. When I told him that I would be spending a week in Belize over the summer, he said, "Well, you're going to want to take all the precautions you can – because if anyone will get sick in Central America, it's you." I am sure he meant it mostly as a joke, but it caused me to be more worried about getting sick in Belize.

From the moment we got through customs in the Belize airport, I started getting uptight. Particularly, I didn't want to touch anything after washing my hands in the "contaminated" water. Finally, right before we left the airport, a fellow intern said to me, "James, you can't do this to yourself, or you won't be able to move the entire time we're here." Then Sugar said to me, "You know, we've been down here so many times and not once has an intern gotten seriously sick. God has blessed us every time." Based on this, I decided to relax about it. We had all been praying for good health while there. I still took precautions, but I did not make health my overarching concern – I was able to contribute and enjoy the experience. I did not get sick the whole time and have remained healthy since returning, which meant a lot to me because of what my college friend had said to me.

Music class

In Belize, Audrey Horn and I taught a music class for the Book of Mormon Day that the interns did Saturday morning for the kids from the church and the surrounding neighborhood. Our theme for the Book of Mormon Day was Lehi's Vision. Audrey thought I should say a few words right before we taught the last song, in order to tie in the music class to the classes about Lehi's Vision. When I sat down to write the outline, it came to me rather quickly. I wrote that the tree of life is the love of God, and that His love will give us great joy when we reach His presence, but that we must learn to have that joy in God's presence even while on the journey, and music is one way of learning to enjoy and praise Him (see D&C 119:6d). When it came time to give the talk, I felt like the Lord gave me extra words that tied in the class even better – that if we're singing His praises loud enough, we won't be able to hear the mocking voices from the great and spacious building that are trying to knock us off the path. The next day, we attended the Restoration Branch in Corozal, and the Spirit was very strong as we sang praises to God. It was a pleasure to worship God with the Saints in Belize.

Trip home

We had prayed for safe flights on our trip. On the way back from Belize, our flight left late from the Belize City airport and was delayed by weather coming into Houston. The airport was so crowded that it took us an hour and a half to get all the way through customs, but we were blessed to get in line before

another flood of people entered customs. When we finally made it to the terminal for the connecting flight, that plane had been delayed by several minutes, giving us time to eat dinner before the second flight. However, the plane kept getting delayed even more—at at one point we were in doubt as to whether they even had a plane for us. We had been silently praying about it because we didn't want to spend the night at the airport, and I finally said a prayer vocally about the plane and the weather. Within three minutes, the voice over the intercom announced the first and last boarding call for the flight to Kansas City. While not an "instant" answer, the timing impressed us. Also, while there was some severe weather in Kansas City that night, it caused hardly any turbulence. The Lord blessed us and kept us safe on all our flights to and from Belize.