

Captive Free West Coast 2007-08 Journal

Date: 10/2/2007

Submitted by: Melissa Nicholson

Journal Entry:

September 29, 2007

Today we traveled through the mountains for the first time. We were all amazed by the beauty of God's creation. During the first couple weeks of our tour I have been very impressed by God's creation. The Earth we live on is truly spectacular. Whether we have been driving through the grasslands of South Dakota or the mountains of Colorado we have been able to see God's amazing work. Even more impressive than the scenery are the people. Everywhere we have gone we have been greeted with enthusiasm and welcomed into homes with fantastic amounts of hospitality. As we drove through the mountains today I could not help but think about all that God has already given us and everything that he continues to provide us with everyday. God is amazing and he will never leave us or stop loving us. He will always provide for us through his beautiful creation!



Melissa Nicholson

Date: 10/24/2007

Submitted by: J.T. Elicker

Journal Entry:

So it was late Friday night and our team still hadn't eaten dinner yet. So while trying to figure out what restaurant was good in Phoenix, Arizona, we decided to go out to Olive Garden. When we got there they said that it would be about a 75 min wait. So we gave them our name and they said that we could leave and return in 45 minutes and they would save our name if we returned then. So we decided to go to Toys R Us and a few of us get Rubik's cubes because we had learned how to miraculously complete them in under 5 minutes. So once we got those and walked around the store and played with all the toys for little children we decided it was time to return to Olive Garden. So in Olive Garden all of us who had gotten the cubes started to complete them over and over again. Then when we finished we went back to the host church and when I stepped out of the van I looked down at my cube and realized that I had gone color blind and couldn't tell which color was which. Not a good thing. So I started to freak out. My whole world had now changed I would not be able to see colors again. I won't be able to match my clothes. So my life has now turned upside down. So then I turned to DJ and asked him what colors he saw and he said that he was unable to see the colors also. So then I wasn't as worried, I had someone else who was color blind with me. Then I looked up and noticed that I was standing directly beneath a street light. So then I put the cube in the van and looked at it in that light and I was no longer color blind.



J.T. Elicker

So this just goes to show that God works in funny ways to remind you to be grateful for everything you have.

So be grateful and thank the Lord.

-j.t.

Date: 10/29/2007

Submitted by: Melissa Nicholson

Journal Entry:

Today we had the opportunity to serve. We were invited to help at a soup kitchen after church in Salinas, California. We were able to serve sandwiches, fruit, salads, drinks, and

dessert to about 150 people. It was exciting to be able to serve people in a different way than normal. We travel around as God's messengers for a year, but often we do not get opportunities to reach people who may not see God's love everyday. We could tell that the people really appreciated what we were doing. I really enjoy volunteering and ministering to people through service. I have always jumped to serve in big ways whenever I could. I think service to others is a wonderful way to praise God and to spread God's word. God calls us to reach everyone with his love and a great way to do that is to serve as many people as you can. I challenge each and every one of you to find someone who needs help and serve them, expecting nothing in return. I know Captive Free West Coast would love to serve anyone in any way we can.

Trust Him,
Melissa



Melissa Nicholson

Date: 10/30/2007

Submitted by: Kimberly Neeley

Journal Entry:

So far we have been on the road for five weeks touring the west coast of God's glorious creation. Time has flown by, we are even thinking about what we are all doing for Christmas and not even Halloween or Thanksgiving has passed yet.

Before team started, I had never been farther west than the state of Iowa, now that I've seen beyond that I want to know more of what is truly out there in the world. If one country can be so diverse, I wonder what the other countries are like?

We have a God that is so marvelous and made everyone so different. From friends back home in Illinois to the host homes out in Arizona God made us all so different.

I can even see the differences in my own teammates and yet even my own family back home. We need to delight in our differences, and treasure each one that makes us so special. Because we are all individuals in Christ, since we unite in Him we see the entire picture, though we may not all see the plan that God has for us.

First Corinthians 11:14 says, "For the body itself is not made up of only one part, but many parts." If we were all made the same life would be completely boring, but since we are all different everything is interesting. If the body of Christ was made up of the same old boring people with the same exact personality, we truly would be living like the shows on television. Since we are all different the body of Christ is in itself exciting, it's like a huge fruit salad with a handful of nuts thrown in.

