



**COVENANT**  
CHURCH

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## *The Aslan Anthology*

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF REFLECTIONS & STORIES FROM COVENANT CHURCH



## Walking in Two Worlds

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"It's already started." What's started? "It's already started," There, I heard it again. Here I am sitting in the dark of the church the night before Easter, looking up at an empty cross and I'm hearing voices. Great, what's next some out of body experience or will I just fall asleep and they find me laying down while setting up Easter service?

As I grow older, the question of 'what's God doing in my life' is harder to answer and perhaps less relevant. As a young Christian in my 20s, I loved hearing that question so I could respond

*...what is God doing in your life' is relevant, but needs to lead to other questions quickly.*

with such phrases as "God's teaching me patience, I'm memorizing scripture, or I'm learning to pray". During my 30s and 40s I responded with other expressions such as "God's teaching me to be a husband and a father, God's helping me find a new job, or God's teaching me hope as I battle with my divorce". All my answers as a young man fostered a 'me-centered' outlook on life, as if I was smart enough to understand God's actions in my life.

I now find myself asking more questions not about what God is doing in my life, but what is God doing in this world and seeking out my role. I've learned just how much of life is

beyond my control and how quickly my environment can change. For example, I am well into my 50's and made a radical career change in 2007 accompanied by moving away from family and friends. I've changed jobs from an international consultant who flew constantly around the world working with multinational CEOs and large scale investments to a new career teaching at Colorado State University, interacting with undergraduates and the Northern Colorado real estate community. In addition, our blended family has experienced numerous intermittent periods of high stress and chaos due to personal and family matters to short periods of serenity and emotional exhaustion. Yet throughout life's roller coaster experiences, through all the times influenced more by fear than faith, there is still an attempt to look outward at what God's doing in this world rather than with me.

All of us have been witnesses to recent and current structural upheavals in global economies, distress and fear in financial markets, bankrupt nations, geo-political earthquakes in the Middle East and elsewhere, and a tsunami of natural disasters in the Far East, Africa, and the

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Steve Laposa



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U.S.; such 'random' events have captivated the media and challenged us as individuals and as a church. During my consulting days, most engagements required a multi-discipline approach to synthesize un-related economic, demographic, and business events and trends on a global and local level in order to solve real problems. But recent global trends have confounded economists, government officials, and people across the world alike; what multiple approaches does it take to unravel the mysteries unfolding before us? Do you, however, see God's hand or purpose behind the headlines and our current events? Is it really the glory of God to conceal a matter and the glory of kings (us) to search it out (Proverbs 25:2)?

By the end of my Easter eve vigil, I finally understood the 'it's started' reverberation in my mind. While watching the movie Thor, I was amazed at the computer graphics and especially the design of Thor's city Asgard; it was amazing, and as a part-time urban economist, I marveled at how 'perfect' the city appeared. The New Jerusalem will look something like this, right? No, not even close, beyond what we can even imagine (1 Cor 2:9). C.S. Lewis stated that the new heaven and earth compared to the beauty of our uni-

verse is like comparing the root of a flower to the flower itself. But the good news is the root is connected to the flower and even as part of the root, I've started and you've started. We've started to walk in two worlds, to live in two kingdoms, and as George Ladd describes, to exist in the presence of the future. As I looked up at the cross in our sanctuary, I continued to see an *empty* cross and realized our walk through time and space towards the new heaven and earth has started.

Notwithstanding my previous discussions, one can argue that the question 'what is God doing in your life' is relevant, but needs to lead to other questions quickly. During my doctoral studies, my Oxford and Cambridge-educated professors taught me the importance of a *why* question. A **why** question seeks out an explanation whereas a **what** question seeks a descriptive answer. I'm not smart enough or have enough degrees to always know why God has allowed certain events, people, circumstances, problems, joys, or roller-coaster experiences in my life. But I do know that God has me walking in two worlds with Him and with a worldview perspective that invites me to seek out the reasons, and my role, in what God is doing in this world.

