

# Spain: A matter of timing

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So far, my summer in Dénia, Spain, has flown by. I have been surprised and overwhelmed, but I also have been amazed by the way the Lord has provided for me.



Hillary McNutt My original intention in traveling to Spain for the summer was to learn Spanish while I worked with a church. This is true to my experience, more or less, but God has a funny way of changing my plans on me.

Instead of learning Spanish in a classroom setting like I expected, I have been simply exposed and expected to take my own initiative so what I get out is what I put in. Also, I'm not working with the church as such, but the school that the church runs, in addition to some manual labor.

From years of mission trip training, I knew to expect the unexpected. As it turns out, that's easier said than done! It's one thing to tell God: "I surrender all of this to you. Use me." It's all too easy later to become selfish and disappointed when God's plan for you isn't tailored exactly to your liking.

Each day here in Dénia, we have a devotional to start off our day with worship and the God's word. Each volunteer will share usually one day a

month. I have been praying about my day for the entire month I've been here. Leading up to it, I felt strongly that I should talk about God's timing, his sovereignty in his plan, and that he has a reason and purpose for everything. Little did I know that I would become sick with both a sinus infection and a respiratory infection only a few days before my day for devotions.

### **Mystified and frustrated**

That really mystified me and frustrated me. As I was sick—spending nearly a week in bed—I really began to feel down about my purpose. I thought: “How can God use me if I'm sick in bed? What good will come of this?” I even ended up having to switch days for my devotional due to being ill.

The day I ended up speaking on timing, it was one volunteer's birthday. For another volunteer, it was the final day at the school. I was personally blessed by God's word as I shared it with the group. “Trust in the Lord and lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5-6). “Wait patiently for the Lord” (Psalms 37:7). “God has made everything beautiful in its time” (Ecclesiastes 3:11). It was clear to me on that day, even though I had realized other aspects of being sick that were beneficial to me—such as being able to spend additional quality time with him—God was sovereign even in his timing about my plan to speak about his plans.

Although I'm still trying to understand the purpose I serve in Dénia this summer, I've come to realize a few things:

First, not all of the volunteers here are believers, and I am gifted in ways to be a light to them. This opportunity is enthralling to me.

### **Praying for the children**

Second, although some of the kiddos I work with are too young to understand the gospel, I get to have the incredible experience of praying

over them daily. I know the Lord is faithful to what he promises, and he has promised to listen to my prayers. “Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath” (Psalms 116:2).

Third, in many ways, I am an encouragement to the church here. Because we are all parts of the body, I take joy in representing what may seem like a small part but can function in a big way. I am compelled by the gospel to serve selflessly, give wholeheartedly, listen earnestly and love unconditionally.

### **Changing my heart**

Fourth, God is changing my heart immensely. I feel that upon going on a mission trip, there is a sole focus on serving, encouraging, and ministering. Valuable, yes, but your heart is usually an afterthought. I often forget how much God usually will teach me about himself and who he desires me to be. I know I will come back from Spain a different person, because God delights in making new creations. Praise the Lord, who has a purpose for each of us, constantly changing as we grow closer to him.

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