My year on team has just started and is already blowing me away, by what we have done, we've already made some differences, but I am sure many more will come.

- Kim



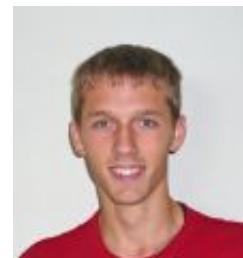
Kimberly Neeley

Date: 11/28/2007

Submitted by: DJ Rasdorf

Journal Entry:

Recently, we have had three eight-plus hour drives, which has given me lots of time to think and read. I am proud to say that I have not yet fallen asleep in the van. I just finished reading a book called Save Me From Myself by Brian "Head" Welch. He was the lead guitarist for a band named Korn. The book is about his dark life in the rock star style living. He was very heavy into drinking and drugs and was just consumed by the heavy metal scene. This went on for many years until he got an e-mail from a friend, Eric, saying he had read Matthew 11:28-30 (the theme verse for our Zones this year) and it made him think of Brian. This was the point in his life that Brian realized that the band was ruining his life and that he wanted out. So he quit the band and accepted Jesus into his life. He was still doing



DJ Rasdorf

drugs and drinking, but now he was also praying and going to church. He would later go on to be baptized in the Jordan river, kick the drugs and alcohol, and devote his life to two people--God, and his daughter Jennea. This book made me sit back and think about my life. I have done some bad things in my life, not nearly the kind of things that Brian did, but I did get in my fair share of trouble. Looking back, I now see that no matter how much trouble you are in, God will be there by your side helping you through it. Even though I got in trouble, God still chose me to do his ministry work as a disciple. I have realized that this is exactly where I need to be, surrounded by fellow believers, giving praise to God every day for the things that I have. There is no other place I would rather be in life right now; I am having the time of my life.

Date: 11/28/2007

Submitted by: Camilla Bendtsen

Journal Entry:

Journal from a Danish girl in the US!!

I have been living in the US for two months now, and it has been amazing so far. We have seen so many beautiful places. I have seen the mountains for the first time. I remember standing on the top of the mountain and was thinking, "WOW, what a big God I have. He has spread out these mountains and created all of it for us and for me."



Camilla Bendtsen

The best thing about being on the road is the people we meet. They have all been a blessing to me. It is so wonderful to meet my Christian brothers and sisters here in the US. It is so great to bring my joy in Christ to people who need it. Many people forget what a gift it is to be a Christian and have Christ in their hearts! A life with Christ is so much more than laws and duties! God created us to live a joyful life! He wants us to be joyful!

Two days ago, we helped some people from a church in their soup kitchen. They served food to the homeless people in their town. I was so nervous and so exited. While we were getting things ready, we could see people walking around outside waiting to get in. Finally the doors opened and people got in. There were about 100 homeless people! It was amazing to look in their eyes when I brought them their soup. You could see how hungry they were, and also their need. They were so grateful! As a team member, you learn to be grateful about the small things in life, such as a real bed to sleep in, a shower, clean clothes. You learn to trust in God and that he will provide for you. He provides for me! I experience that every day on the road! He has given me some amazing friends on my team who take care of me and help me out when everything seems overwhelming to be in a different country. No matter where we go, he calls people to open their homes for us! He provides!

"The Denmarkian girl" Camilla Bendtsen

Date: 1/2/2008

Submitted by: J.T. Elicker

Journal Entry:

So I realized how much I miss this ministry when I went on Christmas vacation. My dad had gotten in a car accident earlier in our tour and had to use my car, and while I was on break, mine died. So I was now down a car and both my parents had to use one car. Leaving me stuck in the house.

When you're on the road every day, waking up every morning and getting into a van and traveling somewhere new almost every day, you kind of get used to it. So that is one reason why I missed the ministry over the holiday break. Another is because I got to play in my church's worship team, but not like I used to, not the way that I play on team. But most importantly, I missed the ministry because of the ministry itself. I really enjoy what I am doing and what I am doing it for. It is an amazing opportunity, and I feel privileged to partake in this opportunity. God has definitely shown me some miraculous things while on tour, specifically what I am capable of.



