

Captive Free South West 2003-04 Journal

Date: 9/13/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Bellman

Journal Entry:

We have been on the road now for a total of two days. Our commissioning service was Friday night and we regrouped Saturday morning. Commissioning was a day of mixed emotions for me. I had to say goodbye to the people that I had gotten close to at training and the idea of being on the road for a year all of a sudden became reality. I was lying in bed the last night of training and thinking to myself... "I am never going to be able to do this. What have I signed up for?" I found myself questioning my call from God and just as quick as I doubted it God responded to my insecurities. He used the people that I had met at training in so many unique ways. He was talking to me through them and used them to show me how special this calling really is. I found myself praying God please give me the strength and the courage I need to make it through this first week. See I knew that God would ease my mind. I just had to ask and trust that he would deal with the rest. It strikes me as odd how many times in our lives we decide to leave God out of the equation when we figure out problems and deal with fears. God doesn't give us more than we can handle and will never set us up to fail. We just have to be willing to take the risk and jump in the deep using him as our lifeguard.



Sarah Bellman

Our first booking was a Sunday School program for 6th-8th graders. We had planned on sing-alongs, puppets show and a sharing. The morning seemed to go very smoothly and I think we got off to a very good start. God was with all of us and I feel he used us to relate to the kids. Our host family was amazing and we all had the opportunity to stay at the same house. They have an 18 month old and 5 1/2 year old little girl. Both of the girls were such sweethearts and we had so much fun playing with them and getting the chance to act like little kids. We are in Nebraska and have a few more out of region bookings on our way to Colorado. My team is having so much fun spending time together and just relaxing and enjoying each other's company. God really is amazing and that is becoming more and more obvious to me every day.

Sarah

Date: 9/16/2003

Submitted by: Nick Barootian

Journal Entry:

Having been on the road only a few days, it's hard to know exactly what is in store these coming months. I do know that after the chaos of training and the commissioning ceremony, these past few days in Wilber, Nebraska have been days of calm recovery for the whole team. There is no scheduled gig here in Wilber; we're just passing through. We are fortunate enough to have the whole team stay in the basement of the same house. Being in the same house and having no formal engagement has given the team a lot of time to energize, bond, and enjoy each other. I feel we are ready to begin a strong ministry together, and I am more excited than ever for the chance to do it.



Nick Barootian

The owner of the house we are staying at is Irma Ourecky, a sweet, ninety-one year old, full-blooded Czech woman. She has a lot of spunk for a woman of ninety-one years. I love trying to imagine what she must have been like when she was thirty-one or forty-one. Spending a few days with Irma makes me even more excited for all of the people I will meet this year. There are so many cool people in the world.

Nick

Date: 9/20/2003
Submitted by: JP Gustafson
Journal Entry:

21 years ago today, I was born to two amazing people. At present, my family consists of five members, including myself. Today I am spending my birthday on the road, and all of the host families I have been with until now had told me, "It must be hard to have a birthday on the road, do you miss your family?" And each time I would reply that it was not hard, but that I did miss my family. As the day began I was feeling pretty homesick. It was going to be a really busy day, and I wasn't sure if I was going to get to call home. I don't know if my teammates knew, but they certainly did their best to distract me. Later on in the afternoon we had some time to go and hang out at a small strip mall and get some personal shopping done. I went to a small bookstore to pick up a book to read, and when I got back in the van I was surprised by my teammates with cards and a few small items for my birthday. It made my day! If I couldn't be with my own family today, I would like nothing better than to spend the day with my teammates. It made me realize that I was not as alone as I had first thought.

JP



JP Gustafson

Date: 9/27/2003
Submitted by: Nick Barootian
Journal Entry:

Yesterday morning, very early yesterday morning, before I was even thinking about waking up, Alli dropped off Sarah at the airport. Sarah's gone home for the weekend to be part of her aunt's wedding. So we're down to four team members at the moment. Last night we had our first "team outing". Thank goodness for team outings. The four of us went into Fort Collins to a place called Fort Fun. With a name like Fort Fun, how could we not have a good time?

