

Captive Free North East 2003-04 Journal

Date: 9/30/2003

Submitted by: Aly Matthewman

Journal Entry:

[Sarcasm] I love technology. No, really, technology is a wonderful thing...when it works. We have been having some technical difficulties with our internet and e-mail and hopefully all of the bugs have been worked out.

Besides the technical difficulties, team life has been an adventure so far. We've been so very busy. I can't believe we've been on the road for 3 weeks now! We've met some wonderful people and been able to share some quality fellowship with them. I am amazed at how well we are taken care of. I was prepared to give up my guilty pleasures **Aly Matthewman** for this year on the road, coffee and chocolate, because I would be relying on the good will of my brothers and sisters in Christ to provide for me what I needed. God has provided for us all ten-fold! Not only are our needs met, they are exceeded through the love and hospitality of everyone we meet. I even get coffee and chocolate once in a while. Okay, more than once in a while!

Sometimes I get so confused. When I decided to go on team, I was preparing to give up a lot of the comforts I knew at home. I was thinking to myself, "I'm going to give up all these things and go and do God's work, be God's hands." I feel so guilty. Because I felt like I really haven't had to give up a whole lot! I actually feel like I'm gaining more than I'm giving. In a way, that just doesn't seem right. And I'm not just talking about gaining materially, although we are very well provided for. I'm talking about gaining spiritually. My faith has grown so much in just a few weeks! It's incredible. I love God more and more every day.

That's all we've got for today on "What's going on in Aly's head?" Tune in next time for "Did I seriously choose to live in a van for a year with 5 strangers?" Seriously, I hope God continues to bless you all and lead you in the path that he has for you.



Date: 10/2/2003

Submitted by: Zac Harder

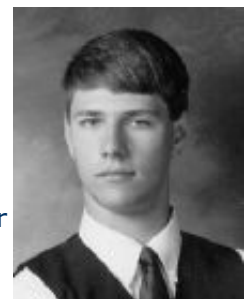
Journal Entry:

The lesson learned this day was that God is good and He provides. The day started out well, leaving Reading PA, but shortly after it went down hill fast. Natalija Pollock was driving and when we were about an hour away from our destination, which was Chester NJ, and we ran out of gas. God is good and we found that out when we came to a stop. Kris and I walked to find help and it just happened that behind the trees we came to stop in front of, was a gas station. Praise the Lord! After we were back on the road we crossed the PA, NJ boarder where there happened to be a four and a half mile bridge that rose to about 200 feet out of the water. It was amazing. One thought... We are little. God is Big.

We arrived at the church about half an hour late. There was boy in the audience and he danced to all of our songs, all around the sanctuary during the program. Jesus said that we must enter the kingdom of God like little children. The little boy knew what it was all about.

The next morning I got a nice morning run along the Chesapeake Bay shore since my host parents lived twenty feet from the water, literally. After a quick shower, my host father drove Natalija and I around to look at the damage from the flood of the hurricane. We saw the infamous sail boat that had floated up against a power line and fried itself along with everyone's power. There was nothing left except a small pile of fiberglass and the metal pulpit at the front of the "boat." The water had gotten to the porch steps of the condominium that I stayed in but no higher. Once again, God is good.

Back at the church, we did our morning activities of morning devotions, a huddle, and a team meeting and rehearsal. We were kindly interrupted by Caleb's host parents. They had brought us a



Zac Harder

gas can to give to Natalija as a joke, but also as a gift for emergencies. God really does provide, because I'm sure that that will not be the last time we run out of gas!

Date: 10/4/2003

Submitted by: Kara Kvanli

Journal Entry:

Wow! What an adventure team has already been! The goodness of strangers never ceases to amaze me. Yesterday was our day off. We definitely used it to its full capacity. We all slept until around 11:00 and then we found a pretty decent mall just outside of Princeton, New Jersey. It took us forever to get there though. You can't make left hand turns off of highways. We had to turn right and make a u-turn. It was most bizarre. Later on that night Kris, Natalija, Aly, and I went to Barnes and Noble, Wal-Mart, and Applebees. It was so much fun. Today we drove back to Pennsylvania where we get pretty much another day off. After having a program six nights a week it is so nice to have a night to relax and really get to know some people. The host homes that we are all at are the homes that we will be at for a week this summer for VBS. It's nice to know that we'll be here again and have it already be familiar! Until next time, here's a random Northeast quote provided by Zac Harder: "I own the cheferly industry."