J.T. Elicker

Date: 1/6/2008

Submitted by: Melissa Nicholson

Journal Entry:

January 6, 2008

We just finished our first Quake of 2008 in Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin. It is amazing to be back on the road, and it was great to start off the New Year with such a wonderful event. We met a lot of really cool people including about 400 youth, Daniel's Window, and Packer Dave. The group of people that I am most thankful for at this Quake are the Event Crew. They make our experience much brighter and we are able to spend a lot more time connecting with kids because of them. The Event Crew members are always willing to help and make our lives easier in any way they can. They are probably some of the most generous, thoughtful, and helpful people that I have met on the road so far. They do everything from registration to our resource ministries table to running errands to leading treks to walking the halls at night. They are a group of people who put in hundreds of hours of work behind the scenes with almost no credit. I just want to take this opportunity to say thank you. Thank you to every single person who helps at our Quakes by serving on Event Crew. You are a God-send and truly a blessing to us. Thank you so much for all that you do!



Melissa Nicholson

~Melissa

Date: 1/12/2008

Submitted by: Melissa Nicholson

Journal Entry:

I love staying at host homes. It is amazing how different each place that we stay is. People sometimes ask me, "Does it get old staying in a new house every night?" It really does not. Each host family is so different that even though we are asked a lot of the same questions, each conversation is completely new and different. The host families really show us themselves and bring us into their lives for the short time we are there. I truly enjoy getting to know them and getting to have new experiences every night.



Melissa Nicholson

Last night I stayed with an amazing host family. Camilla and I were given nicknames; got to be a part of a new band including two guitars, a piano, a singer, and a cello; and learned how to play some really fun games. They let us make ourselves at home, gave up their bedrooms for us, and really let us be ourselves. I have a blast at each host home I stay at, but the host home last night was definitely one of my favorites!

God blesses my teammates and me each and every day with wonderful people who take amazing care of us. If God did not provide these very generous people for us I don't know where we would be. It is unbelievable how well God provides for us through our host homes and host churches!

~Melissa

Date: 1/14/2008

Submitted by: Melissa Nicholson
Journal Entry:

A few weeks ago our team was able to go to Lincoln Hills School. It is a detention center for boys from ages 12 – 20. We were not really sure what to expect, but we were excited to be doing something we had never done before. When we arrived we met the Chaplin, Pastor Mitch. He was an awesome guy who truly cares about the boys at Lincoln Hills. After going through security we got our stuff set up and waited for our first congregation to arrive. I was really excited as the guys walked in. As we started our program I became even more excited! The guys were bobbing their heads and getting into the music. Then when we did a sing-a-long and invited some of them up to help with motions they stood up, danced around, and really got involved. I was impressed with their ability to forget about where they are and just have fun in the Lord's presence. As they left our program we shook their hands and thanked them for coming. They were very grateful to us for coming to see them and praise God with them.



Melissa Nicholson

After our first program we were able to get a taste of how the boys at Lincoln Hills live. We had a state dinner of ham and potatoes, and got to see some of their rooms. We even were locked in one of the rooms just to see how it felt to be in there. As we looked at the rest of the rooms some of the boys talked with us a little. It made me sad to see that these were normal kids just like my little brothers who had simply made mistakes in their lives. I don't know what any of them did, but it was sad to think that some of those boys will be in prison for most of their lives. They are children of God and I am glad that they can spend time with God no matter where they are.

I had a great experience at Lincoln Hills. It helped remind me that God is everywhere, and that we are always in his presence.

Trust Him,
Melissa

Date: 1/31/2008
Submitted by: J.T. Elicker
Journal Entry:

So there we were at the Chicago Quake 1 and at quakes Matt and I always do the prayer/praise room, which the kids can pick to go to instead of going to the dance on saturday night. Well because Matt and I always do the prayer/praise room we started to realize how tired of doing this activity we are. We had forgotten our music this time and we did not have the time to get the music so we decided to just wing it. We thought that it was going to be just another worship room and at first it seemed like it was an ordinary worship room. The next day a junior guide came up to Matt and I and said that thanks to us two of her girls in her group found Jesus in the worship room that evening. Matt and I were in awe. The night that Matt and I talked about how boring the room had gotten we had been struck by someone accepting Christ as their personal savior because of us. Matt and I were moved. WE realized that even when we dont enjoy doing what we do so much that God still uses us to affect peoples lives. It was an amazing experience.