Fort Fun did not disappoint. We played mini-golf. We drove go-carts. It was a good time. Katie got all in-a-tizzy because I kicked her butt at the go-carts. She got over it—eventually. (A go-cart rematch has been scheduled.)

The best part of the night was the face-painting. Katie and Alli got their faces painted at Fort Fun. This was serious face paint. I'm talking about the whole face. It was great when we walked into Denny's and half of the customers turned their head to see Katie and Alli walk in proudly, faces decorated, arm in arm with JP and me.

All in all, a fantastic evening. I wished Sarah had been there to make our fun more complete. There will be other team outings, when we will all be there.

Nick



Nick Barootian

Date: 9/30/2003
Submitted by: Allison Page
Journal Entry:

Wow! I have to just rave about how beautiful Colorado is. We spent the past few days in Colorado Springs with some amazing people. Yesterday our new friend Sharon took us to a place called Garden of the Gods. Sounds like a heavenly place, right? Well, it totally was. It was such a peaceful place, with lots of huge "orangish" rocks. I actually got stuck climbing a few, ha ha. It was just awesome to be in a place like that with my team on our day off. We were all at such peace with ourselves, each other and especially God. I feel so close to God when I am surrounded by all of this natural beauty that he created. I feel like it is a glimpse of heaven and that makes me excited. I am looking forward to all of the awesome creations we will be seeing in this part of the country. I thank God for giving us this beauty!



Allison Page

Date: 10/15/2003**Submitted by:** JP Gustafson**Journal Entry:**

Tomorrow, I get to be in charge of my first sharing. A sharing is a time during our program where we have a mini sermon. It's kind of like a testimonial, but kind of not. Anyway, tomorrow is my first day to be in charge and I'm a little bit nervous. Having grown up in the church I don't have a miraculous story of how I came to find Christ, or God or a "new life". So I am a little anxious about telling my tale. I know it will be fine and all will go well, but that doesn't make it any more comfortable. My sharing has to do with being prepared to do God's work, and how I impacted a girl's life back in high school by sharing the gospel with her. My verse comes from 1st Peter 3:15 (NIV), "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." So tomorrow is a day of sharing, I'm going to be prepared.

JP

**JP Gustafson****Date:** 10/21/2003**Submitted by:** Nick Barootian**Journal Entry:**

Little kids have so much energy! Tonight we did a program for a bunch of families with young children, and it was a lot of fun. We sang a lot of sing-alongs and got all the kids dancing in the aisles. One little girl in particular loved to dance. Even after the sing-along portion of the program, she remained in the aisle and danced and held an imaginary microphone to her mouth, doing one of the finest rock-star impersonations I've ever seen. It was hard for me to not laugh out loud.

We've been blessed with some amazing audiences lately, who have seemed to enjoy our programs a great deal. It's very rewarding to see people having fun and loving our music.

The central valley of California is beautiful right now. The temperature is ideal, and it hasn't rained in weeks. As all of us on the South West team are originally from the northern half of the United States, it's actually kind of strange to not be experiencing Autumn right now. Not that I'm complaining.

Nick Barootian

**Nick Barootian****Date:** 10/22/2003**Submitted by:** Katie Ernst**Journal Entry:**

Well I haven't been writing many journals and so I thought I would sum up how things are going for me on the road. Life is interesting and boring all at the same time, if you could imagine that! Everyday is a new day that is filled with meeting new people, seeing different parts of the country, having different conversations, and eating different food. All though on the other side it is the same thing day in and day out. We wake up in the morning, eat breakfast, get in the van, and drive to somewhere new, set up for a show, play the show, and go to sleep! Nothing out of the ordinary and that's when it becomes boring. Don't get me wrong I love being on team. It has been a great experience. There are many ways I keep myself entertained on the road and if you ask any of my teammates, family or friends

**Katie Ernst**

they can tell you that I am really good at it. One of the ways is by practicing drums on the van's interior (my teammates love it). We also have weekly theological questions that are submitted by the lovely and amazing Sunitha Mortha. They are great and they keep us challenged in our faith. So there is my team life experience in a nut shell.

