

Testimonies from Youth Mission Teams Serving with Living Hope

Our Missions week to Living Hope ministries was the most fruitful, most challenging and most productive missions trip I have taken our students on, ever. The students were placed in the wonderful tension, of having of having the ministry responsibility on “their shoulders” through teaching, preparing and running VBS. This left me as a pastor to do what I really want to do on missions trips—coach stressed students who are responsible to teach the Word of God. It was wonderful to have the student in this position. None of them could sit back and relax. They had to work hard and rely on God. It was wonderful.

Steve’s leadership was evident. Living Hope is not a chaotic mess where the “clients” run the place, but is orderly and well run. This gave our students the security and freedom to teach and minister the word. This was very good.

-Eric, Youth Pastor (2009)

"While on my missions trip this past summer at Living Hope Ministry I experienced true fellowship and devotion to God. I feel like I really was able to connect with the kids at our sports camp and also to connect with God. Through this experience I have grown in my faith and I know that i was able to show others God's love, which is truly the best thing of all."
- Nicole, 11th grader on her first mission trip

The following are testimonies from a team of two youth groups that served with us in July 2011.

This summer over 170 teens and leaders served us and the people of Northeast Minneapolis, and we did our best to serve them and help them grow through the experience. God certainly was at work in many lives this summer, and I want to give you a small taste of that. Here are some things teens and leaders said at a debriefing time after their mission trip. Rejoice with me, for God has done great things!

- One student began to see that “God is always at work, even in the little things”
- Several students expressed that they never really understood the power of prayer until this week. They saw specific prayers answered. Some that were mentioned:
 - For the true love of God to pour through us to the kids
 - For energy at times of extreme exhaustion
 - God’s total control over the weather
- Several students had not intended to go on the trip, but somehow God had led them there. By the end of the week, they could see that God had a grand purpose for bringing them on this trip to Northeast Minneapolis.
- Some students remarked how this trip meshed their youth group together in a way they had never experienced before. Others expressed amazement at how two youth groups from different places quickly became like a family!

- Two students confessed that before the trip they really disliked each other. This was something that both of them were nervous about and were praying about as they went into the trip. On the second night, God just did something! He broke both of their hearts, and there was reconciliation...and new friends.
- Some students were pushed out of their comfort zones...and at the end of the week they were very glad for that experience! Students shared the gospel with strangers on the streets; they went prayer-walking through the neighborhoods, praying out loud and asking strangers if they wanted prayer; some made phone calls to strangers; others did service projects that stretched them out of their comfort zone. Some were way out of their element just working with kids, but found it to be extremely rewarding. All of them found that they needed to depend on God more in these situations, and they realized that He was always there with them to help them.
- One student loved how excited the kids in his group got about heaven. They asked tons of questions about it. He said the strangest one was, "Can I do a backflip on a wolf in heaven?" (It's a fair question. I want to know.)
- Some students were impacted by the difficult situations the kids find themselves in. One expressed gratefulness that God has a plan for each of them, even if their futures look grim. Another learned the importance of making the most of every opportunity, knowing that you may only have one chance to tell a kid about Jesus.
- One student insightfully noticed, after a few years of coming to Living Hope, that she is more apt to go out of her comfort zone and take opportunities here than she is in her home town. She knows that has to change.
- One young man was incredibly moved by the trip. He said that he's been wanting to see God in a real way, and that his perception of God this week has been life-changing. He now sees God as one who is actively at work.
- Another realized that fear of failure was a major issue before the trip. Ministry success was all-important to him. God opened his eyes to see how he was using ministry to point to himself rather than to God.
- These students and leaders faced many difficult situations when they were with us. (Satan tends to hate what they're doing and work pretty hard against them.) One girl said, "God taught me to look past the bad stuff and rejoice in God." Another student felt burdened by things going on at home, but God answered his prayer to lift the burden.
- One student was convicted of his impatience and cynical attitude and finally asked God for help.
- One leader was struck in a new way by God's heart for the poor and for children.