J.T. Elicker

Date: 3/4/2008
Submitted by: J.T. Elicker
Journal Entry:

Just this past weekend we participated in our first lock-in as a team. Now I have been to lock-ins before and helped out a little with the most recent one i was at but this one was much different. The leaders of this lock-in told us that it was their first lock-in that they had done so it was a little different then i was used to. Once all of the kids got there we had played a couple games and put on a concert for them to kick it off. This went



J.T. Elicker

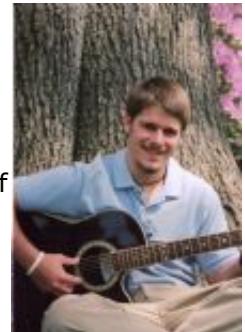
really well. Then we had some pizza and then we split up the kids in junior high and high school groups and led them in a seperate bible study. Then they all got back together and played another game and then watched the movie to end the night. We woke up around 7:30 the next morning and hung out with the kids until it was time for them to leave. Although it was a long tiring night it was a blessing to just hang out with all the kids and get to know where they come from and stuff. We really enjoyed our time there.

Date: 3/4/2008

Submitted by: J.T. Elicker

Journal Entry:

So the guys on our team (DJ, Matt, and I) gave up meat for lent. I thought that it was going to be extremely hard because I am one of those people who can eat three kinds of meat at every meal. But so far God has blessed us with a rather easy time. The host homes have been very accepting of our decision and have made us vegetarian dishes such as spinach and cheese calzones or vegetable lasagna and other things like that. It has forced us to try some of the things that we wouldnt normally try. And so far we have liked it all. And sometimes the want for meat is there like when we look at a poster at burger king and it is of a huge triple cheese burger or something like that. It makes our mouths water but we know that we have to stick to our commitment and live on with our daily lives. So God has blessed us with other foods to substitute for the meat.



J.T. Elicker

And this is the first time I have ever givin up anything for lent. So it has actually been a little bit of a challenge.

Date: 3/4/2008

Submitted by: Camilla Bendtsen

Journal Entry:

I am having an amazing time on team. Every day is exciting, every day is different. We see so many things and meet so many awesome people. They don't only get a chance to do programs and play music we also get the chance to be a part of different service projects. This week we went to a place for homeless people called HALO in Racine. We were there the whole day to help them with different things.



Camilla Bendtsen

First we got a tour around the buildings to see everything. There was around 200 people living there. Women could live there with their kids. They even have a small day care for the kids so the mothers could go to work. All the people living there have to be a part of different programs. These programs to help them in society again.

They have a big warehouse filled with clothes and stuff that was given to the institution. The girls organized a room with clothes and school supplies. We had a lot of fun looking through all the stuff. The room looked very neat when we were finished. We even had some spare time to have some fun! We had a runway show in the old warehouse. The photo shoots were pretty good with the old warehouse in the back ground! I don't think we will make it to Americas next top model though. The boys built shelves for a lot of different toys for the kids. They had to take heavy shelves outside and then upstairs into the attic to where all the toys and things were. It was so great to do something different. I really enjoyed the service project.

When I do things like this I really realise how thankful I should be. I have everything that I need and even more! It was an eye-opener for me to see how hard these people were fighting to get back on their feet again, they don't just give up. Even though they don't own much in our eyes they are still so grateful. We have so much to be thankful for! God give us so much! More than we will ever

need!

Camilla

Date: 4/13/2008

Submitted by: Camilla Bendtsen

Journal Entry:

Since Christmas God has really humbled me in many ways. There have been times when I have yelled at God, times where I cried myself to sleep, and sometimes where God just seemed so far away. It all comes to a point where I asked myself, "God what are you doing to me? Why, God?" I have used a lot of time trying to figure out how I could make some sense out of all these things God has done to me.



Camilla Bendtsen

I found out that it isn't possible; God will never make sense to you. You will never completely understand God. You just have to trust what He is doing, that is what faith is all about; trusting in what you cannot see. Trust is to let God do the pushing in your life. The Bible is full of people who did this. Noah built an ark before he saw any rain, Moses left Egypt without knowing where God would lead him and the Israelites, and God is calling me to go home next year and I am just going to trust Him and do His will. It is hard to trust in God sometimes, do you have enough faith to risk it?

God made me stumble and humbled me to make me stronger. He is preparing me to do amazing things. Someday He will reveal to me what those amazing things are. I think that we often are too focused on what we did in the past and too worried about the future that we forget about the "now." God is calling you now, He wants your life NOW, trust in Him!

