Impact: A Staffer's Reflection
by Lara De Haan

Lara De Haan is a student at George Mason University. Her home church is Westwood Baptist Church, a BGAV-member congregation in Springfield, VA.

It amazes me how sometimes we go on mission trips with the idea that we are to chase others who need love and God’s word, but sometimes our reason for going is actually God chasing after us.

This summer I had the opportunity to work as a staff member for the Baptist General Association of Virginia’s Impact Missions camp. Having gone as a camper for the five previous summers, I thought I had an idea of what my summer would be like as I sent in my application.

Early wake-ups. Hot afternoons. Humbling living conditions. (Anything but the typical summer vacation dreams of lying on the beach like I would do at home.) Looking back, I actually had no clue what this summer truly had in store for me.

I jumped in with the inspiration to be a staffer who was remembered for adding energy to the mornings, genuinely getting to know the campers, always being in front worshipping as though no one was looking, joining in on the work on sites, and for opening the minds and hearts of these high schoolers.

But more than the accomplishment of any of these goals, I believe God gave me this opportunity to open my own eyes and heart. Having been super distant from worship and scripture while studying at college for a couple years, I think God gave me the opportunity to hear through others and be reminded of his reckless love that I’d forgotten about.

I don’t think she knew it at the time, but one girl (we’ll give her the alias, Grace) flipped my thoughts and led my heart back to where it belonged.

Grace asked me to talk after worship one night. That one night was the
night of worship I shared my testimony for the first time. She relieved my vulnerable feeling by admitting she, too, had been feeling some of the same ideas I had shared, one being a recent uncertainty in God and a guilt because of that doubt.

I sat down and listened to her, and when she asked what I thought, I couldn't control it; my mouth just opened and began to pour out reasons why I know we can't doubt God's presence in life.

I don't remember quite what I said, but as soon as the words left my mouth they came right back and hit my ears so hard that my heart absorbed the punch, and suddenly I knew that I wasn't just speaking to Grace anymore. I was speaking to myself.

And as the weeks went on, people continued to share their stories of life with me: the heartache of losing a wife and a daughter, the fear and miracle of a son surviving a bullet to the head, the pain of growing up with a manipulative and alcoholic father, and the loss of a friend who sacrificially stepped in front a bullet.

I was baffled as I sat through these stories of pain and suffering that always seemed to have a happy end. Each being a “happy end” because each storyteller ended with an unbreakable confidence in God’s intervention, love, and purpose.

My soul needed this summer opportunity to be on staff. Being at Impact gave me a platform to have deeper, more intimate conversations about God with those who came. Ultimately, these conversations helped refocus and reaffirm what I believe in.

Impact Mission Camps celebrated 25 years of service this summer. We wanted to highlight how Impact is helping to change lives for Christ.

For more information about Impact Mission Camps, contact:
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