Peace, Love, and Slinkys,
Kara



Kara Kvanli

Date: 10/14/2003

Submitted by: Aly Matthewman

Journal Entry:

So here we are in Aly's head again for "Did I seriously choose to live in a van for a year with 5 strangers? And the answer is yes, yes I did! And it's been, may I say, interesting. I may not appear to be, but I am an introverted person. I am very fond of my "me time." But God has challenged me in my ways. "Me time" is not always possible on team. I spend about 10-12 hours with my teammates a day and after that I am getting to know my host family until I go to sleep to rejuvenate for the next day's adventures. Little did I know that giving up some of my "me time" would be a good thing for me. I've had some wonderful conversation and fellowship with my host families and my teammates also. For example, on our day off Monday, all I wanted to do was stay home in my pajamas and watch TLC (one of my very favorite channels). I did get a chance to do some TV watching, but I also got a chance to bond with my teammate Natalija. We had an awesome day hanging out, talking about boys and such, and dying her hair from bright blonde to deep red. It was awesome and she looks very pretty! But beside the fact that we had a good time together, I realized that had I played hermit all day, I would not have had the opportunity to grow closer with Nat. And I decided to try to take every chance and not miss an opportunity to create a bond with someone new.

I encourage all of you "introverts" out there to take an hour out of your alone time and talk to someone new, or even someone you've known for a while and see if you can't discover a new bond you have with them! And for you extroverts, look for the opportunities to create a new relationship with someone and to witness!

I love Jesus!



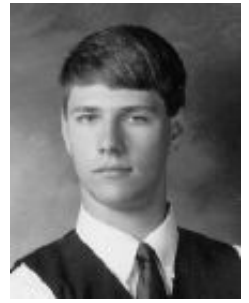
Aly Matthewman

Date: 10/16/2003

Submitted by: Zac Harder

Journal Entry:

Every Tuesday is like a slice of heaven because we get communication with the outside world. We get a mail packet! Usually our mail packet is actually a large box filled with supplies, supplemental information and merchandise, job information and last but definitely not least, personal letters from family members, friends, and fellow teamers. God has been teaching us patience this week by making us wait for what we enjoy. The mail packet did not come on Tuesday, or Wednesday. Today is Thursday and it still has not arrived. This is a good reminder that things work on God's time; not ours. Sometimes when we have smaller turnouts than expected I get depressed about our ministry. I think it is helpful to remember that similarly, we are working on God's time. We are only here to plant the seed. We should not feel like we had little impact just because we did not get to witness the "harvest." That is all in God's time. Quote of the week: Let go and let God.



Zac Harder

Date: 10/25/2003
Submitted by: Caleb Norris
Journal Entry:

This weekend was great we had a retreat with about 120 junior high students at a camp in the mountains of New York called Sunrise. Saturday night I gave my sharing during the program and it was amazing, because I don't think that I've ever had that many Jr. High students give me their complete attention for 7 whole minutes. All the kids really loved having Captive free at the retreat with them and I really feel that they all got fed this weekend along with my whole team. It was nice being able to stay in one place for more than one night and being able to make more in depth friendships with the people at the camp was a good experience as well. On Sunday morning we did the Simple Service and that went better than it ever has for my team and Kris gave his sharing and did a great job with it. I also got to see a little bit of snow at camp as well and that was cool because I haven't seen snow in forever, being from Texas. So I guess you could say that all is well on the Northeast side of things! God bless!



Caleb Norris

Date: 10/28/2003
Submitted by: Aly Matthewman
Journal Entry:

I'm writing this journal after riding in the van for ten and a half hours today. So if I seem a little bit incoherent I apologize. We were lucky enough to spend five nights in one place. Spending more than two nights in one place has been unheard of to us so far. We spent the past days at SonRise Lutheran Ministries on Schroon Lake near Pottersville, NY. It was B-E-A-U-tiful. We were part of the Atlantic District Junior High Youth Gathering. We had such a wonderful time just hanging out with the young people. They were so excited to be there and to grow in their faith. It was infectious. Sometimes I get so caught up life's tasks sometimes that I forget to just have FUN! But that's what I did this past weekend, is have FUN. Caleb, Kara and I lead an improv comedy workshop and it felt so good to laugh. Not just a little giggle, but a healthy old belly laugh! I guess the young people enjoyed it too! But that was my reminder from God this weekend. To not take life too seriously. To sit back and enjoy all of the goofy things life has to offer.

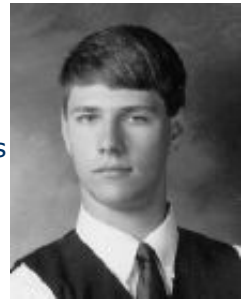


Aly Matthewman

Date: 10/30/2003
Submitted by: Zac Harder
Journal Entry:

Today was awesome. God had a few lessons to give us. One of those was patience. This seems to be a reoccurring theme in my team experience. We were all packed up and ready to go and then our church contact offered to take us out to eat Chinese. Once we

got there one of us realized we forgot our Bible back at the church so after we were done eating Chinese we had to track all the way back to the church. The only problem was that I had only planned enough time to eat. Not enough time to romp around the countryside. After we picked up the Bible, we set off on hwy 7.... the wrong way. That was my bad. So, once we got that figured out, we ran into traffic; heavy traffic. This was partly due to a very smashed up explorer. The bumper was placed about where the person in the back seat would sit. We thanked our lord and savior for watching over us. It did however cause us to be an hour late; something that our team struggles with frequently. Luckily, our host had planned for us to arrive an hour early, for whatever reason. God had planned our day out so much more than I could ever have imagined.



