

Kate's travels to Norway and Latvia 2010



The whole group at the Elvheim discipleship week - Norway

quiet times each morning, that I forget what a privilege it is to do so and what a powerful and personal message I'm holding in my hands - That it is God's letter to us!

Each evening had an international theme; with 8 countries being represented in the group it proved to be quite an event! We had activities ranging from making Latvian 'bread soup' (yum!) to making the Estonian national flower from coloured paper. These were great opportunities to hear about what life as a Christian is like in different countries, and amazing to know that our God is the same faithful and unchanging one all around the world!

Throughout the week we had the chance to hike in the stunning mountains surrounding Skjolden. This provided many wonderful opportunities to get to know the rest of the group.....there's certainly no better way to get to know someone than chasing them up a Norwegian mountain out of breath and somewhat soggy! It was such a blessing to meet so many wonderful people on this trip, and I'm thankful for the chance to keep in contact with them via the wonders of modern technology! During our spare time, we played a lot of midnight volley ball (badly - on my part!), jumped in the FREEZING fjord (it took me a while to pluck up the courage, but I did it!), hiked a glacier, made lots of cakes, and generally enjoyed sharing stories of how God been working in our lives. A truly unforgettable time with some very special people and one amazing God!

My summer adventure began in Norway.....

What a breathtaking country in so many ways. God's creative hand is displayed in all its glory wherever you go in this stunning country. We arrived in Norway in mid June and spent a few days in Bergen as a British team. We then travelled to the beautiful village of Skjolden, which sits at the head of the Lusterfjord in South Western Norway. Elvheim youth hostel was to be our base the rest of our time in Norway and where we joined a team of 40 young people from as far away as Uganda for the international discipleship week of teaching and great discipleship which centred on Ephesians 6 and the Armour of God. Each day began with an hour and a half of quiet time reflecting over what we had been looking at in Ephesians, and seeking answers to questions we were challenged to think about at the start of the week. Sitting beside the fjord and looking up at the towering mountains made these times all the more powerful. I was really challenged to find time in my 'normal' life for opportunities like this. So often I get caught up in the routine of



The stunning view over Skjolden on one of our hikes.

The final days at Elvheim were spent preparing Bible studies, dramas, games and testimonies and attempting to learn some Russian for the next stage of our adventure into Latvia....

"Pray for me also that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am in chains." Ephesians 6:19-20

....this verse really stood out and became a great help in those days. 'Words' have never been a strong point of mine, and leading bible studies in a different language, culture and age group to that I was used to was a bit daunting to say the least. But over the next few weeks, God taught me that He could work through my weaknesses for His gospel to be made known!

And then onto Latvia.....

My heart still jumps with joy when I think back over my time spent in Latvia, a country that now holds a very special place in my heart. After arriving and spending a day in Riga, we travelled to the village of Zosna close to the Russian border where the camp would be held for the week. Our team of 17, from the UK, USA



The UK team after glacier hiking

and Norway were joined by around 80 young people ranging in age from 4-24 for a week of bible teaching, seminars and lots of fun, volleyball and swimming!

I had the privilege of co-leading a bible study group (with Jan-I dar from Norway) of 10 young people through the week. We were studying the theme of 'Grace' looking at a number of Jesus' parables that helped us tackle questions such as 'Why do we need grace?' and 'How do we take hold of Grace?' It was so exciting to see the group really opening up and engaging in Gods word, asking some very searching questions and encouraging each other in doing so.

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."
Galatians 5:1

This became a favourite and inspiring passage for our group over the week...coupled with the song 'Cast your burdens unto Jesus, (for he cares for you.)' We thought a lot about the amazing freedom Gods Grace gives us, that we are not longer slaves to sin but free IN Christ. And how this grace shown to us should motivate us to live lives holy and pleasing to God - glorifying Him in all that we do. The Bible studies gave me a great opportunity to get to know some of the girls especially well. Lera, Nastja and Kate were three young ladies with the most wonderful smiles!



My bible study buddies Nastja, Lera, and Kate.

Prayer and praise points for Latvia

- Praise God for a truly unforgettable summer, where His amazing Grace was displayed so simply and so powerfully.
- For the wonderful friendships formed with the Latvian young people and the rest of the team. Please pray that my friendship with Lera, Nastja and Kate would remain and develop especially. That I could be an encouragement to them and God would continue growing them into godly young women.
- Please pray that God would raise up leaders from among these young people who would be willing to invest their lives in others and continue the ministry in Latvia.

I have the opportunity - God willing -of visiting Latvia again at the beginning of October!! Details are still quite vague at the moment, but please pray that I could use this opportunity to deepen friendships with the students I met over the summer and really seek Gods guidance in how to use my time there for His glory.



Our wonderful Bible study group at Zosna camp.

They were so much fun to spend time with, and during our 'free time' we had some really great conversations about anything and everything. God taught me a lot through these three girls especially...about the value of investing in true friendship, and about being open and letting God guide your conversations. Each day I saw more and more of His grace being displayed in conversations like that around camp - I think that was part of the beauty of Zosna. Despite the total randomness and haphazard way of camp, God was so obviously at work behind every small thing that went on there.

The evenings were probably the most exciting times for me, everyone would gather around the campfire to sing songs (with some amazing actions!), perform dramas, play games and most wonderfully to hear testimonies of what we had been learning during the day. Each day we all had the challenge of learning a memory verse from the Bible study and at the end of the week it was amazing to watch a lot of the campers standing at the front reciting all 6 verses! My prayer is that these verses won't just be words those that have learned them, but truths that we know are for us from our loving father. These were such wonderful times of fellowship and fun together and God opened many doors for great conversations into the early hours there.

My time in Norway and Latvia, and especially at Zosna camp was definitely life changing. God showed me that He is not limited by what I think or see of Him, that He can work in great but subtle ways with an outcome that is far beyond my expectations. An amazing trip to end an amazing year!



Special times around the campfire