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*Do you, however, see God's hand or purpose behind the headlines and our current events?*

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## Comfort Zones are Overrated

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*...sometimes I find myself asking why I chose Thailand.*

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The other day I learned how to say “I’m sorry” and “thank you” in Thai, which puts my grand total of Thai phrases up to about five. This ordinarily would be no problem, except today I looked at the calendar and realized I only have a month left in Colorado. My departure date is getting closer and closer, and there’s still so much to do. It’s overwhelming, and sometimes I find myself asking why I chose Thailand. I could have gone somewhere in my comfort zone, somewhere familiar, like Germany or Australia. When I have these moments, I have to remind myself that God is in control, and why I chose Thailand in the first place.

You’d think choosing a country for foreign exchange would be pretty straightforward. For me, it wasn’t. Until December, I thought I was going to South America for foreign exchange. It seemed like the perfect place for me, with Spanish

(I’ve always wanted to learn), a little bit of German (which I am learning), field hockey, mountains and a rich cultural heritage. My parents supported me, but something was off. The idea of South America sounded perfect, with everything I wanted, but it didn’t feel quite right.

During that time period, I spent a lot of time praying to God. I asked Him where He wanted me to go. I thought God’s answer would be instantaneous and straightforward, like He would just say, “Argentina” and I’d say, “Okay, sounds good.” But I spent those first months of the application process

lost. I thought about Thailand, once in awhile, but it was the place I hardly dared to dream of going. Thailand felt so far away it didn’t seem real at all, and I was sure that someone braver would be going there.

In December, we had our outbound interviews in Cheyenne. The day went like this: a “world fair”, interviews, interviews and more interviews, and then we would make our final selections. The “world fair” was where inbound students (students living in Colorado and Wyoming, from other countries) would tell us about their home countries. I was excited to talk to the kids from South America, and disappointed when I realized that they weren’t excited to talk about their countries. In fact, they looked like they would rather be anywhere else on the entire planet, which did not make me pumped about going to South America.

It was strange, but I was actually relieved. It was like God told me, “South America is amazing, but you aren’t meant to go there next year.” So I started talking to the people representing Asia. I learned about the programs in India and Taiwan.

There wasn’t a student from Thailand at the interviews, but my parents got me to talk to Thailand’s country representative, Terry. When she talked about the program, I just knew that was where God wanted me to be. It took three months for me to actually hear His voice, but I’d never heard it clearer than that moment.

*God is bigger than my fears.*

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**Maike Prewett**



Finally realizing where I wanted to go was only half the battle. I still had to make it through a day of interviews, and I learned a lot of interview etiquette on the way. (Don't say the word "sucks" unless you're talking about vacuums, straws or black holes, be specific and don't give fluffy "world peace" answers, laughing buys time if you can't think of an answer, be honest, it's easier to interview with other people than one-on-one, and if an interviewer uses sarcasm that doesn't mean they *necessarily* hate you.)

After making it through the interviews, we made our final country selections. There were still things to worry about: having too many people apply for the same country, or getting cut from the program. I had no idea how many people applied for Thailand, and I didn't want to think about the second option.

"We'll call you back tomorrow or the day after to tell you where you're going," they told us.

Waiting for that phone call was the longest day of my life. The phone call came on December 5<sup>th</sup> three minutes before the Walking Dead season finale. I have no idea what they said on the phone because the only thing that registered was "Thailand" and that was the only thing I wanted to hear.

*...Even if I believe in God with all my heart, there are still times when I doubt.*

Since that moment, it's been a roller coaster ride. Some days I wake up and I'm so excited I just want to get on the plane. I can't wait to go to Thailand, I can't wait to see everything there is to see and do everything there is to do. And some days I wake up and I'm nervous and overwhelmed, and I think it was crazy to choose Thailand. And through this, I've come to realize that

there will *always* be doubts. Even if I believe in God with all my heart, there are still times when I doubt. And I think, in a way, it's the same thing with foreign exchange. It's something I have to do, and something God wants me to do, but I still have doubts. Doubts that say "you're crazy" or "you won't last" or "you've never been this brave before, why are you being brave now?" But I've learned that these thoughts don't matter, that they distract from the purpose of the whole thing. God is bigger than my fears.