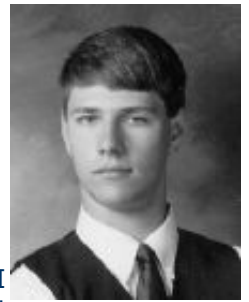
Zac Harder

Date: 11/14/2003
Submitted by: Zac Harder
Journal Entry:

"Journals for Dummies" By Zac Harder

Sometimes God has amazing things for us in store that we do not see coming. The other day I was running in the morning in order to stay in shape. I was staying in an older new development where all the houses are actually mansions. The whole development was on the side of a hill, which was going to prove challenging to my run. I am just a beginner at running so I never go far. It is usually around a mile to a mile and a half. I ran down the road a little ways and then took a left in order to go around the block. The left took me back up the hill. At the end of that block I took another left in hopes that two more lefts would bring me back to the house. I got halfway up this street and realized there was no way I was going to be able to run any further because it was such a steep grade and I was actually so out of shape. I set a goal in my mind; "I am going to make it to that mail box." Once I made it there I stopped and huffed and puffed and almost blew myself over. In the process I turned around and realized that I in fact was on the top (almost) of a hill. Not just any hill but a very large hill that looked down into a valley, and actually half way across New Jersey. I was totally not expecting to see the view which I did. It really struck me all of a sudden how magnificent of a place I was in and how small I am.

Sometimes I try to do things myself and lead my life where I want it to go. God doesn't always like that. God has a lot of things planned for me this year, and for the rest of my life. There is no possible way that I can know what God wants for me other than what it says in His word. Therefore, it would be advantageous for me to let God control my life instead of trying to keep myself at the helm. I know that with God my life is totally out of control, which is ironic because I am willing to sacrifice control only to Him.



Zac Harder

Date: 11/15/2003
Submitted by: Kara Kvanli
Journal Entry:

Wow! What a crazy week this has been. Aly went home for a funeral and will be back with us on Tuesday. We've had to adjust with programs and jobs, but thankfully everything is getting done. Aly is certainly missed, though.

We've been busy doing lots of rehearsals trying to get our second program done. It's been a lot of fun learning new songs. It's also been especially fun for me learning new things on the bass guitar. I really enjoy that instrument!

I had quite the time at my host home a couple nights ago. It had been windy all day so it was nice to get inside a warm house for awhile. The house had a wood burning stove so it smelled really good in the house. I sat in the living room with the couple talking to them for at least an hour. When I woke up the next morning, the power was out! Due to the strong winds, many trees fell down and knocked over power lines. So we were going to go out for breakfast and then they were going to take me to another house so I could shower. When we got back to the house after breakfast, the power was back on! God is good all the time! When I was saying good-bye to my host mom she



Kara Kvanli

kept saying that having Captive Free people at her house was always such a gift for her. It really made me so happy to hear that! It's so amazing that you can give someone a gift and minister to them just by being around!

God's blessings to all who read this and I, again, leave you with a random quote courtesy of a Northeast teamer (me): "The sleeping part of you always knows!"

Peace, Love, and Slinkies,
Kara

Date: 11/16/2003
Submitted by: Kris Duarte
Journal Entry:

Well Well Well... what can I say? The Captive Free experience is simply amazing. The impact of team on my life in the last few months is pretty huge. Knowing that all you really need, and feeling grateful for simple things like a bed, shower, and a meal is a great way to learn that everything else in the world is a want or a simple pleasure. I thank God daily for the opportunity that He has given me this year to experience His ministry on a new level.

I do miss my family and friends from home a lot. I have never been away from home this long and sometimes I just want to sit on the couch with a glass of water like I had so many times when I was at home. This year isn't about being comfortable though. It is all about the ministry of truth and sacrificing everything we can for Him.

One thing that always keeps me going and inspired to keep going is knowing that Mid-Winter training is just around the corner. I am excited to see other teams and hear about there experiences, I am also excited to see some very close friends from other teams that I have not seen, only talked on the phone, since we left in September. I really think that this Christmas is going to be very special. I have always been around home for Christmas, but I think my return will be something special for my family and I am excited to see how much my brother Alex and sister Mishell have grown and changed and I hope to help them with any questions they have about life. I also can't wait to see my parents and hear what they have to say about my long hair and freshly pierced ears. I'm sure they will be able to handle it, and accept me and still love me no matter what.

Overall, I am having a great time on team and can't wait 'till next year!
In Christ, Kris Duarte <///><



Kris Duarte

Date: 11/22/2003
Submitted by: Caleb Norris
Journal Entry:

This weekend was great, we had an event that went every well. It was the Northeast congress. It was such a good experience for me, my team and all the youth that went to the event. Saturday night was amazing. I got a chance to do a little bit of speaking at Last Word and it was awesome to let God use me in that way. I didn't think that an event was going to be so much hard work. I spent a lot of the weekend on the laptop working on the slide shows and such. The event staff was amazing to work with. They did such a great job and really let us run our part of the event. We also got to meet Tangled Blue who were the performers at our event. They were also great people to work with. They really taught me a lot and they were just really fun to hang out with. Saturday was most definitely the longest and most fun filled day.