Programs are going awesome. We have so much fun. There is a song or shall I say a rap that we perform that is off the hook. We are going to expand on that song with a little free style or remix. Be looking for it at future shows! Well I need to sign off.

God's Blessing,
Katie Ernst

Date: 10/23/2003

Submitted by: Allison Page

Journal Entry:

It's amazing to me to think of all the places that we have been in just a little over a month. We have met so many great people, and have worshipped at so many different places. Our worships have ranged so much, and each have touched me in a different way. For instance, last night we had a Family Program that was absolutely packed with energetic teenagers. It was an upbeat program with lots of dancing and singing.



Allison Page

However, only a few days before we were worshipping in a small room with a group of older folks at a nursing home who only watched and listened. Both experiences were extremely different, but extremely fulfilling. I am truly starting to feel God working in all aspects of life. I am learning that God is present all the time: in our van, in the homes we stay in, on the stages that we perform, and in our hearts. I find so much more meaning in life when I seek God in each thing I do. I am realizing now how much God is working in me and not just through me. I am excited for all of the new places in my life that I will find God's presence. I have definitely found Him many places here in northern California.

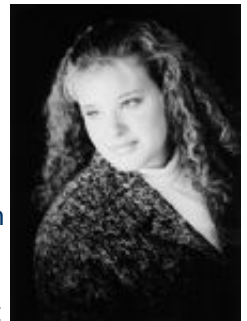
Allison Page

Date: 11/27/2003

Submitted by: Sarah Bellman

Journal Entry:

Happy Thanksgiving!!!! There are so many things that I can think of to be thankful for. Most of all I am thankful for this call to ministry. I was so nervous and doubtful of this at first and there are still days that are not easy but as a whole I can see God working in my life and I am loving every minute of it. I love being able to see people, especially children, on fire for God. My team is another major thing in my life. I think... no, I know that I take them for granted sometimes and this holiday is giving me a chance to reflect on the amazing blessings in my life. Everyday I appreciate my family more and more. This is not hard for them and they are doing so well realizing that this is a call and that I am doing God's work.



Sarah Bellman

We got to spend time at Rainbow Trails Lutheran Camp in Hillside, CO for the holidays. That was an amazing experience and the staff was awesome. The camp hosted a community dinner and we got to be the "entertainment" before the meal. It was a great time of fellowship and awesome food. Christmas is just around the corner and I am so excited about spending time with my family preparing for my favorite holiday.

Well goodbye for now... God bless and Happy Holidays!

Sarah Bellman

Date: 1/1/2004

Submitted by: Nick Barootian

Journal Entry:

Happy New Year! I hope you all had a very blessed Christmas, and a well-spent New Year too. We spent the New Year with some folks at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Grand Island, Nebraska: sang some songs, played some games, got chocolate syrup all over our faces, etc. It was a good time for one and for all.

You may be wondering why we haven't written in our electronic journal for so many weeks. Well, the truth is that we ran into some trouble in southern California. Yeah, we picked up this hitch-hiker. He seemed like a nice guy, but it turns out he was an evil elf. He worked some magic on our computer so it wasn't able to upload anything from word-processing programs. And that's why there haven't been any new entries in our journal in such a long time.

Okay, so that's not exactly how it happened. You see, we were in our van and Katie decided to try to jump the Grand Canyon. We made it across with the van, but as we were sailing through the air, the computer fell out of the trunk. It was about to disappear into the darkness of the canyon when a giant butterfly flew by and snatched it out of the air. And that was the last we've seen of it.

Alright, so that's not quite how it happened. The real truth unfortunately, is way less interesting. Way back in early November, I left the team computer at a host home. The saga that ensued has never been recorded in its entirety, and there isn't room here to share all the details. It ends happily, though. After much labor and hardship, the computer was finally recovered. Over our Christmas break, the computer finally arrived at our main office in St. Paul, and it is with us now as we return from Christmas break and point our compass back toward the Southwest. On the road again.

