

Kieu-Thu Bui

I've just had one of the most incredible, remarkable, and blessing summers of, perhaps, the rest of my life. My prayer before Peru was for God to show me what He sees and to grow my heart for the people He loves. In His faithfulness, God answered in bigger and better ways than I could have ever asked for.

I was most blessed by interactions with the people, even when my broken Spanglish elicited more awkward looks than actual understanding. I will never forget when one of the *jovenes* confessed that whenever my Spanish fell apart, he would still smile politely and nod, pretending to understand but really just hoping to catch something grammatically correct. Then I confessed that I did it too. Fortunately, God redeems by speaking directly into people's hearts, and we are still blessed.

However, I was most comfortable interacting with the younger girls. I remember first meeting Laura, a reserved 12-yr-old who always kept her distance and never seemed to laugh or play as much as the other kids. I tried to be as friendly and silly as I could, even if she hardly smiled at me, because God had drawn me to her. I will never forget when, one day, Laura asked me if I knew my father. I was surprised that she would ask such a strange and obvious question. My initial response was, "Of course! He raised me." But as I answered, the look on her face broke my heart, when I realized that something so normal to me was a blessing she had never had. Laura has never known her father, and has been waiting on him her whole life. She told me how lucky I was to have mine. At that moment, I felt so unworthy, so overcome with emotion for this girl God had brought into my life. I wanted so badly to tell her about the Father who loves her so much more than she knows, the Father who has been watching over her whole life. I wanted her to

know her Heavenly Father in an intimate way, because only He can fill that emptiness in her heart. I said as much as I could in Spanish, but words could never fully express my heart's desire for her. That has become my prayer for Laura, and I believe God will speak into her life in more ways than I ever can.

God opened my eyes and broke my heart in Peru. He showed me love through the *jovenes*, who loved us enough to pretend to understand our broken Spanish so that we would not be discouraged. He blessed me with girls like Laura, who reminded me of the Father's perfect love. Although I'm physically here, but my mind often drifts away to Pucallpa, where a part of my heart still beats for the people of Peru. People say missions can feel like a dream, a fading experience that you doubt ever having, but that's not the case for me at all. In fact, missions feels so much more real because I have seen God's glory working in this special place on earth; I have interacted with His people and my life can never be the same because of it.