Caleb Norris

Date: 11/26/2003
Submitted by: Aly Matthewman

Journal Entry:

My life has been completely discombobulated for about two weeks. I couldn't tell you which way is up, my left from my right, what day it is, what time it is, even what month it is. The reason being that I was absent from team for a week. Who would've thought that it would mess me up so much? Well it did. And my life has been a whirlwind.

You see a good friend passed away November 10th very unexpectedly. I have never experienced that before. I ended up getting permission from the YE office to leave for a few days. I booked a flight for the next day. Everyone was very kind and supportive, especially my team. The service was just perfect for Mike, exactly what he would have wanted. I sang his favorite song with his two best friends, Matt and Eve. Being there provided me with much needed closure.

The thing is, is that I didn't realize how much my faith would help me through something like this. It also helped me to encourage others grieving the loss. I have found a tremendous amount of peace in knowing that Michael is in heaven with Our Lord. I have found peace in the power of prayer. I have found peace in knowing that God has his hand in our lives, every moment of every day. That he knows best. I would have thought that I would have been angry with God for taking him, but I'm not. This tremendous amount of trust in God has grown from my short time on team. And I am so incredibly thankful that I have had the opportunity to grow in my trust in God, or Mike's death may have been even harder to cope with.

To conclude, I don't have any great words of wisdom. Just a hope that everyone can find the same peace I've found in my difficult time, in their own difficult times. To know that God's way is the best way, no matter how difficult it may seem. If He brings you to it, he WILL lead you through it. God's blessings and peace to all who read this.



Aly Matthewman

Date: 12/2/2003

Submitted by: Kris Duarte

Journal Entry:

Team rocks! This experience has been a blast. I am really having a great time playing music and just having fun getting to meet a lot of new people. Although team relations aren't always super happy and cool, I really do love all my team mates. Getting to know what kind of people they really are now compared to who I met in August has been really great to see.

I think all of us are growing spiritually and faithfully on team together and I am really happy to be a part of it all. Our daily devotions and Team Huddles time really makes us talk to each other and learn about each other; which is very important.

We are making our way back to the Mid-west for mid-winter training, which is very exciting. I cant wait to see my friends from other teams and hang out with them. I am really looking forward to coming home for Christmas break.

I have the opportunity to lead the contemporary worship service again at my home church (Peace Lutheran), with the group Song of Praise. It will be cool to see how much they're sound has improved since I have left back in August. I feel very welcomed home since they have invited me to come back and lead worship for a Sunday.

Overall, I am having a great time on Captive Free and cant wait to see my friends and family at Christmas time.

Kris Duarte <///>< Acts 20:24



Kris Duarte

Date: 1/7/2004

Submitted by: Aly Matthewman

Journal Entry:

"On the road again! Just can't wait to get on the road again!" I can't believe it's been

over a month since my last journal entry. How time flies!

Well, now that we're back from training and break I feel refreshed. I had a great first week at home visiting with my parents, grandparents, sister, niece and friends. But I was one of the lucky people out there who was able to experience this year's flu. My Christmas Eve and Christmas Day were spent in my bed in my new pajamas. (A tradition in my family is that each of us gets new pajamas every year. It's the first gift we open Christmas Eve. We change into them right away, and spend the rest of the evening sporting our new duds.) But The Lord heals, and I am now a "new creation!"



I wasn't quite up to par when we regrouped after break on Saturday, December 27th. Kara and I both came back quite ill. By Monday, Kris and Natalija were also ill. Zac also ended up catching the bug. But we're hoping now since we've almost all had "the bug," that the rest of the year will go smoothly concerning illness. Thanks to the Torbit family in Baltimore, MD for being great nurses. We spent New Year's at their home. (They're the parents of Pat Torbit on Watermark Germany.) It was a really great way to ring in 2004!

We also had our first Youth Quake last weekend in Baltimore and it was such a blast! We don't get much sleep at events and some of us were still recouping from illness, but the Holy Spirit is always working to keep us renewed and refreshed, pumped up for God!

Wow, much has happened in just a short time. Thanks and praise to the Lord for all of the experiences he has provided thus far in the new year. I can feel the Lord at work in me every day shaping me into the person he wants me to be. I can feel myself being shaped in my relationships with teammates, in my host home ministry, in my music, in everything I do. It's a gradual process that the Lord works through, with each of us every day, but I think it's magnified in life on team (like many other things!). I pray the Lord's will be done in each person's life reading this and that you find the faith to trust in His plan for you (Proverbs 3:5-6): that the Holy Spirit will soften your heart, that you will allow Him to shape you and change you into the person you are to ultimately become. In Peace.

Aly Matthewman

Date: 1/7/2004

Submitted by: Zac Harder

Journal Entry:

Things For stuff and pondering. Jan 7/04

Our team had a break through a couple days ago:) We decided to schedule in an hour of fun time because with out it scheduled in, it doesn't happen. So we decided to go to Target and do some crazy Christmas shopping for each other. We all drew names and went in with a mission. It was snowing hard core outside so that added to the festivities.