Nick



Nick Barootian

Date: 1/4/2004

Submitted by: Allison Page

Journal Entry:

Wow, it feels really good to be back on the road after Christmas break. The coolest part about this time of year is that we are going back through lots of places that we visited earlier in the year. It is awesome and comforting to see families that I have stayed with before. They are my families away from home, and I love them all. I am also looking forward to all of the people that we have not met yet. God always seems to put the right people in my path at the right time. For instance, every time I need reassurance that people are hearing our message and finding God in our music, He always seems to put a face in my path to share a smile of joy and contentment. I have met some truly amazing people on the road, who have shared some life-changing experiences with me. I love that our mutual relationship with God allows for that sharing to take place. It is a blessing and a gift.

Another great thing about going home for Christmas and then coming back, is knowing that I am truly following God's plan for my life. It is not always easy to use our gifts the way God wants us to, because sometimes it is dramatically different than our own plan for our life. When I went home for Christmas, it was wonderful to spend time with familiar people, but in my heart I knew that God had many other people for me to meet and spend time with this year. It is a wonderful feeling to feel that you are exactly where God wants you to be.

I saw a poster the other day that said "Everything I learned, I learned from the Bible." This poster has stuck in my head because of how true it really is. Every time I read my Bible I learn something about the person I am, and the person God wants me to be. It is exciting because I am growing and changing in myself and in my understanding of God.



Allison Page

I would like to end this entry with a request for anyone reading this. I ask that you keep us in your prayers as we are sharing the message of Jesus Christ with people. As it says in 2 Thessalonians 3:1, Pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. I pray that the Lord is blessing your life right now, and that your relationship is growing deeper everyday.

In His amazing and precious love,
Allison

Date: 1/8/2004

Submitted by: Katie Ernst

Journal Entry:

Today we drove from Denver, CO to Ogden, UT; needless to say, it was a long drive. It was about ten hours in a van with four other lovely, tired, stinky people! It was great, I am one of the only ones that love having long drives but this drive was a little bit different for me... See I had ten hours to think about things and that was about nine hours and fifty-nine minutes more than I wanted or needed. What has been on my mind lately and what consumed my mind most of the ride was what I am going to do next year. I have three choices, either to do international team, college, or move to Minneapolis and work for a year and see what develops. I figure whatever way God leads me He will use me in that area. God has been showing Himself to me lately in so many ways. For example He shows up in my teammate, Allison, she believes and knows that God told her that I will not be going to college anytime soon and that I should give up on that option for next year. I don't mind that idea to tell you the truth!! I believe that our God is a faithful God and will be with me until the end of my days no matter where I go or what I do.

So there I sat nine hours and forty-five minutes later, in a moonlit sky surrounded by the silhouette of the mountains in Utah knowing that God was with me right there speaking to my heart. What He said to me was to have a heart of discipleship and the mind of servanthood. I feel that He is leading me down the path of missionary service abroad, whether it be with Youth Encounter or not I don't know but I don't let that trouble my heart. I am comforted by the verse in Philippians 1:6: He has started a good work in you and He will see it through until the end. Praise the Lord!

God's Blessings,

Katie Ernst



Katie Ernst

Date: 1/11/2004

Submitted by: Sarah Bellman

Journal Entry:

Ok so I know that this was a while ago but, HAPPY NEW YEAR!!! This New Year is bringing so many new experiences and so many new goals. A lot of people say that they have New Year's resolutions but instead of setting resolutions I am setting reasonable attainable goals. One of my main goals is to try not to take on the world. I am a very goal-oriented person and my personality lends itself to try to solve everything for everyone. With some people in my life this is a good thing and they appreciate this aspect of my personality. With others though it causes us to butt heads and threatens some people. So my goal is to lend a helping hand but not to take over and finish the project. My other goal is to strengthen my faith. God is becoming more and more obvious to me and I am loving every minute of it. I have always known God but I think now more than ever I am having a personal relationship with him and I feel he is a real thing in my life. For so many years I have seen God as this unattainable being in my life that seems so elusive and magical. I am learning that I can sit down and talk to God and have a real friendship, not just use him and request his mercy and help. I can see myself growing and other people in my life can see changes in me also. I love knowing that I am growing up and getting more mature and am excited about the



Sarah Bellman

person that God is letting me become. He will show his will to me and for now all I can do is be patient and let him be the amazing planner and creator that he is. Goodbye for now from Utah. God Bless and thank you for your continuing prayers and support.

