

THAILAND EXPERIENCE 2010

By: Nicole Anstey

When I thought about coming to Thailand for three months, it all seemed very glamorous. Traveling around the world is so adventurous and working with the sex industry is simply exciting. Then there's the element of the unknown. Not knowing what to expect, what you'll see, how you'll experience things and how God will change your heart is all very exciting.

During this internship, I have been challenged, loved, surprised, and confused along with many other elements and each part of it has taught me something new about myself, the world we live in, and how God operates.

The week I spent in Vietnam with Sandra and her husband Peter taught me about dependence on God. The people there have no religious freedom, yet they outwardly seem to love God more than North American culture. They hunger for Jesus and when they put their full trust in Him, cool results happen- aka the growth of the Vietnamese church. My hope is that when I return to Canada, I'll no longer feel embarrassed or unsure about my faith, but will confidently stand for what I know to be the truth.

Another experience during my time in Thailand was attending the annual retreat for S.E.A. Missionaries in Phuket. Getting to lead the teens of missionaries from all over South East Asia was so refreshing. Youth ministry is what I feel I can do well, and getting to talk with teens who are immersed in mission work because of their parents' calling was very interesting. It was cool to see their perspectives on missions life, God, and world issues. I felt like they were teaching me more than I was teaching them! Meeting so many missionaries in one place was eye-opening and I got a glimpse of what the real missions experience means. It's not always fun or quick. It's not always comfortable. But when God decides to use you and you become open to his will, you can find fulfillment in knowing your doing what he's called you to do no matter what you're experiencing.

The majority of my time was spent working in the Nightlight office on a weekly basis and attending outreach in the bars of the red light district on Friday nights. I experienced so many emotions and challenges. From learning to find purpose in doing simple things like data entry, to feelings of anger or sadness in the bar settings missions work has proven itself to be intense. I've learned to love people when it's difficult to love them. I've learned to see not only prostitutes but, the men who purchase them through the eyes of God. I've learned that actions can speak louder than words, like simply holding the hand of a girl whose language you don't speak to show you care. I've learned more about my weaknesses and have had my strengths tested. Truly, I came thinking I could change Thailand, or at least a few people there, but Thailand has ended up changing me. I'm a stronger person for the internship. Because I've been surrounded by such a diverse group of people, I've learned to think for myself, and sharpen my beliefs. I've learned that I don't need the approval or opinion of man but that I just need to do what God is telling me. And while I've felt overwhelmed at the need in Thailand,

I've realized that helping even one person at a time is making a difference in God's Kingdom.

So, the kind of glamour I expected when I first came to Thailand, is not the true glamour I experienced at all. While traveling is exciting and meeting new cultures and learning about them is fun, the true glamour is found in how you allow what you're experiencing to change who you are as a person and as a child of God. I'm leaving here a different person than when I came. Thank God for that.