We had a price limit of a dollar so it was interesting trying to find something crazy for less than a dollar. I was looking for something fun and I realize that God shops for us every day in a crazy way. Every day I see crazy things in life and nature that could only have been put there by God. One day we were driving in the mountains through road construction. We saw a sign that said "littering, \$500 fine." Right next to the sign was a highway department dump truck and it must have been break time because there were two guys in the cab eating. We knew they were eating because one of them threw an empty can out the window and it actually hit the sign indicating that littering was a finable offense. Kris and I both observed this incident and promptly busted a gut. I think that God puts things like that in life so that we can get a laugh and remember that He has a sense of humor too. Having joy in the Lord is a big part of good ministry and looking for crazy things in life helps to remember how to have joy in Him.



Zac Harder

Date: 1/9/2004

Submitted by: Kara Kvanli

Journal Entry:

Hey there outside world! Our event this weekend in Baltimore was incredible. There were over 800 kids there! It's just so incredible to see so many kids getting on fire for Christ. Since break, our team has come closer together. We learned at mid-winter training that we are a team that likes to stick to the weekly schedule that Zac makes for us. So we started scheduling in some extra stuff. Like fun time, where we just do something completely random together. We also added in worship time. We had that today. It was incredible. We sat together singing worship songs and then the pastor came in and we had communion together. That was just amazing. We haven't communed together for a month. It was especially meaningful for me. The last time I had communion was over Christmas break and my mom gave it to me. But I'm really glad we had that opportunity and the pastor was just thrilled that we asked him to do that for us. Well, that about tops it off. I leave you with this random Northeast quote via Aly: "The Parthenon? Isn't that in Washington D.C.?"

Peace, Love, and Slinkies,
Kara



Kara Kvanli

Date: 1/15/2004

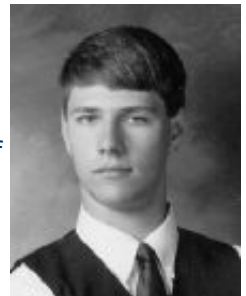
Submitted by: Zac Harder

Journal Entry:

Our team had a breakthrough a couple days ago:) We decided to schedule in an hour of fun time because without it scheduled in, it doesn't happen. Our team is kind of anal like that. So we decided to go to Target and do some crazy Christmas shopping for each other. We all drew names and went in with a mission. It was snowing hard outside so that added to the festivities.

We had a price limit of a dollar so it was interesting trying to find something crazy for less than a dollar. I was looking for something fun and I realize that God shops for us every day in a crazy way. Every day I see crazy things in life and nature that could only have been put there by God. One day we were driving in the Appalachians through road construction. We saw a sign that said "littering, \$500 fine." Right next to the sign was a highway department dump truck and it must have been break time because there were two guys in the cab eating. We knew they were eating because one of them threw an empty can out the window and it actually hit the sign indicating that littering was a finable offense. Kris and I both observed this incident and promptly busted a gut.

I think that God puts things like that in life so that we can get a laugh and remember that He has a sense of humor too. Having joy in the Lord is a big part of good ministry and looking for crazy things in life helps to remember how to have joy in Him.



Zac Harder

Date: 1/26/2004

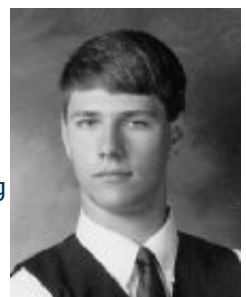
Submitted by: Zac Harder

Journal Entry:

There have been many times when I have felt very passionate about something until God shows me different and corrects my attitude. Last night was one of those correcting moments for God.

We were at a booking where we did not get much sleep and I was very upset about the situation. The sleep I did get was not good sleep and we, as usual, had a program the next night. I am a person that requires about 8 hours a night so suffice it to say, two hours did not cut it.

A friend and I have been reading through Acts together and there are some correlations to be made. Paul was also involved with an intense ministry; a huge time commitment, ultimately eternity. He also suffered due to the circumstances of his ministry. The correlation breaks down with the amount of suffering he and I experienced (if lack of sleep can even be considered suffering) as well as our attitudes toward the circumstances. Paul was flogged, stoned, beaten, and ultimately martyred



Zac Harder

because of the message he preached. I got to have a good time and sacrificed a little sleep for some fun with some really cool youth. Ultimately my eyes were a little heavier the next day. Paul rejoiced when he had the honor of suffering for the message of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. I complained to my teammates about it and drove their demeanors into the dirt. When I realized what I was doing I stopped talking and began praying.

