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Bruna Barbosa

Bruna Barbosa
Andrews University

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Bruna Barbosa



I have always known that I wanted to become a missionary; however, I assumed that when I went to serve I would be an adult, already equipped with a professional degree that I could use to help others. Instead, God sent me to be a missionary much sooner than I expected. Little did I know; my missionary year would change my life!

When I arrived at Southern Adventist University, I was a young, enthusiastic freshman. Being a student missionary was not at all on my radar. Yet, when I began hearing the stories and experiences of past student missionaries, I immediately felt drawn to the experience. I felt a clear calling to become a student missionary. I was not sure which year I would go, and I did not know which country needed me; all I knew was that God wanted me—and that was enough.

Then life happened.

As a freshman, I did not have the maturity necessary to remain focused. I was a social work major, but I wasn't sure about this career path, and I found myself doubting my choice often. On top of that, I wasn't doing well in school. I got comfortable. I started making friends. And I lost the passion to serve God as a missionary. I liked Southern, and decided to stay.

Not long after, a recruiter from Andrews came to Southern to give an overview of their health professions programs. After the presentation, I decided to become a speech-language pathologist and transferred to Andrews.

I finally knew what I wanted to do with my life, but that revelation only served as one more excuse to forego becoming a student missionary. I knew that if I became a missionary, I would not be able to enjoy more than one year in my current comfort zone. Once again, I was faced with two paths and familiarity seemed to be the easiest choice. This time though I didn't feel content taking the easy way; I could not shake the desire to be adventurous, to be bold and to be obedient to God's voice.

In April, I decided it was time to become a student missionary. Unfortunately, the deadline to apply had already passed, but I met with the director of Student Missions and she agreed to work with me. Yes, this should have been proof enough, but I still asked God to send me another sign just to make sure I was doing what he wanted me to do. I knew exactly what to ask for: If God wanted me to be a missionary, I needed to see a butterfly.

At dinner that evening, I was scrolling through Pinterest when I saw my sign: A gif of a penguin chasing a butterfly flashed across my screen. I know, I know: Some of you don't think social media signs count, but I do! Excitedly, I jumped up and ran to the Student Missions office. I had received my sign. I was ready to become a missionary.

I spent my SM year in Palau. While there, I met a precious gem: Five-year-old Kazia. Kazia could only speak a few words, and she communicated by following people around. Her parents and the community assumed that she was autistic, but after intense testing, they told me that Kazia was not autistic. She suffered from a severe case of language delay and desperately needed a speech-pathologist.

Kazia and other children in Palau now fuel me as I sit in classes studying to become a speech-language pathologist. There are no speech-pathologists on the island of Palau. Some children are not succeeding, not because they aren't smart, but because they are not receiving the therapy support they need.

Here at Andrews, I have a mission. I have a purpose. I know what I want to do. I will become a speech-pathologist. I will help the children of Palau.