Date: 4/13/2008

Submitted by: J.T. Elicker

Journal Entry:

Before Christmas break I was wrapped up in a few things that required a lot of attention. So I paid attention to those things instead of working on my relationship with God. However during Christmas break I realized that I did not need to be wrapped up in these things, so I stopped worrying about them. Once I returned from break I was devoted to reading the Bible and praying. This helped me learn more about our creator and helped me to draw closer to Him. In this time God has shown me what my talents are and what I am supposed to do with those talents. Also over the past few months, my faith walk has become gradually easier to follow. God is doing BIG things in my life and I can't wait to see the outcome.



J.T. Elicker

Date: 4/13/2008

Submitted by: Kimberly Neeley

Journal Entry:

God has been so good to me. I've grown in my relationship with Him and it continues to flourish everyday. I have been blessed with such wonderful teammates who are an encouragement to me. Being on the road has tested my faith. God has put me in situations that I'm not used to and by putting me in these situations not only have I learned from them, but in everyone, I have found God.



Kimberly Neeley

Before team started my life was devoted to about a million different things. I was super involved with everything and had put my entire heart in it all expecting nothing in return. It was extremely draining. I kept feeding others faith in God, but forgot to nourish my own and let others help me to grow.

Now that team is half over I realize that throughout this experience so far that I have still fed others spiritually, but I was getting fed back. I have connected with God through other people. They have been God to me by feeding me spiritually so that I'm not parched and searching for fulfillment on my own.

My relationship with God has grown and I alone can't take any credit for it. The people I have met along the way can. For prayer alone cannot say that I have a relationship with God. I see how we have impacted others and brought them closer to God, but I can say the same thing.

Surely reading God's word and praying are good, though I used to do them sparingly, but now I have learned to worship Him in new ways, not just telling others and having them listen to you rant on and on about God in your life, but sharing, sharing the good news by helping them and dropping simple reminders that God loves them no matter what. People then finally hear the true message.

I have grown spiritually thanks to others and also to God. God has placed others in my life to bless me and I'm so grateful for it, that words cannot describe how much I am in debt to Him. Without God where would I be? To answer the question, truthfully I have no idea. I'd be lost in a world caught up in sin not knowing what is right from wrong. But thanks to God I can say that I live a happy life and I am fulfilled by Him and His works everyday. Sure there are days when I'm mad and get disappointed, but then I think I have God with me so why should I be mad? It's not worth it.

My relationship with God has grown in so many ways and I am blessed everyday.

Date: 4/13/2008

Submitted by: Melissa Nicholson

Journal Entry:

I learn to trust God more every single day. I don't know what I am doing after team, but I know that no matter what I do in this life, God will take care of me. That is amazing to know deep down in my heart. God is always there for me no matter what I do wrong or how many times I mess up in one day. I have really learned this on the road because I know that I mess up something every single day, no matter how hard I try not to, and I have learned that God doesn't care. He loves us all with an unconditional love. God blesses me everyday through my teammates, host homes, churches, youth groups, and everyone else on the road. He has blessed us with good health, safe roadways, and many other things throughout this year. God is truly my rock and sometimes he is the only thing that keeps me going when things get rough. I know that He will always provide for me and I have no reason to doubt that, knowing that He has provided everything for me this year. I trust God with all of my heart and I trust Him with my entire life because He is my rock. I want to follow His path for my life and go wherever He needs me. God is amazing and I know I will be blessed as long as I keep Him as my center.



Melissa Nicholson

Trust Him,

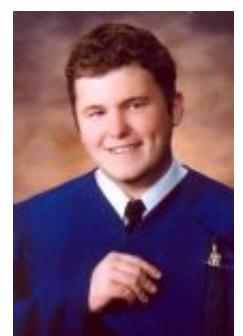
Melissa

Date: 4/13/2008

Submitted by: Matthew Norris

Journal Entry:

I felt towards the beginning of Christmas break that I was pretty drained. Lets face it, ministry, though it is super amazing, its draining none the less. I was really lacking in everything, especially prayer, and reading my bible. Yet inspite of all this I still wanted to seek God but I was not doing anything about it. I found myself broken and dry. I felt that I had nothing to give to the people I met on the road. The day of the Chicago Zone came. We had just gotten back from Easter break. Over the break I had made up my



mind that enough was enough. I was going to start reading my bible and praying and really seeking God with all that I am. I got hit hard at the Zone. God revealed to me that I needed to seek Him as a Dad, and more or less call Him daddy. As of right now I am in the process of really trying to build my faith and seek God with all that I am.