I have no idea what my exchange year will be like, but I know that God has great plans for me. And until I step on that plane, I'm learning to take it one day at a time. The days have been full of "firsts". The first time I talked to my host family. (I have three host sisters and a dog named Chopper.) The first time I had Thai food. (I'm not normally one for spicy food, but Thai food is pretty much the best.) The first time I introduced myself, in front of people, in Thai. ("Sawadee kha! Chan cheu Maike kha...")

Success!

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*...Even if I believe in God with all my heart, there are still times when I doubt.*

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# Farewell Message

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*There is no better way to become mature in Christ than to walk alongside those who are becoming new in Christ.*

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It was 5 years ago that I drove from Chicago to Fort Collins. Lisa was finishing her rotation work for grad school and wouldn't arrive until the end of the summer. My second day on Colorado soil I was headed up for a backpacking trip and our Jr. High Summer Adventure camp. Now, this was no ordinary backpacking trip, for Brian Trout was leading it!

When we arrived at the road that would lead us to the trailhead for the Mt. of the Holy Cross, we saw a gate and a sign that said, "closed for elk-calving season." The ninth grade boys and I looked at Brian to see what he would do. Within minutes we had parked, eaten our packed lunches and put our backpacks on. "It'll add just a few more miles" said Brian, and we were off. Well, by the end of the 36 hours of our trip those "few extra miles" added up to 26 total miles of hiking and climbing, much of it with heavy packs. You can just imagine the bonding that happened -- and the opportunity to become a pastor to those young men.

*It's a photo album full of joy and fun!*

That trip, and those extra miles, they set the pace for me as a pastor. Even as I managed the work of transition in my last months, I felt the call to go the extra mile to make sure the ministry is in its best shape possible for the next leader. Five years later this call finds its strength in a deep care and love for our students and families. And it is now a call that I pass on, and add, to the call of our congregation to nurture and inspire the next generation.

God's Word states it this way in Col. 1:28 and 29: *Our call is that we, together as the adults of our church, might proclaim Christ, admonishing and teaching every young person with all wisdom, so that we may present each one fully mature in Christ. To this end, we strenuously contended with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in us.*

out alongside parents and adult volunteers for the students in our midst. So that against all odds, against the grain of the culture and the aims of this world, young adults might emerge from our care displaying the marks of maturity in Christ and ready to follow the Way that leads to life.

I'd like to give a quick word-picture of my 5 years here: some snapshots of the incredible diversity that is youth ministry; the photo album I keep in my heart:

Praying for students and leaders after they have given their testimony; Phil Christ playing line tag; Chad Moyer on a tiny bike riding around Ameya with a small boy clinging to his back; 20 high schoolers piled on a slide to take a picture; performing my first baptism; listening to Ben Trout, Josh Hisgen and Mark Haile tell the story of how they captured a chipmunk and put it in the girls' tent (and how my wife, Lisa, instigated it!); students showing me their work during Scripture Project; Hannah's first time leading worship; pastoral counseling while disc-golfing; carrying the tray of dishes from the youth room to the small kitchen - - goodness sakes, that is a long hallway!; late night conversations under the stars; parents talking as they give their kids a few more minutes to play. Blake and the middle school boys presenting their Foot-Hold anthem; Krista Frable at the whiteboard tallying votes for a game; Danny Valles and Andrew Giddings pretending to be middle school boys in a skit; Saturday night dance parties at High School Fall Retreat; circling up for prayer before all 37 trips and retreats; playing at the beach at night in San Juan Del Sur; the drive pack to our hotel when the skies opened up and we all got drenched; and, my personal favorite, watching a landscape of students engaging a quiet time in their own way: some with Bibles open, some with eyes closed.

