

Day 3 Reflection

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I'm so glad to be back in Belize. It was great arriving the first day at Port Loyola Baptist Church and seeing familiar faces. I was immediately greeted with a huge hug by a little girl I remembered from my first trip. Her mother came up to us and told me that she

had a picture of me with her daughter and that she wished she had brought it. It was really nice to know that they remembered me and that they had kept this picture from three years ago.

I was also really looking forward to seeing a little boy named Keemar that I made a connection with on my first trip. I really enjoyed spending time with him on that trip. When I saw him he immediately remembered me, as I did him. I called him by his name and he was amazed that I remembered it. We started looking at photos from the trip 3 years ago and a large group formed as Keemar started calling over children who also were in the photos. As we were scrolling through, Keemar told me that he remembered my sunglasses from the first trip. I let him wear them whenever we had some downtime in the sanctuary. They were much too big for him, but he looked very cute in them. I then scrolled to a photo of him wearing those sunglasses and he was so excited to see this.

When I signed up to do the trip to Belize 3 years ago and realized that the group was going back to Belize for the 2nd time, I remember thinking, I wonder why they are going back to same place? I had done a number of mission trips when I was in youth group in high school and then into college, and we had, for the most part, gone to different places, met different people, and worked on different projects. I always enjoyed the new experiences. For me, however, this would be my first time to Belize and so again a new experience, so I didn't think much more about it.

However, now coming back to Belize for the second time, I completely understand why SVPC continues to return to here. It is really special, the connection that our church has made with Port Loyola Baptist Church. It is nice being able to form actual relationships with this church and their community – as opposed to serving a community once and never seeing them again. I went on a mission trip to Mexico, 15-ish years ago, and I still think about the people from time to time and wonder how they are doing, how old the children would be now,

and if they are all still in that same village. With PLBC, I don't have to wonder, because we have regular contact with the wonderful people we have met here.

We are able to see the children that we have gotten to know grow up and watch their personalities change. Keemar, for example, was 5 years old when I first met him. He is now 8. He was a little rambunctious when he was 5, and was often getting into trouble and being scolded by his aunt. But you could tell he was a very sweet boy. He still has the same personality, but he has grown up. I watched him participate (thoughtfully) during the church service and VBS. I watched him help the younger kids and show them where they needed to be. And I watched him help out without anyone asking as we were setting up for VBS. It has really been nice to see how he has grown over the last 3 years.

I'm looking forward to spending more time and making more memories with Port Loyola Baptist Church.