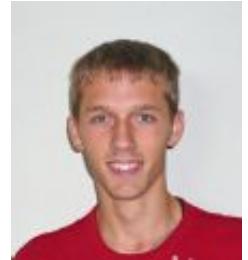
Matthew Norris

Date: 4/13/2008

Submitted by: DJ Rasdorf

Journal Entry:

Hello to everyone who looks at these journals. This is an update of my faith walk. It is now April and as a team we are doing great. My faith has been challenged many times along the way. You would think that since we are a ministry team, and we devote our year to spreading God's word, that we would be the most spiritual people. I however have found it very hard to concentrate on my own faith journey. I am always so busy worrying about our programs and helping others grow in their faith that I rarely take time to further my own relationship with Christ. I feel that pushing others in their faith has become my top priority, which is all well and good, but if my faith is not strengthening, then I am a hypocrite. Telling other people to that they need to go home and inspect themselves and read the bible, and work on their relationship with God, when I don't even do that, is not right. So I have started trying to intentionally take time each day, normally right before I go to bed, to read my bible and just talk with God. It doesn't have to be a long well thought out prayer, just a chat with God. You should be able to talk to Him, like He is your best friend, should be able to tell Him any problem, ask Him any question. It can also be very casual, just use language that you would use in a normal conversation, I know most of the time that pastors use big words that sometimes you don't even know when they pray, but you don't need to. My teammate Matt has told me that he wishes more people would stress the relationship with God, rather than stressing tradition. Not that tradition is a bad thing, but it should not become your faith or religion. I have thought a lot about this, coming from a traditional LCMS Lutheran church, I am starting to agree with Him. Tradition is good, in an ever-changing world, having something stay the same is a comfort. But the reason for the religion is to have faith in God, to be able to form a relationship with Him, so strong that if He asked you to do anything in the world, you would do it. Just like Abraham did when God told him to sacrifice his son, Isaac. We should all have faith that strong. I hope someday God will give me a command as hard as that and I am able to do it without any question.



DJ Rasdorf

Date: 4/24/2008

Submitted by: J.T. Elicker

Journal Entry:

At the Wisconsin Dells Quake 4 Melissa and I were leading the praise and prayer room during late night activities on Saturday. At first there weren't any kids who came into the room and it didn't surprise me. Then after a little bit a junior guide walked in and sat on the edge of a couch in the room and quietly listened. As Melissa and I finished the song we were singing, which was *You are so Good to Me*, the junior guide looked me in the eyes and asked me this question. "What does that song mean to you?" At first I was a little upset and mad that he would come into my praise and prayer room and asked me this question, but realized almost instantaneously that I was taking his question the wrong way. It took a minute for me to answer and I started to read the piece of music. Once he saw that I was doing this he said don't read the paper let it come from your heart. So I answered that music is my passion, its my getaway, its where I like to find myself, and where I like to be. It says in the chorus of that song "you are beautiful my sweet sweet song." So I responded, that that is exactly how I think of God, plus more, but music has always been there for me. When I was upset in anyway, when I was angry, or sad, and even happy, I was always able to put on some music or pick up my guitar and play some music and feel better, and I know that that is one area where God finds me and meets me a lot. Like in the song *Meet With Me*, it says I'm here to meet with you, come and meet with me, and that is where I meet with God so to speak. I know that He is always there with me and everything but that is exactly where I can find him all the time. Well this answer didn't satisfy him. He then said something like, you guys are on the road and you sing



J.T. Elicker

these songs day in and day out and you have obviously memorized them so do the words continue to come from your heart. Melissa then made a comment about how this far into the year she has noticed herself kind of start to go into auto pilot because of singing the same songs over and over again. He then kind of smiled and then looked at me. I knew that I wasn't ready to answer yet but I had to. I said something about how if I don't actually think about the music that I am playing I tend to mess it all up. I also said that there have been a few times when I managed to get away with not actually thinking about what I was playing and singing but normally I do think about what I am playing. And he had asked many other questions while we were sitting there and it was just amazing because I know that this boy was sent to us that weekend to help remind us why we were doing what we were doing and it was just a blessing to talk to him and everything. So that's my story of meeting someone on the road.

