

Personal feedback on the CYSM camp from 30/11/2015 to 04/12/2015

So, here we were in the evening of Monday 30th November 2015 in Simons Town – five youthful delegates from Cape Town, not knowing what to expect in the camp. Maybe the others have had previous experiences of such youth camps, but this was my first, and I had nothing to compare it to. In a nutshell, it was life transforming and mind renewing. That same evening the delegation from Pretoria joined us at our special seaside venue – Water-Edge Pre-primary – which was going to be our camp site throughout the program. At first, it felt so awkward praying and worshipping so intimately and intensely with people I had neither seen, known, nor ever heard of before. But one truth kept resonating in my mind and spirit; the Spirit of God is one, and in Christ Jesus, though diverse, we have so many characteristics in common which put all barriers to rest.

On Tuesday morning, things started really happening. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst was extremely evident. I prepared my mind and heart to digest a whole new perspective on the lives of Joseph and Daniel, but the Holy Spirit ministering through Pst Gabila drew my expectant heart to the fact that one thing must be settled first before one can fully appreciate the force behind Joseph and Daniel's zeal for God and His purpose. We were reminded about the conditions for being a disciple of Jesus Christ as documented in Luke 14:25-30. More specifically, we were exalted to let go of the things that are not in God's plan for us because these same things prevent us from entering God's purpose for our lives. Now, this is no new teaching to me, but it hit me really hard. Although I still professed Christ as my Lord and saviour, I could see how my heart had strayed from that of a disciple. My entanglement to family, relationships and my career were brought before my face. At that moment, I wondered how any man with such a heart could emulate the lives of Joseph and Daniel who allowed themselves to be malleable in God's hands. A complete surrender and recommitment to God followed. The next five minutes were so profound. I asked God for mercy and made prayers I had never made before. If the camp were to end at this point, I don't think I would have gone with any regrets. But we had another three days to feed from the example of these biblical heroes. I knew the whole thing must have been a setup from God considering the circumstances that surrounded my attending the camp. Several calls and commitments required that I'd not attend the camp, but God miraculously caused them to give way.

It will be unfair of me not to acknowledge the wisdom that God has blessed His children with. During a long question/answer session, we were encouraged to answer (as a group) the same questions we asked anonymously. Besides a few cases which were clarified by Pst Gabila, our responses were very unanimous, and I strongly believe that they drove the nail in for each individual; at least they did for me. Also, sometimes you are not even aware of your ignorance until someone voices it out; a lot of questions were asked which I benefited from probably more than the one from whom the question came. I enjoyed this, and the best part – the bible was our source of reference throughout. By this time, I knew almost everyone by name, enjoyed their company and could vaguely discern each person's role in the body of Christ. It was a room made up of about 22 youths and I could identify God's diversity made manifest through the gifts of the Holy Spirit in prophecy, teaching, and words of wisdom.

Then came the teachings on Joseph and Daniel (from Wednesday to Thursday morning), but by now as far as I was concerned, it was 'Jesus or nothing'. The foundation had been laid for the rest of the camp, and everything made sense. Of all that was said, a few things stood out for me;

1. Investing in your relationship with God is the greatest investment you can make in your life especially in your youth. Conversely, taking it lightly is a bad investment – somewhat a death sentence.

2. Given the times in which we live, I must be prepared for life-threatening/career-threatening tests in the likes of those experienced by Daniel and his friends. Honestly, I have always been scared of taking risks for God, but praise God, this fear was broken.
3. The world has problems, and is in need of answers from experts whose know-how is greatly limited because it is only canal. As a child of God, in a new way I saw myself as a vessel of God-inspired solutions for the present (in my immediate sphere of influence) and for the future (considering the positions God is taking me to). We were each called to share (and formally document) how we plan to advance God's kingdom, and I was marvelled at the uniqueness in that no two people had the same calling.
4. Releasing from your heart those who have hurt you in anyway just like Joseph did, is the pathway to my fulfilment in God's vineyard. Pst Gabila's testimony was a vivid eye-opener.

The seminar on marriage was packed to say the least. I learnt a lot from the first hand experiences of the couples who were present, and especially from their answers to our questions which covered much more than the question asked for. Though so important, I had never given marriage and the choice of the right spouse as much attention as I do now; this could only be a product of the camp. Considering the nature and geography of where God will have me operate, my choices were significantly narrowed down. "An institution made of two servants who strive towards out-serving each other"; what a description. Apparently, it takes more than shallow love or what the eyes can see to make a marriage work. Hard work and determination are integral ingredients. I can say I have been divinely equipped with so much practical information on my journey towards the institution of marriage, thanks to this camp.

May there be many more of such camps, and my prayer is that all youths will have the opportunity to attend even one. The seed it has sown in my heart has a huge eternal consequence to the glory of Him who created us and loved us by reconciling us to Himself through His blood.

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