I could go on and on and on. It is

So it is that I have poured myself

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*Joe Thackwell*



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a photo album full of joy and fun. So many faces, so many smiles. But the deepest joy is to see the Lord's face in each one.

Well, it is time to say goodbye; so it is also time to say thank you.

To Bert, Tom, Diane and Brian: you have formed and shaped me by your faithful working out of the gifts the Lord has given you.

To Kim: I don't know what I will do without you: thank you for being a mother in Christ to me.

To Ashleigh French: you helped save my life and fulfilled a dream of co-ministering.

To Hannah Kvidera: One of my greatest joys has been seeing you blossom in ministry and maturity in Christ.

To the FootHold leaders: you are the jewel I wear around my neck.

To all my leaders over the years: thank you for pouring yourself out with me.

To the church: Thank you for helping me grow up. I have become a real adult under your care. You have helped me endure pain and mistakes; and you have helped me know and value my giftedness. You have provided friendship, mentorship and a true community of care. Lisa and I want to thank you for your love and support over the years. And we want to thank you for sending us with a blessing.

To my students: Your gift to me is immeasurable. There is no better way to become an adult than to stay close to the young. There is no better way to become mature in Christ than to walk alongside those who are becoming new in Christ. It is hard to be a teenager; to be between two worlds -- emerging into adulthood while holding on to childhood. But you teenagers are a walking parable to us adults. You help us point to the Lord's desire that we remain childlike, even as we mature in Him. Because of you, I feel closer to the kingdom, closer to the Lord's heart. I believe nothing delights our Lord more than our playfulness, our inquisitiveness, and our transparency. The world

can be dark, combative and complex; which leads some adults to lose their sense of play, to turn off their desire for adventure and searching, and to set up defenses from being truly known.

The greatest thanks I have to give today is to the Lord for giving me the community of teenagers who have helped me remain childlike. I can truly say I am most alive when I am at play with you; when I am bright-eyed and full of questions with you; and when I am myself with you. Thank you!

It is my joy now to let my thankfulness pour out to all of you in a pastoral blessing. Please receive this blessing and benediction:

May the Lord bless this church and its generations.

May the Lord bless each person and family.

May the Lord bless each gift offered and each ministry of this holy priesthood of all believers.

May the Lord bless our pastors and keep them from temptation and harm from the enemy.

May the Lord bless our fathers with boldness and kindness.

May the Lord bless our mothers with courage and patience.

May the Lord bless our children with dreams and visions.

And may the Lord bless the new servants among us: Mike and Sommer Nunan

So, go now, each and every one of you, proclaiming Christ, admonishing and teaching every one with all wisdom, so that we may present each one fully mature in Christ. And please, receive the call, each of you, to strenuously contend for the next generation, with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in each of you through the dispersing of his gifts. Go and mentor, go and be childlike, and go with joy of knowing that the faith is passed on from generation to generation until Christ comes in all his glory to make all things new.

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*...deepest joy is to see the Lord's face in each one.*

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*Little did I know at the time that this dream would take eight years to be fulfilled*

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I am so humbled to find myself in my current position. What was it that Psalm says? Something about trusting in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. My dream to go back to school and work in the medical field started in 2003, while I was on a trip to Nepal. Little did I know at the time that this dream would take eight years to be fulfilled and would eventually take me to the Dominican Republic (DR). To fully understand my gratitude to the Lord for allowing me to work in the DR, I must explain how it all started.

I was working with Crossroads worldwide in North Carolina and went on a mission trip to deliver basic medical and school supplies to orphanages along the Annapurna circuit in Nepal. My friends and I were running a small wound clinic, when a family brought in their 6 year old daughter, who had impetigo, a skin infection. In the US she would have been given some antibiotics and it would have healed quickly. Unfortunately, they did not have access to medicine and the infection spread along the whole back side of her legs, leaving her unable to even sit down. The family was using gum wrappers to try to cover the open sores. I wanted to help, but didn't know how. It was then that I decided I wanted to learn more in order to have the skills to help these people.

