



I'm 50, and you want me to spend 28 hours doing what?

That's me in the blue coat on the left. A couple months ago, when I first decided to help staff our Winter Teen Life Intern Retreat, I admittedly was thinking of it as more of a chore than a privilege. I've worked in youth ministry for 26 years, so I've done a few retreats with teens. There's usually lots of starch, sugar and chips. Sleep is always interesting – and scant – bunk beds packed into rustic cabins and kids who can't or won't go to sleep until long after lights out. Bathrooms in a separate building 'down the road a piece' which, now that I'm older ... well, you get what that means in the middle of the night in the middle of winter. Always doing headcounts to make sure no one's wandered off as a couple to be alone. Yeah.

But although every single one of these things was true last weekend, something much more important happened during the retreat.. Our focus for the 28 hrs we were spending together was Love – the difference between conditional, strings-attached kind of love, and God's kind of unconditional, "I'll love you even though..." kind of love. On Friday night, one of our staff members shared his testimony of how God turned him around from a path of destruction and death with love and forgiveness. He shared how God had healed and restored him from deep wounds. As he finished, every teen got up and surrounded him and, weeping, we prayed over

him. God's loving presence was unmistakable and palpable in the room.

The next morning, another staff member gave a very creative and clear explanation of the gospel – and riveted the teens' attention (which is in itself a miracle, given how little sleep they all got!). After this, one of the teens spontaneously shared her "love story" with the group, describing how God had rescued her from a harmful relationship and showed her what abundant and unconditional love really is in Christ. Something exceptional was happening. There was a powerful sense of truth, courage and vulnerability that was opening up the hearts of the teens. God had their complete attention.

After two more teaching sessions, another one of our staff members decided to share her testimony (also spontaneously) of God's love for her despite so much pain she'd had to go through. The teens connected with her deeply, and although I was supposed to pray for them later -- at the last part of our retreat -- it was clear to me the time to do it was right then.

So then I had the privilege, not the chore. I had the amazing privilege of inviting all the teens who wanted this kind of love, God's kind of love, into a love relationship with Jesus Christ. Any teen who was ready to trust their life to Christ was invited to stand as we prayed, and every teen in the room stood up.

There was a song we sang a few times on the retreat: "By his stripes we are healed. By his nail pierced hands we're free. By his blood, we're washed clean. Now we have the victory. The power of sin is broken, Jesus overcame it all. He has won our freedom, Jesus has won it all." What an incredible privilege.

Thank you, thank you for all your prayers for our teens and children at New City! We are so grateful for your partnership with us in this work! And thank you for your generous hearts that allow us this privilege of witnessing new life in Christ happening before our very eyes!

Pastor Linda

(p.s. - don't forget to register for our upcoming "concert" - but it goes way beyond concert - "imaginative multi-media extravaganza" might be closer.)



Watch our ONE MINUTE trailer to The Turnaround.... then share it!

New City Kids presents:

The Turnaround / April 20 @7pm

An original production from New City Kids

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