Sarah

Date: 1/13/2004

Submitted by: Nick Barootian

Journal Entry:

There is growing excitement for our upcoming Quake. As our first big event draws near, there is a lot of planning and preparation to take care of. This process of preparation makes me a little wary, but it also makes me all the more eager to play at a big event with so many excited Christian youth. There will be so much going on. I can't wait.

Nick



Nick Barootian

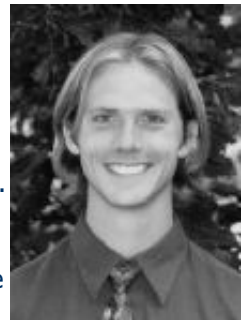
Date: 1/24/2004

Submitted by: Nick Barootian

Journal Entry:

The good news is that Allison will be back in our midst again tomorrow morning. On Wednesday, we left her behind in Modesto, CA so she could get her wisdom teeth pulled. She's been recuperating at the home of Cindy and Greg since then. Al's absence has really been a lesson in our group's interdependence. When one part of the body is gone, the other members do suffer, especially when the missing member is responsible for the daunting task of setting up a soundboard for programs. Her presence has been missed in other ways that I'm less able to pin-point. It's clear that the five of us have grown together in a special way. To some extent, we need each other.

Nick



Nick Barootian

Date: 1/27/2004

Submitted by: Allison Page

Journal Entry:

Well, I certainly have quite the story about how wonderful and gracious our Lord is. One of the hardest things about being on the road is taking care of your health. Not having convenient access to doctors and dentists when you need them can be quite overwhelming, not to mention the stress of having to leave your team one man short to take care of yourself. So, when my wisdom teeth got infected I started getting a little nervous about all these things. Where would I get the surgery done? How much would it cost? Where would I recover? How long would it take to recover? How much stress would it put on my teammates? All of these questions just plagued my mind, and I felt almost helpless. I wanted to have trust that God would take care of things, but it was hard.

Just when I thought I truly couldn't take the pain anymore and was going to have to make a trip home for surgery and recovery God answered my prayers in a way that I will never forget. He took care of everything through an amazing family that I was staying with. Greg, my host dad, was a dentist and his wonderful wife, Cindy, saw that a dentist visit was on our "needs list." I explained my situation and she was determined to help me take care of it, even though I insisted that there were just too many factors to think of. The next morning I got x-rays and had the surgery an hour later. My host family took care of everything, and then some. They made all the arrangements and then took care of me in their home while I recovered. They showered me with care and love, and I truly felt like a part of their family. Matt, my host brother, gave up his bedroom so that I would be



Allison Page

comfortable. Katie, my host sister, stayed home from school one day to hang out with me. Little Ben stuffed napkins in his mouth to match me with my gauze. Cindy and Greg opened their hearts and their home to me and treated me like one of their own. How God blessed me at the right time with the right people, made me so aware of his mercy on me. He will never give me more than I can handle, and I need to trust that. What an amazing God we have!!

P.S. They let me keep the teeth and they are HUGE!!!!!!!
God's Blessings on your day,
Allison Page

Date: 1/29/2004
Submitted by: JP Gustafson
Journal Entry:

Tomorrow is our first event. It happens to be the Northern California Quake and I am really excited! I went to events like this when I was in middle school and I remember them being a lot of fun. I saw one of my first Captive Free bands at a youth gathering and it inspired me to become a musician and later a team member. I'm hoping to get some sleep tonight but I don't know if it will happen, I'm ready to get this party started!

JP



JP Gustafson

Date: 1/31/2004
Submitted by: Katie Ernst
Journal Entry:

What is up everyone? I'm great here! We are in the middle of our first Quake this weekend and it is a blast. The kids are awesome, the staff, and artist are too!