There have been quite a few bumps along the way. As I worked full time and took a full load of prerequisites, I wondered how I would get it all done and if I would even get into school. Once I was accepted into CU's physician assistant program, how was I going to make it through three years of school commuting to Denver every day? How was I supposed to study, commute, and be able to see my husband? I say these things to give all glory

to God. It is amazing to me that I was accepted and made it through (and had a very gracious husband, who helped along the way)! I graduated this past May and thanks to the support of ECC I had the opportunity to work in the Dominican Republic for a month. It looked like the trip wasn't even going to happen, because I was originally supposed to work with a Covenant missionary in Mexico. But due to the violence, the school would not let me travel there. So a month before I was to start that particular clinical rotation a friend put me in touch with New Missions, an organization that works in Haiti and the DR. Only God could arrange all the details and raise the money I needed in a month!

*It is amazing how God can use us, especially when we feel most inadequate.*

I was so excited, but as the date of my departure drew closer, I began to wonder what I was doing. I don't even speak Spanish! How was I going to relate to these people? I had never been on a mission trip on my own and did not know any of the missionaries I was to be working with. What was I thinking, when I decided to spend a whole month there? As I was boarding the plane for the flight from Miami to the DR, I felt so alone. Then a still, small voice told me that I was never alone. For those who have been in a foreign country in which you cannot speak the language, it can be overwhelming and frightening, but never the less I walked out of the airport into the most intense heat and humidity and was greeted by two of the missionaries.

While education is free in the DR, transportation to the school is not. A gallon of gas is about \$6.00 and most families cannot afford to pay for the taxi ride to the schools. That is why providing education to the smaller communities is a primary goal for New Missions and thankfully, they have been able to start three elementary and jr. high schools and one high school,

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**Amanda Benedict**



with plans for another to begin soon. Part of my job was to perform physicals for the 700 children in their school system and direct any that needed further care to New Missions' free medical clinic. As is often the case with children, they were able to squirm into my heart with their infectious laughter and joy! It was a blessing to know and serve them.

I also worked in the clinic several afternoons a week, serving those in the community. The need was so great that people would line up hours before the clinic would even open. On my first day, again a wave of fear came over me. How was I, as a student, who couldn't understand the language, supposed to help all these people? It is amazing how God can use us, especially when we feel most inadequate. He used every opportunity and all of my weaknesses to form new relationships and I am particularly thankful for the young women who helped as my translators. Two translators were often needed, because the immigrant Haitian community only spoke Creole or French, which my translators did not know. So the conversation went from English to Spanish to Creole/French and back again! As I worked with the teachers, nurses, and translators at these facilities, I was struck by their joy and contentment and their absolute faith that God would provide. I was exhausted at the end of every day, but it was such rewarding work.

Several of the encounters at the clinic have left a lasting impression on me. One woman came to see me for dizziness that left her unable to work and she had spent most of her money, which was needed to feed her family, on medical bills. If we were not able to help her, she was going to have to spend the rest of her money to see a specialist. Thankfully, with a couple of easy maneuvers, her dizziness was gone. She was so grateful for such a simple act on my part. I cannot thank God

enough for the education and skills He gave me to help her! I was also privileged to meet Marcos and his mother. Marcos had cerebral palsy and I saw them several times during my month there. The last time I saw Marcos and his mother, he had been discharged from the hospital five days earlier, after having been treated for pneumonia. He should have begun a course of antibiotics at home immediately, but his mother explained that she was not able to afford the medication he was prescribed. Sadly, the pneumonia had returned and Marcos died one week later. I knew that due to his condition, Marcos was going to continue struggling with pneumonia, but I wondered why I could not have done more to give him more time. God then reminded me that it was Marcos, who was in the better place and not me; he is whole and new. I was the one who needed to change my perspective.