The book "The Purpose Driven Life" has been popping up in my life at random places. One of my teammates has been reading through it with his significant other. A couple days ago another teammate of mine started reading through it with his significant other. Both of them recommended it to me. I made some comment like, yeah, I'll read it sometime, not really intending to. I got a valentine package from my mom filled with candy and cookies and the normal care package contents. In the very bottom was this book, "The Purpose Driven Life." So I took this as a sign from God that I should read this book. I opened the cover and the first line hit me like a ton of bricks. "It is not about you." I am not sure if that means anything to anyone else, but that should be the motto of any teamer. We constantly deal with youth we meet putting us on pedestals. We constantly deal with selfish egos placing ourselves before others. We constantly deal with attention seeking behaviors. Anything of this type is contrary to the message we are supposed to be spreading. It is not about us. It is about God. It is about Jesus and everything He taught us. It is about the atoning sacrifice He made 2000 years ago that still remains for us, sinful creatures that we are.

I challenge you to remember that we are not the center of the universe. God is, literally. He will take care of you so rejoice that someone more powerful has your circumstances under control. For the rest of the story, our contact was nice enough to let us crash on his couches at the church for a few hours. Even in my petty complaining, God took care of us.

Date: 2/10/2004

Submitted by: Kris Duarte

Journal Entry:

I am just hanging out at a host home right now listening to music, winding down from another day of team life. My glasses slide down my face, so I push them up a lot now. Sometimes when I don't wear them I catch myself trying to push them up... but they aren't there, so I end up poking myself in between my eyes. Isn't that cool?

I have been playing piano a lot lately and have written a total of three songs on that particular instrument. Speaking of writing songs... One day Nat was playing piano at a church during some of our down time and I over heard her and decided to take a listen.

She was playing a few chords and a chorus she had written to a song. All she had written was the chorus and she told me she needed verses, without even thinking about it I started singing words. I managed to sing two verses, so we decided to write down what I said. A few minuets later the rest of our team was picking different parts they could sing, and different instruments they could play. For about a week now we have been playing the song "I Need You" written by Nat and I. It is definitely a worship song and I can't wait to play it for camp fire at events. Speaking of events, Virginia Beach Congress is coming up in a few weeks and that means I get to see my family soon. They are flying from Seattle to Texas, then to Va. Beach to see the team at the congress. I am quite excited. Okay, I will say goodbye for now, but if you managed to get to this part of the journal entry I thank you for your time and tip my hat to you for putting up with a piece of Kris' life. Good Bye.
Kris Duarte <///>< Acts 20:24



Kris Duarte

Date: 2/21/2004

Submitted by: Zac Harder

Journal Entry:

As I have been reading through Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, I have begun to understand how much God wants us to rely on Him. When the Israelites came out of Egypt, they had very little with them, they didn't know where they were going, and they were not in a land abounding with "stuff." You know, "stuff" like food, water, animals; the things they needed to survive.

For those of you who aren't familiar with the story, the Israelites were complainers. It is



Zac Harder

very easy to accuse them of not trusting God and just being an annoying people. I have to admit that I would have fit right in. I am a person who likes to know the details. I need to know where food (money) is coming from. I need to plan in advance for the future so that I know I will be taken care of. This kind of personality leaves very little room for God. He did not leave the Israelites to die in the desert. He provided food from them, although not in a way that any of us would have planned. He let manna rain down from the sky. God taught them, and me, an amazing lesson through this particular incident. He told them to collect only enough food for the day and nothing more. Even after this instruction, knowing myself, I think I would have been stuffing some in my tunic, in my apron thing, maybe in a scarf of some sort. It is just very difficult for me to not try to plan for the future. He wanted them to rely on Him for their sustenance. Their punishment for keeping food longer than was specified was its molding and deterioration.

Recently I came upon the realization that I have too much stuff, even here on the road with me. I had a suitcase full of clothes that weighed in excess of 60 lbs. I think I had like 15 shirts and about that many pairs of socks. I had two pairs of shoes, four pairs of pants, and a tie that was never used. I looked at all of the stuff that I had and I thought to myself, how many people in the world live on less than this for a whole life? I am only traveling for a year. How many people in the world trust that God will provide every piece of clothing they will need, every meal they will eat, and security for all the hard times they will pass? I became very ashamed of how much I wasn't relying on God. So, probably very hastily, I dumped the contents of my backpack out. I picked out 7 shirts, 7 pairs of socks, one pair of pants, all of the appropriate under garb, and shoved them into my backpack once again. Everything else, including most of my dress clothes (Ooops), was packed back into my suitcase.

My dad flew in to see me in York PA Last night. My aunt and uncle live in State College PA and so after he visited me last night, he drove there to visit with them. I gave him my suitcase and in about two days it will be flying back to Mountain Lake, Minnesota. I have been living out of my backpack for a week and really enjoy it. For one, it is much easier to carry around. On a different level it serves as a reminder that God will take care of me. He will provide for me. Not once in the past six months have I not had a bed to sleep in. Not once have I missed a meal because it was not provided or I could not afford it. No matter where we have been, there has always been a congregation or group of friends that has showed us hospitality and ministered to us.

Quote for the day: "Let go and let God."
-Someone.