This journal entry I wanted to tell everyone what it is like on the road and the simple joys that go along with it. For example, one thing I get really excited about when I get to a host family is looking in their bathroom to see what type of shower head they have! I know that sounds strange but a good shower with the right pressure and flow of water makes my day and sometimes my week. One host family we stayed at had one of those waterfall showers that you just stand under and buckets and buckets of water pour down, until you can't take anymore. Another joy comes when we arrive at church, set up and get ready for sound check. It is then when I find out if I will be able to play with real drum sticks or if I have to use thunder sticks, which aren't as loud. Sometimes I get to use real sticks and that definitely gets me excited, because that means I can play loud! My team enjoys that, too. A final thing but not the least that gets me excited is Cold Stone Creamery. For those of you that know what that is you understand without me telling you why, but there is some of you out there that have no idea what Cold Stone is and pray that someday you will experience it firsthand. I will try to explain it to you right now the best that I can about what it is like. It is an ice cream shop but not just any ice cream shop. There are at least twenty flavors of ice cream to pick from and about fifty different toppings to pick from. When you go in the store the first thing that hits you is the smell of fresh waffle cones being made. Then you pick a base ice cream. Next you add your toppings and they make the creation right in front of you on a marble slab putting everything together. Then they put it in a bowl or waffle cone or waffle bowl. Amazing, I know! Then you sit back and enjoy! My favorite is coffee ice cream, heath bar, caramel, and almonds. It's to die for! Oh, the simple joys of team life, you have to love it. Well I hope all is well with everyone!

Peace,
Katie Ernst



Katie Ernst

Date: 2/3/2004

Submitted by: Nick Barootian
Journal Entry:

We just got done with our first Quake of the year. It was great! Singing to Jesus with a room full of four hundred other young people was really some powerful worship. And, man, we could make some noise. I won't ever sing the chorus of Trading My Sorrows the same way again. Yes, Lord.

Highlights of my weekend included getting to share nighttime devotions with Lord of Life Lutheran Church and Immanuel Lutheran Church. I love to talk about God, and it's hard to talk about Him with everyone. So I really appreciated those devotional times we shared. I also got a huge kick out of the Prayer Group that I led Saturday night. I think the youth that came got a kick out of it too. Well, they either loved it or they hated it, because when our prayer time was over they threw me in the pool. My jeans are still drying, but it was worth it.

As Captive Free, the nature of our ministry is temporary. We drive in for an evening, give a program, perhaps a little morning chapel service, and then we drive off to the next place. We don't often have the opportunity to really develop relationships with the people we encounter. That was perhaps the best thing about the Modesto Quake. I got to spend significant chunks of time with people and youth groups. It was fun, and it was a deeper kind of interaction than we are usually allowed in our daily, on-the-road life.

All the technicalities of the Quake were taken care of. Partly, it's because we have an awesome Event Director, Jen Noyes, who just makes everything run smoothly. And partly, it's because we knew that all the technicalities were less important than having the right hearts. We were there to praise God, and teach, and learn, and that was going to happen regardless of whether the sound system was working and regardless of how many chandeliers Swen and Dean broke. The power of faith is no small thing.

Thanks to all of you who came to the Modesto Quake and made it so much fun! You are all blessed, and you blessed me. Continue to live in the presence of God every day, serving, working, and loving.

Peace,
Nick Barootian



Nick Barootian

Date: 2/5/2004
Submitted by: Allison Page
Journal Entry:

It is really hard to believe that it is already February and that we are at the halfway point in our tour. I have met so many awesome people, grown abundantly in my spirituality, and traveled in over 8 states. All of this in only 6 months!!!!

One of the most challenging things this year has been the lack of personal time and space. Being around people almost all the time is a huge test of emotional energy. I have learned that when I am truly tired and burnt out I cannot hide it. I cannot put on a mask because people see right through it. Living this way has really opened my eyes to the person I truly am and how God made me, flaws and all. It is so easy to fit into the roles that people want us to, and act the way that they expect. When you are around people all the time, you learn to just be yourself, and it is a valuable lesson. God didn't intend for any of us to be perfect, so I have learned to be honest with myself and my team when I am being crabby. Communication is so important, so that other people don't take your mood or attitude personally. Learning this on team has changed so many relationships in my life. I have recognized that people can't read my mind, and honesty and communication can help them understand me better. The deepening of relationships in my life through this change and awareness in myself may never have occurred if I was not on team. So, if anyone ever asks me about this experience being life-changing, I can already attest to that truth.

