

Volunteering at the Den

by Jason Alston

Let's see. Well it all started when a friend from church wanted to get together with me the following week for coffee. We both had pretty busy schedules that week and just wanted to take some time out and chat. So we went through the whole gamut of weekdays with no compatibility of days except for a Monday of the following week, which really wasn't available for him unless I would agree to meet him at the Den. He told me he was planning to go down to the Den to see about some volunteer opportunities for helping out with youth. With God already actively working on my heart about serving for His Kingdom in a more dynamic way I agreed. See, I had some brothers praying for me and I was praying that God would give me more of a serving heart. I had some fears about working for the Lord just because of my tendency to get started with something and to kind of fizzle out as the relationships that developed crossed over from shallow to deep. I certainly did not want to get any young person's hopes up and just quit on them. But wait a second I thought, I prayed about it and maybe this was the place God was directing me to go. The following Monday came and as the time approached to go down and meet my buddy at the Den a streak of fear gripped me and tried to stop me from going but I went anyways. I kept reminding myself that it was not about me but serving my Lord. So I arrived at the Den and there were no cars parked around it or signs of life. I knocked at the door a couple of times with my heart pounding at redline. I called my friend who was supposed to meet me and he did not pick up. I knocked on the door a few more times and also re-read the hours posted to confirm that Monday was a day of operation which it validated. So I got back in my car puzzled with honestly a sense of relief that I did not make some kind of commitment that I would latter regret. How selfish, but those were my thoughts at the time. I finally talked to my friend who was supposed to meet me and I told him that there was nobody around when I went down to meet him and he was surprised. I guess I was off the hook, I mean I made an honest attempt. I still continued to counsel with brothers that I meet with on a weekly basis and they were curious as to how things were going with me in terms of becoming more active in the Body of Christ. I think approximately 3 weeks went by but the Lion's Den would not leave my mind. I decided to go back down on another Monday and after a couple of knocks at the door Erin Quinney opened the door. After a warm greeting she showed me around the place and gave me the link to the online volunteer application. She gave me Jeff's number as I expressed an interest in working on Friday nights with the teens. I called Jeff and he scheduled me for that next Friday. And here I am!

Volunteering for the Den has done many things for me but most importantly it is allowing me to exercise my trust and faith in the Lord. The fear which I expressed at the beginning of this article was all centered around me. The faith and trust that I am expressing at the end of this article is all centered around Christ Jesus. I finally have something to offer that is of value with faith and trust in the Lord. It no longer has to be about me and my limits but the unlimited source of power I have through Christ. I am able to express a greater level of love without fear of running out or letting anyone down because an unlimited source has been revealed to me. What a privilege it is to see young lives transforming right before your eyes, young lives becoming leaders with the truth, young lives exercising trust and faith in the Lord. It's just encouraging to see the kids embracing Christ and avoiding snares that tripped me up. Praise God! Amen.

"The Lions Den is the best place I've ever been to. Lion's Den is the perfect crowd to hang out with, there are other teens to look up to, and the volunteers are role models. There are always people to talk to for advice. If you come to the Lion's Den you have everything to do!" –Erick

MANAGER IN TRAINING

By Jeff Stappenbeck

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.” Hebrews 1:1-3 (ESV)

What an honor it is making another article contribution to the Lion's Den Newsletter. Let me start off by thanking all who have prayed for the ministry of the Lion's Den. Thank you to those who have partnered with my personal ministry in prayer and support.

As you many know, the summer 2009 ministry at the Lion's Den ended with an incredible week spent at Word of Life Island, in upstate New York. A group of Lion's Den teens were blessed with a week of discipleship, Bible teaching, and outdoor adventure. Teens met Christ intimately and a number of teens met him for the first time in their lives.

In addition to camp ministry, Word of Life has a Bible Institute in upstate New York and the camp counseling staff are students from that program. While the teens were enjoying the Island ministry at Word of Life, I was blessed with experiencing the ministries of Word of Life first hand. As a result of my personal time meeting student counselors from the Bible Institute and my time spent observing the ministry, I decided that the Lord was providing me with a great opportunity to attend Word of Life Bible Institute. I applied to Word of Life's Bible Institute shortly after leaving the Island summer camp in August, and by September, I was a freshman at Word of Life Bible Institute! My goal this year at the Bible Institute is to build a foundation in Biblical Studies in order to serve Christ more effectively in my life and ministries.

Besides being a freshman...again (I recently graduated from Springfield College in 2008), I have been greatly blessed by my time both inside and outside of the classroom. Each week, we have a guest lecturer who teaches us from a specific book of the Bible. Over the past weeks we have studied James, II Peter, Jude, Leviticus, and Hebrews. We have also taken a personal evangelism class and attend courses in Bible Survey and Theology, which are taught by resident professors.

One of the great things about Word of Life Bible Institute is that the curriculum is designed to give you opportunity to apply what you learn about the Word of God immediately in ministry. I have done this in many ways over the past month and a half. These include discipleship of fellow students (I'm a resident assistant on campus). We will be traveling to New York City to be involved in street evangelism. I will be involved in Biblical counseling at Word of Life Superbowl's (These are evangelistic youth events held throughout Northeastern cities). This year I will be a counselor at 3 Superbowl events in Portland Maine, Springfield Massachusetts, and Binghamton New York. Finally, I will have the opportunity to counsel youth over the summer at a Word of Life summer camp.

The more I serve Christ in ministry, the more I realize that God's plans are always far better than ours! Although I greatly miss my Lion's Den family in Springfield, I am excited about the work the Lord continues to accomplish at the Lion's Den and I am greatly blessed by the opportunity to spend a year studying and applying the Word of God at Word of Life Bible Institute. How exciting it is to serve Jesus Christ!