Date: 3/11/2004

Submitted by: Aly Matthewman

Journal Entry:

Has it really been nearly 7 months that we've been "on the road?" Incredible how time flies when you're having fun, huh? =) Since my last journal entry in January (I know, I know...it really IS about time) so much has happened. I even broke my foot! We were in New Jersey unloading the trailer when I (call me Grace) stepped out of the trailer and my foot gave out. Since it was the 3rd time my foot sprained since team started, I figured I didn't need to see a doctor. "Raise it and ice it" was what I was prepared to hear them say. But apparently God knew I needed a doctor and there was one at the church. She advised me to have an x-ray and a week later when I was in Virginia, I found out it was broken! So she sent me to an orthopedist in Arlington to have it casted. I have yet to find a doctor willing to take it off for me.

In the meantime God has been teaching me humility. I'm a very independent person and not used to letting other people help me. Obviously, having my limb in the state it is in, I have needed some help. It's been very hard for me to swallow my pride and let the many gracious people who have offered to help me, help me. I want to always be the one to be doing the helping or serving. And to be honest I'm not sure exactly why God has been trying to teach me to swallow my pride. Maybe it's exactly that...to swallow my pride. I will leave this journal entry with a verse a friend just shared with me. Phillipians 1:6 "being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." God will continue to shape me into the work He has envisioned me to be. In such ways as teaching me humility through an injury. God's blessings to all who read this.



Aly Matthewman

Date: 3/13/2004

Submitted by: Natalija Pollock

Journal Entry:

Hello there everyone! I'm so sorry it's taken me this long to submit a journal entry. I'm learning SO much this year, and one of the things I'm learning about is time management. I've been finding out how to lead this incredibly busy lifestyle and still find time for important things like keeping in touch, i.e. writing journals. This year has been totally incredible so far. I've left at least one of my personal possessions in almost every state we've been in. I drove the van until it ran out of gas one day, I forgot to plug my microphone in before a family night program, I've discovered that wet cold really is different weather than dry cold, and realized that people really can be total opposites.

I've also discovered new favorite foods, gotten to play music literally almost every day, found out what a "goomba" means, been thrilled with not seeing a pine tree for six months and learned how to embrace differences in other people. I really love being able to serve on Captive Free, and I'm so thankful that God had this in His plan for my life. It's already been amazing, and I still have a while to go yet!

Right now we're in Alexandria, VA. Tonight we had a family night program, and it was a total blast. During the program, I thought I spotted a familiar face in the crowd, but I wasn't totally sure about it. Afterwards I made my way over to that person, and my gut instinct was right. It was Stephanie, from Captive Free Northwest '99-'00. Her team spent two weeks at the summer camp in Kalispell, MT that I work at. She encouraged me way back then to consider serving on Captive Free in the future and her awesome Christian example displayed as a teamer really encouraged me. It was so great to see her again, and receive some advice from her.

One of the things that I love about this year is all the wonderfully strong faith-driven people I've met so far. I really feel that while I'm doing what I can to reach out in love and share about God's grace in my life, I'm constantly learning from others as well. I stayed at a home in Connecticut a while ago where the woman hosting me shared about how she's learned to truly trust in God's awesome power, and I was blown away. She reminded me that I still have so far to go when it comes to maturity in my faith walk. Alright well that's a little bit about what's going on with me right now. Thank you very much for taking time to read this, and I'll try to do more regular updates in the coming months. Take care and remember: Don't bite down very hard on a plastic fork. It might break, and besides, you could chip a tooth.

In Him,

Natalija ><> Phil 2:14&15

"We may speak about a place where there are no tears, no death, no fear, no night; but those are just the benefits of heaven. The beauty of heaven is seeing God. Heaven is God's heart." –Max Lucado (When God Whispers Your Name)



Natalija Pollock

Date: 3/15/2004

Submitted by: Kris Duarte

Journal Entry:

Great day today. We are hanging out in Chester, VA out side on a beautiful day. I have been jamming out on Kara's guitar for about an hour, just having a good time. The last few days have been very difficult as far as team goes, with a lot of emotional drama and flaring attitudes. Today has been quite nice to just hangout and be a team again.

Though we have our tough times, we always seem to work through them. God is great, because without him, I don't know if we could ever work through the stuff we do. We are all looking forward to Easter break to go home and see friends and family. I can't wait to go to San Jose, CA and just be in the sun all day long. Sounds great.

In Christ, Kris Duarte John 14:6



Kris Duarte

Date: 3/21/2004

Submitted by: Natalija Pollock

Journal Entry:



Natalija Pollock

Greetings to everyone from Fleetwood, PA. I'm currently in my host home, hanging out on my day off. I don't like to sleep past noon, because I feel like most of your day is already gone once you wake up. I have to admit, it was hard not to sleep longer than noon today. This week our team had a really intense experience. We took one of our teammates to the hospital for the first time. On Saturday Caleb had an allergic reaction of some kind. He was getting pretty sick so we took him to the ER and got him taken care of. As health coordinator I went in with him. Thank the Lord for being the great healer! By that evening most of his symptoms were gone and he's doing much better now. That whole situation with Caleb made me realize yet again just how much we're relying on God alone to take care of us this year. What's so great about His power is that He provides for us in ways that I couldn't believe possible in my normal daily life.