Be prepared; it is overwhelming, when God grants you the desires of your heart. I cried when I left for the Dominican and I cried again, when I had to leave my new friends to head home. I am so thankful to God for how He provided for me every step of the way and for the unexpected opportunities He gave me. Thank you to ECC for supporting and encouraging me during my education and my trip to the Dominican Republic.



# Loving the Homeless?

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*His kindness and transparency was more than I had experienced from a stranger in quite some time.*

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The past several years I have had the great privilege of meeting one on one with Brian Frable, our worship pastor, bi weekly. During this time I have worked through many issues in my life, grown closer to the Lord, and have been able to fully experience what community in the body of Christ truly is. One could call Brian my Spiritual Director. Brian has listened to me for countless hours with a loving heart and has offered kind words of discernment and encouragement when he felt led.

At first it was obvious that in order for me to continue to grow and mature as a husband and father, I needed to work through issues in my past that had hardened my heart and separated me from my loving heavenly Father. Through many weeks of conversation, prayer and scripture reading, Brian helped me realize that I am indeed fully loved by my Creator, and nothing I can do or anything on Earth or in Heaven could separate me from this Love. I also learned that God wants me to spend time with Him, he wants my undivided attention so that I can be aware of His great love for me.

At first, this realization was not easy to swallow, as I have always looked at God as some sort of upholder of the law. My goal in life had been to abide by His rules and try to please Him through my actions. This, I learned, led to a failure rate of 100%. Something in my heart and mind finally clicked, this is what makes God, God. I am broken and a failure, but by His grace and unconditional love I am restored to glory. This quickly became a new way of thinking for me. It was simple to it's core. I could finally get over myself and quit focusing on what I wasn't doing, and simply spend time with Him. This new way of living started to trickle into other areas of my life. It wasn't about me, and my sin, it was about loving and serving others, and spending time with God.

Brian and I felt victory, we were filled with Joy as we continued to meet and talk about Jesus and His vast love for us. Eventually the question arose in our conversation, "What's next, for our time together?" For the next few meetings we continued our conversation on what that looked like. We prayed and asked, "How can we share Christ's love in a practical way?" We both deeply desired to share Christ and let others know they too are loved. We also felt very strongly that we needed to take physical action, to get out there and start doing something. It was time to start walking the walk.

In a way that can only be described as from God, we started talking about the poor and homeless. When we dug a little deeper in scripture, it was incredible to learn how much time Jesus spent talking about and being with the poor and broken. Today, many believers in Christ, including myself, are so passionate about political and social issues. We argue and post on Facebook about which political party makes better decisions regarding our nation, and share passionately with others our views on what is right and wrong.

Besides these conversations, what are we actually doing to put Christ's teachings into practice? What about the poor? What about the homeless? What about widows and orphans? Jesus constantly talked about serving them and loving them. How much time and resources do we as Churchgoers actually spend following this commandment that Jesus gives us?

It was becoming increasingly clear the direction Brian and I were to head. We needed to serve the poor and homeless in Fort Collins. We set a date. We decided that at our next meeting, we would go around Fort Collins, seek out homeless people, ask them their stories, and see what practical ways we could serve them. We also decided to bring Wal-Mart and Subway gift cards to fill any immediate needs they might have.

We met on our selected day, and set out around mid morning. We didn't have a specific plan or know where to go. We prayed and felt confident God would take us to where we needed to be. We decided to head to Old Town Fort Collins, as we had both experienced homelessness around there. On the way we prayed, "Lord, we don't really know what you have planned, but we trust you are calling us to this. Please guide us and lead us to the right place, and be glorified by our actions today."

We drove down to the corner of Linden and Jefferson, a spot opened up immediately and we took it. We got out of the truck, left a few belongings behind and started walking, looking for any sign of homelessness. We talked a bit as we walked, with no real direction. All of a sudden, about 50 yards from where we parked we found ourselves walking down a sidewalk next to a park. In the park were a group of men gathering with large backpacks, bicycles, and blankets. As we walked by, one of the men looked at us, nodded his head at us and said, "Hey!" Brian and I looked at each other and decided to go

*It was time to start walking the walk.*

Clayton Jenkins



continued

over to the group of men and talk.

