

Justin Bruce

Church Sermon

Before my pilgrimage to Ecuador, I had a different connection with my friends. With all of the technology in our lives, I would constantly be texting my friends, snap chatting, playing video games, and watching TV. I never took the time to enjoy my everyday surroundings until after Ecuador.

When we started driving to the Amazon, with the knowledge that we would have no internet connection, anxiety was a bit high as to what we would have to do to entertain ourselves, along with the fear of spiders and bugs, and most importantly falling into the river and getting eaten up by piranhas. When we first arrived where we would be staying for the next two days, I checked my phone for a signal just in case. Then out of nowhere, the manager came up behind me and said, “My friend... there is no signal here” in an unsettling voice.

Henry, Aaron, and I walked to our room and immediately had an encounter with a spider. I decided to step up and attempt to kill it until Henry said he thought it was a Black Widow.

Later, we all got dressed up and ate dinner then it was time to go to bed. Henry and I thought that it would be a good idea to sleep in long sleeve shirts, sweatpants, and long socks so we wouldn't take any chances of getting bit by spiders in our sleep.

While lying in bed, I started to get aggravated by all of the noise that the bugs were making outside. I was convinced the noise would keep me up, but it actually did the exact opposite. I listened and thought to myself, I never got the chance to do this at home because I would probably be looking on instagram at this time.

The next morning Henry and I played cards for about an hour and a half. He told me he had never lost in the game Egyptian Ratslap which made me determined to beat him at least once, and after about an hour I did! This was not bad at all, I was having a blast without any internet connection so far!

All day we swam in the pool, played more cards, played truth or dare, and even just talked, and none of us were bored. I realized that there are millions of ways to have fun without technology, but we are surrounded by it everyday, which makes it hard for us not to use. Since Ecuador, I have used less technology when hanging out with friends whether we are playing sports outside, riding bikes around, or just talking.

What I came back with, as I stand before you now, was a greater understanding of my own creativity and my ability to connect with people in a more meaningful way.

I would like to thank my parents, the J2A angels, My J2A leaders Anna, Barbara, and Daniel, my fellow J2A pilgrims, and last but not least the church for an amazing indescribable experience.

And oh yes...I'd like to thank the spiders for leaving me alone.