Here's a good example of how God is providing for me on a regular basis this year. A little while ago I ran out of deodorant. That might seem like a minor problem, but when you're riding around in close quarters with five other people in a van every day, it's a bigger deal. So I was going without for a few days, and I don't care who you are, that's not a good idea. I told someone I was running on empty as far as that item goes, and they brought the exact kind I use (they had no way of knowing my favorite kind) to our next program. How generous to go out and buy something for me after I only mentioned it casually! I suppose they might've felt bad for my teammates...but God is so awesome. He works through His people all the time.

I've gotten to stay with a lot of really cool people who've opened up their homes and hosted me. I recently stayed with a pastor who did his internship in Texas, and the country singer Lyle Lovett was in his youth group there! I've stayed with people who have really interesting careers, like structural engineers who've had a hand in putting together really famous American landmarks. I'm just experiencing so much! It's so radical to look back on what I've already learned and realize how many things I'll always cherish about this time of ministry and personal growth. I feel God stripping away parts of me to allow Him to shine through more and more every day.

I keep a devotional journal, and today I read it a little bit, backtracking and reflecting on things that God has been showing me, and over and over I've been thanking Him for answered prayer. I think it's really too easy to get focused on what's going on in the here and now, on what we might be involved in or stressed about. Then it's difficult to sit in awe and realize that in a quiet way, your prayers have been answered in an area that you least expected it! Lately I've just been concentrating on my team life, and didn't even realize right away that a prayer about a completely different area of my life had been answered and I hadn't taken the time to rejoice and be glad. Those were just some thoughts I've been having lately. I figured I might as well throw them out there. Once again, thank you for spending this time reading about what's happening with me. Take care and remember: In some cases a comb can be more useful than a brush.

In Him,

Natalija ><> Phil 2:14&15

"Happiness can be found neither in us nor in external things, but in God and in ourselves as united to him." -Pascal

Date: 4/24/2004

Submitted by: Natalija Pollock

Journal Entry:

Hey there everyone! Greetings from Huntington Station, NY! Today I'm feeling slightly groggy because we had a lock-in last night. We were in Attleboro, MA. On Thursday our team had some free time, so some of us went to Cape Cod. Seeing the Atlantic Ocean again was a lot of fun. We made it back just in time for dinner before our lock-in. So last night, someone on our team grabbed my pillow out of the van to sleep with. Normally I

wouldn't care, but since we were all sleeping on the floor, that meant I didn't have anything to sleep with. The person who was using the pillow was already asleep and I felt bad about taking my pillow back. So I was faced with an interesting situation. Well a few of us realized we didn't have pajamas to sleep in and headed to the home we'd be showering at in the morning to get some. That house had some nice pillows on their couch and I asked if it would be okay if I used one. They said "Sure!" and handed me a leopard print one. I felt like Jacob, searching for a place to rest my weary head and finding a rock. Only it was a leopard print rock...never mind. I apologize for any lack in coherency; this is a real example of me severely deprived of sleep. God is constantly providing in ways that blindside me when I don't expect it in this crazy lifestyle.



Natalija Pollock

Oh, I wanted to mentioned something that I just thought was awesome about last week. We had a family night program in upstate NY, and afterwards I introduced myself to a couple. We started really talking and they told me they actually weren't members of that church, they'd read about this in the local newspaper. They were just looking for something different, and came that night. I was so excited to have received a reminder that people from all over could possibly come to any of our programs. It's encouraging to know that our ministry has the potential to reach out into communities. God's using our team as instruments for His glory. Woo hoo!! Right on! Have I mentioned before that this region we're traveling in is awesome?! I'm really excited about next week, one of the stops we'll be making is in Philadelphia, PA, our destination being U Penn. I really enjoy going to colleges and hanging out with my peers. Alright I'd better end my journal entry. Thank you so much for reading this! To anyone who checks this out, take care and remember: Mud can be more treacherous than ice. (Just trust me on this one.)

In Him,
Natalija Pollock ><> Romans 12:1&2
"Anxiety is taking today and trying to live tomorrow." -Joyce Meyer

Date: 4/27/2004
Submitted by: Aly Matthewman
Journal Entry:

Journal Entry 4/27/04
"This is what happens when you stop being polite and start getting real."

I write from UPENN in Philadelphia after a long lapse in entries. It's hard though, after spending a day in the van, setting up equipment, singing a program and tearing down sound equipment, to motivate oneself to compose a written expression of how their life on the road has been. But here I go.

A tired and blunt Aly shares "I'm at the point this year where I'm used to my life, going from place to place. But I'm also extremely exhausted at the same time. I'm getting very tired of this lifestyle. Many days I wake up wishing I was in my own bed. I'm very spiritually and emotionally drained at this particular moment, not to mention I have ZERO money.

I realize that there are worse things that can happen and I realize that I am well taken care of by the gracious people who feed me and put a roof over my head. I am not in any way ungrateful, just tired, poor and drained. I'm human, we all have our moments. This is mine. I know God will be with me through it. He heals broken people, such as me."



Aly Matthewman