God Bless Each of You,



Allison Page

Date: 2/17/2004

Submitted by: Allison Page

Journal Entry:

I have discovered that one of the most wonderful things about this ministry is the fact that it has been going on for so long. Knowing how many people have traveled this path before me is so reassuring and comforting. We are all like a family, each year of "teamers" representing a new generation. I have realized that this year will in fact come to an end, and a new group of chosen people will carry on the same message that we are. Of course the way they present it will be unique, as every team is, but the mission will always be the same. It is so easy to put myself at the center of things, and recognizing my place in the big picture of this ministry has truly opened my eyes. God is the one who runs the ministry year after year, and the people that join team are simply the messengers. We are the messengers!!

God Bless you all
Allison Page
GMD



Allison Page

Date: 2/22/2004

Submitted by: Sarah Bellman

Journal Entry:

So one thing that I had decided on team is that when you are living with four other people you learn more about yourself than about others. I never thought that I would be one of those people that would find it difficult to not have personal time or space. I thought I was a person that craved companionship and I still do but there are days when I want to be able to be by myself and not think about anyone else. We are going to have solitude in a few days and as much as I am dreading not talking for a few hours, I think it will be a good time to have a conversation with God and that doesn't require words. I think that this time will be used in reflection and prayer and letting God into my heart.

God is really testing me right now and as much as I say that I love being challenged, I think that I have enough for right now. At least I can see Him working in my life. He is using other people in my life to challenge me and to study His word. There are people in my life now that ask questions about my faith, make me think, and force me to have an opinion. I have always had adults in my life that have taught me invaluable lessons but never peers that have had this much of an effect on my faith walk. I am a firm believer that friends are God's angels that he sends into our lives to watch over and protect us and as far as I am concerned I can use as many angels as possible. GOD IS AMAZING and I am learning that more and more every day!

God Bless,
Sarah



Sarah Bellman

Date: 3/11/2004

Submitted by: Allison Page

Journal Entry:

Can you believe it's March already?? Where does the time go? Being from Boston, this is usually a very grey and slow time of year when everything is dead and it just seems to drag. Now, I don't want to rub it in to all you folks experiencing the winter blues, but the sun has been shining nonstop since Christmas for us, and the temperature has not

been under 70 degrees very often. All the nice weather just seems to make the days go faster.

I am happy that the days are going fast because I am really looking forward to Easter. Sure I gave up soda and cannot wait to have it again, and I always enjoy the Easter treats, but those are not the reasons that I am looking so forward to Easter this year. This is the first time in my life that I have truly felt the meaning of Lent in my personal life. I have always known the season to be a time of giving things up and reflecting on Jesus' death, but never truly embraced it in my personal relationship with Jesus. Seeing the movie "The Passion" on Ash Wednesday was the beginning of my new perspective. Seeing that movie made me feel like I was watching my friend Jesus die for me. I am a very visual person, and seeing those events just did something to me. I began reflecting and reading the Gospels over and over again, meditating on what Jesus did for me, Allison Page. Giving up soda during this season seemed so trivial and small compared to what my Lord and Savior did. I want to give more of myself, and to make true changes in myself that will glorify Jesus. That is the least I can do in honor of a man who gave his life for me. I don't want these changes to end on Easter morning, but to only become stronger as I celebrate my living God. Easter is not about anything worldly, but of all things holy and righteous. I feel so blessed, that as a Christian, I already know of Jesus' resurrection. So, during this time of Lent, I live with hope until Easter when I can celebrate!!

God Bless all of your days,
Allison Page
GMD



Allison Page

Date: 3/23/2004
Submitted by: Allison Page
Journal Entry:

Being seven months into our journey has brought a whole new set of emotions and experiences. I am beginning to reflect on my Captive Free experience in chapters, and each chapter thickens the plot more and more. I am amazed at how we have grown as a team and as individuals. I have seen changes in my teammates and in myself that I know are permanent. We are at a critical time in our journey together when we are feeling tired, worn, dry, and lazy sometimes. I would say that it is similar to how we start to feel at the end of a school year. It is easy to let the work do itself and settle for passing when we know we are capable of so much more. In the beginning of the school year we are motivated and energized, but as the year moves on our energy and excitement begins to dwindle. My prayer is that God will give me the fire and energy to live like it is the first day of school... EVERYDAY!!!