The man who had greeted us introduced himself as Paul. Paul was African American, short, and had very dark, porous skin. The whites of his eyes had a pale yellow hue to them, as if to signify his battle with jaundice. The smell of alcohol seeped out very thick from Paul's mouth. Paul had a warm smile and was very humble and inviting.

Paul was originally from Texas, he shared with us, as soon as he could scrape together a few bucks, he was going to take the first train back. He wanted to see his children. He openly shared about his addiction to alcohol and acknowledged it was the root of his current situation. He talked about the population of homeless people in the park and how they were a family and took pride in caring for one another. Paul also expressed how much he cared for the homeless women and children, that one day when he had enough money he would open a shelter for them, so they may have a safe, warm place to sleep.

As we chatted with Paul, I couldn't help but feel drawn to him. His kindness and transparency was more than I had experienced from a stranger in quite some time. As he talked about how much he valued other people's lives over his, I couldn't help but feel as though I was actually looking into the face of Christ. This was a very powerful moment for me. How could a man with so little in his life in regard to shelter and material possessions, have so much to offer in terms of relationship? During our short time at the park, it was very apparent that Paul was highly regarded, respected, and loved by his "family."

Eventually Paul introduced us to an older man with a beard, he affectionately referred to as "Red". Red was just as kind and loving as Paul, and also expressed his desire to care for other homeless brothers and sisters.

The conversation quickly turned to the Bible. Paul pulled his Bible to reference one of his favorite scriptures. It was very clear Paul loved the Lord. He was happy to share that at times, all he has is his trust in the Lord.

After about an hour talking with these men in the park, Brian and I decided it was time to go. We handed out the gift cards to very thankful and humble people. We asked

what we could bring back in the future that would be helpful to them, and said our good-byes. The men, again, expressed their thankfulness and said we were welcome to come back anytime and visit with them. I left the park with a warm felling in my heart, not by anything I had done for these men, but what they had done for my life. Their kindness, humbleness, and love really touched my heart in a place I had never felt before.

Within a couple weeks of our visit, we were informed that Paul had passed away. He had died in a car and wasn't found for 5 days. I wasn't completely surprised given the amount of alcohol he consumed regularly, but was indeed sad. I had looked forward to visiting with him again and even taking some pictures of him and his life for a project.

Before I was made aware of his death, I had a random dream about him. Paul was brand new in shinning light, telling me how good it felt to be healthy again, that he was a completely a new person. In the dream he hadn't died, but was healthy and quit drinking. This dream was very real to me and I can still see it very clearly.

Upon learning of his death, I immediately thought of the dream. Was this the Lord's way of showing me that anyone who is in Christ is a new creation? Surely, I thought, Paul is with Jesus right now. Exploring his new life, and his final victory over the addiction to alcohol.

As I reflect on our visit to the park that day, and Paul's death. I realize how much I learned. I remember how judgmental I felt and much better I thought I was than the homeless and beggars before this experience. Hanging out with the homeless finally changed all that in my heart. They aren't much different than me. Often times it seems that I too am willing to fight to the death and hold on to our my earthly desires and possessions. My spirit is willing, but my flesh is so week.

I was so excited to help the homeless, to change their lives and make them better, but the irony is that it was my heart that changed. It was their love and humbleness that moved me and impacted my life in a positive way. Indeed, they were sharing Jesus' love with me.

Isn't that what we all want, to love and to be loved in return? Thank you Jesus, for showing me your love in the most unexpected way. I am indeed loved by my Savior!

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*Hanging out with the homeless finally changed all that in my heart. They aren't much different than me.*

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*...I couldn't help but feel as though I was actually looking into the face of Christ.*



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Have a reflection or story you'd like to share? Let's start by contacting the office.