Date: 6/10/2008

Submitted by: Melissa Nicholson

Journal Entry:

Ways God has blessed me since VBS training:

1. his love
2. ability to trust God
3. smiles
4. hugs
5. my family
6. my teammates
7. luther dell bible camp
8. youth encounter
9. being accepted on Watermark to Denmark for next year
10. host families
11. trips to walmart to buy whatever food we want for the week
12. music
13. kids at Vacation Bible School
14. getting back in touch with great friends
15. ability to share my faith
16. ability to sing
17. fun times
18. ability to talk to Him
19. pastors at churches
20. ability to heal when things are dropped on my head
21. opportunities to learn
22. great books
23. beautiful sunsets
24. friendly cows
25. new t-shirts



Melissa Nicholson

...and many other ways! And to think that was only in a week and a half. How have you been blessed lately?

Date: 6/10/2008

Submitted by: Camilla Bendtsen

Journal Entry:

We are now in the ending stretch of the year! It has been the best year of my life! We had our first VBS last week and it was one of my favorite bookings we have had! I love to spend time with small kids and I got to hang out with a group of kindergarteners for a whole week! The small kids called me "The Children"



Camilla Bendtsen

Tree," because I always had three or four kids hanging on me.:) The kids were a true blessing to me because of all their joy! They are filled with joy every day! We had a theme for the VBS, "Friendship Trek." I made so many new great, little, friends! Kids can teach you so many things. I think I learned more than some of the kids that week. And I learned, by watching the kids, what true friends are! What true friendship is about! It is about loving your friends as they are! Even though those kids were so different they all took care of one another. They still watch over one another. I didn't see anyone fight over that entire week because they were having so much fun together! We were all blessings to one another! Just as God wants us to be!

camilla

Date: 6/10/2008

Submitted by: Kimberly Neeley

Journal Entry:

We are in the midst of our second VBS. So far I am loving it. the kids have been phenomenal and amazing. God has worked His way in these kids. our first vbs only had 30 kids and we each went around with a group of kids. i went with the preschool group. they were so cute. we only had 5 kids, but some where quite a handful! during the opening/closingpart of VBS, my team and I led songs and did motions. in the first pew sat the 5 preschoolers, and 2 leaders trying to get the kids to participate in the motions. the kids sat in the pew sulking or attempting to leave the sanctuary. finally on the last day of VBS, the preschoolers started to sing and even do the motions. some of them even came up front and danced around. in my mind we were never going to get the preschoolers to participate in anything, and finally they did. they were different on the last day as if God had done something in them. God had truely blessed those kids, and in return they have blessed me! some of them had such joy in their smiles and it made me thankful for those last moments of seeing them participate



Kimberly Neeley

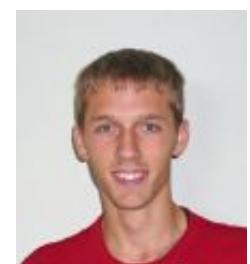
kim

Date: 6/10/2008

Submitted by: DJ Rasdorf

Journal Entry:

well hellllloooo there. it has been awhile since i have written a journal. about 2 weeks ago we finishedwith VBS training. since then we have been on



DJ Rasdorf

the run with hundreds of school age kids. in the midst of all the comotion, God has blessed me with patience. these kids have tons of energy and are always jumping and clinging on to us. so i am glad that i have the patience to play along with them. also God has blessed me with awesome teammates who keep me in check and help me out when situations get overwhelming. i am thankful that our team can think on our toes and keep the flow going so the kids don't get bored or distracted. also the staff at the churches are a blessing because they provide everything we need. and last, but not least, the kids are an amazing blessing. we can learn so much from them if we listen and follow 1 Timothy 4:12 (look it up im not going to give it away.) these are the ways i have been blessed since VBS training

dj

Date: 6/10/2008

Submitted by: Matthew Norris

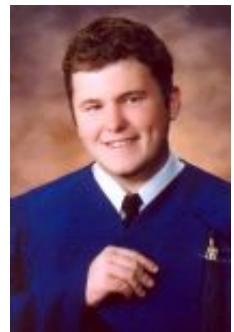
Journal Entry:

God has blessed me in many ways.

He has blessed me by teaching me things.