Praying for you always,
Allison Page



Allison Page

Date: 4/1/2004
Submitted by: Katie Ernst
Journal Entry:

Dear Friends,

I think. I think a lot. My mind has been hard at work lately. I always think, but it has been in overdrive since Ash Wednesday. It started with The Passion of the Christ and the whole Lenten Season. My mind has been engulfed with what our Lord and Savior did for me and everyone, and as it gets closer to Holy Week the thoughts are more and more. The love that has been lavished on me by God is so overwhelming. To know that the creator of the earth, who can move mountains with a snap of his fingers loves me more than I will ever know, that takes my breath away. So as Easter comes closer I hope you find that love that



Katie Ernst

God so freely gives to all to find. My family has been on my mind lately, they are always on my mind. I have two nieces and two nephews back home that are growing and learning every moment of the day. I wish I could be there to experience all of it with them, but I can't because I'm on the road.

My teammates are on my mind too. I love all of them and care for all of them very much. They are my family this year and I always think about my family. This ministry is on my mind because I want to give all I can. I think about ways to improve myself so that it will affect the ministry. I think of ways that I can get to know people on a deeper and more personal level. I want to show the love of God to all I meet and that consumes my thoughts a lot of the time.

Another thing that is on my mind of late has been what I'm doing next year. This has been the center of my thoughts for the last week. I crave to do God's work, I crave to do His will, and I crave to affect His kingdom for the better. Like I said I have been thinking a lot. Although the other day I read this verse in the Bible and it spoke to me in a way that only could be the work and voice of God and His Spirit. The verse is found in Philippians 4:4-7, it reads, "Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving; present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." That verse just set my mind at ease, and that peace that Paul talks about did and will always transcend my understanding and I am ok with that. My mind is at peace as I enter the Holy Week, praise the Lord. May all your minds be at peace too.

Peace,
KT
CFSW

Date: 7/24/2004

Submitted by: Allison Page

Journal Entry:

I absolutely cannot believe that my year with Captive Free is almost over. It feels like the end of an era, and for my life it truly is. I have been changed this year through the people I have met, the places I have been, the challenges I have faced, and the ministry I have been a part of. If you were to judge my experience by the amount of journal entries I have written, it would be an extreme misjudgement. The truth is, that I could write a book on all I have learned this year. And, who knows, maybe I just will.



Allison Page

The Lord has blessed me so richly this year, and made himself so visible in my life. Being a stubborn person, and even cynical at times, I have spent a lot of my life doubting God's ability to truly provide. I have had a need to rely fully on my own understanding and ability to solve all of my own problems. Being faced with challenges this year that I was entirely incapable of resolving on my own, tested and strengthened my faith in God. It surely didn't happen overnight, but as I began to surrender to His will out of desperation, He began to change my life. He opened my eyes to things I needed to change about myself, and warmed my heart to accepting things about others that I had previously had no patience for. By providing all of my needs, tangibly and spiritually, God gave me a trust and peace that I have never felt before. He has taught me the power of FULLY relying on him, and not on my own understanding. And, more importantly, has shown me that to truly love him with all of my heart, soul, and mind, I must first trust him.

I believe that our relationship with God is like any other, in the time and effort it takes to make it grow. My prayer for myself as I finish this year is that my relationship with God will continue to grow deeper and stronger as I move on. I pray for energy and motivation to seek him in new ways, and to trust him with my whole heart always. I thank him so deeply for calling me to this ministry and for providing all of the support that I have needed to complete this year. He has put so many

amazing people in my life that will forever remind me of His amazing power and presence.

May God bless you abundantly, and may you trust in His plan for your life. May you seek him in weakness and in strength, and be an example of his love to others. Remembering that we are all brothers and sisters in Him.

Sister in Christ,

Allison Page
