

I know you're probably looking at lots of internships right now. And they offer a lot of things: college credit, professional experience, room and board, and some even offer to pay you. But there's one thing I'm pretty sure most internships don't offer.

Let me tell you a story.

When I interned at Compassion, I first met twenty of the other interns an hour before heading to the Denver airport for a red-eye flight to Cartagena, Colombia.

We spent a very hot, humid, and sweaty week in Cartagena, serving together and getting to know one another. At one point, the city of Cartagena literally stopped all running water, and we showered with bottled water, which was a great bonding experience.

But when we returned from the trip, we all moved into our host homes and only saw each other at work. We were in such an odd situation: thrown together so quickly and then separated just as quickly. Would the budding relationships we'd begun continue, or would they dissolve into the dreaded monotony of "office friends?"

A couple of weeks in, we met for a hike in a canyon. It started out as a normal hike, but when we descended to the bottom, huge boulders stood in the riverbed that gurgled by. As adventure-eager newbies to Colorado, we immediately raced to climb as high as possible. Making it to the top of the boulders, the social media intern snapped a picture for Instagram, and then we climbed down and resumed our hike. But somehow, after the rush of bouldering, normal hiking just didn't satisfy. We set our sites higher: climbing the canyon walls.

After making it over the massive amount of boulders at the bottom, we reached the actual walls. I started my ascent. As the rubber of my hiking boot scraped across a rock, losing traction, someone shoved my backpack to keep me upright.

We made it a good three-quarters of the way up when we reached a nearly impossible obstacle. Above, we saw a narrow shelf and an eight-foot wall of rock before the top of the canyon.

"I'm not sure it's safe to try and make that," I puffed doubtfully, rubbing my sweaty forehead. Looking back, I could see the sharp drop down into the canyon.

"There might be a foothold there," Garrett said, pointing.

Our tallest intern, Micah, went to investigate. He climbed onto the shelf and stuck his hand in the foothold.

"I think I can make it," he said. The other interns climbed to below the shelf, ready to try and break his fall if something should go wrong.

“You got it, Micah.”

“Be careful, Micah.”

He shoved his foot into the rock, reached up to the edge of the canyon, and pulled himself up. We all cheered in relief.

Next, Micah pulled Garrett up over the ledge. Then, the two of them lay flat on the rock and pulled each intern up one by one. For a pretty random group of people out for fun, it was the most intense team building exercise I’ve ever experienced.

When it came my turn to scale the rock, Micah and Garrett took my hands to pull me up, and I knew interns were behind me to spot me and keep me safe. They spoke encouragement as I used all of my strength to make it up and over to the top of the canyon. I made it up and looked around, seeing golden beams of sunlight streaming through the sky.

The interns arrived as strangers, simply thrown together. But as we got to know each other, we supported each other, encouraged each other, and offered help whenever it was needed. As corny as it is to say, we helped each other scale the rock wall of this internship.

If one intern messaged us that they needed help on a project, five interns were at their cubicle within the hour. When I was freaking out about my final day’s presentation, another intern was there to give me a pep talk. We prayed together, worshipped together, and grew together.

Compassion fosters this community. They encourage interns to support each other and sharpen each other as iron sharpens iron. And that’s why I can assure you that this beautiful Christian community is something that Compassion offers every summer. Any time you apply, you’re applying for college credit, professional experience, and payment (thank goodness Compassion pays!), but you’re also applying to join an incredible community of brothers and sisters in Christ. And the best adventuring buddies you’ll ever find.

And that’s something you won’t find elsewhere.