He has taught me to rely on him

There have been many times that i have felt alone or that I am not good enough for this year. God works in many ways. One way, He taught me how to rely on him through MY TEAMMATES! they lift me up! another way, was through my friends on other teams who do the same. i do admit i doubt God sometimes but i know He know what he is doing!! and thats what keeps me going!!!



Matthew Norris

matt -wc

Date: 6/10/2008

Submitted by: J.T. Elicker

Journal Entry:

SINCE VBS TRAINING GOD HAS BLESSED ME IN MANY WAYS. ONE WAY THAT STANDS OUT TO ME EVERYDAY, BECAUSE I LIVE WITH THEM, IS MY TEAMMATES. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE OUR FIGHTS AND ISSUES WE CAN ALWAYS, FOR THE MOST PART, GET PAST THEM. BUT ONE BLESSING THAT I REALLY ENJOYED WHEN IT HAPPENED WAS THE ONE THAT THE OTHER 18 PEOPLE WHO STAYED AT LUTHER DELL BIBLE CAMP WITH ME OVER MEMORIAL DAY BREAK GAVE ME. MY BIRTHDAY WAS ON MAY 26TH. BACK HOME WHEN I WENT TO SCHOOL ON MY BIRTHDAY ONLY A SELECT FEW WOULD REMEMBER THAT IT WAS MY BIRTHDAY EVEN WHEN I WOULD TELL PEOPLE EVERYDAY WHEN MY BIRTHDAY WAS STARTING A WEEK IN ADVANCE.



J.T. Elicker

WELL EXACTLY AT MIDNIGHT WHEN THE DAY HAD TURNED FROM MAY 25TH TO MAY 26TH EVERYONE WAS STANDING AROUND THE CAMPFIRE AND STARTED SINGING HAPPY BIRTHDAY AS LOUD AS THEY COULD SO I COULD HEAR THEM BECAUSE I WAS STANDING ON THE DOCK OVER THE LAKE. SHORTLY AFTER THAT I WENT TO BED. AND WHEN I FINALLY DECIDED TO GET OUT OF BED AROUND NOON TIME, I WALKED DOWNSTAIRS WHERE JUST ABOUT EVERYONE WAS SITTING AND THEY ALL YELLED HAPPY BIRTHDAY. WHEN I SAT DOWN THEY BROUGHT OUT A CAKE, WHICH I SHOVED MELISSA'S HEAD INTO, BECAUSE SHE LET ME, AND STARTED ASKING ME WHAT I WANTED TO DO FOR MY BIRTHDAY. IT WAS MEMORIAL DAY SO ALOT OF THINGS WERE CLOSED, AND WE WERE PRETTY MUCH STUCK UP AT CAMP ANYWAY. SO THERE WASNT MUCH TO DO BUT IT WAS NICE THAT THEY MADE THE DAY ALL FOR ME. LATER, AROUND SUPPER TIME THEY BROUGHT OUT ANOTHER CAKE, THIS TIME WITH CANDLES AND SANG HAPPY BIRTHDAY AGAIN. THEY ALSO BROUGHT OUT A CARD, WHICH EVERYONE HAD SIGNED, AND A GIFT. I FELT LIKE I WAS ACTUALLY WORTH REMEMBERING. SO THANKYOU TO ALL WHO GAVE ME SUCH A GOOD DAY.

-JT

Date: 7/23/2008

Submitted by: J.T. Elicker

Journal Entry:

so here with only about 2 weeks left i just wanted to dedicate this journal to all of those who have helped me along this journey whether it was through prayer, money, or just lending a helping hand when needed. i thank you all. i have had an amazing experience. whenever i would describe team ministry to others who asked and were interested in joining, i would tell them that this is one of the hardest things you would do in your entire life if you were to join. meeting five brand new people and traveling around the country with these people and have to always make it look like everyone is happy and no conflicts go on within the team. i must say that at times that can be very challenging. sometimes even when we dont have conflicts within the team we still dont want to see each other because we just want some space. although there are these times team ministry is very rewarding and well worth it. i have no regrets of doing this and i know that when i go home i will definately miss it.



J.T. Elicker

when i return home i will be starting classes 8 days after i get home. so i ask that i can get your continued prayers as i enter an entirely different field right away. thanks again to all those who supported me in all the ways possible.

God be with you all

-jt
