



Shaped by Experience

TEXT
1 Peter 2:1-5

August 26, 2018 — Village Church Youth Sunday

Brady Symon

Hello, my name is Brady Symon. I'm in eighth grade, and I go to Indian Hills Middle School. Today I'm going to talk about my experience in Minnesota with the youth group. In the morning of the first day, we got into two separate vans and started on our way. On the way, we danced to our favorite songs and laughed a lot. A couple hours in, I noticed half of my earbuds were trapped in the sliding door of the car. Everyone thought that was pretty funny.

We stayed at a church that welcomed us with bright smiles and open arms. The first morning, we started out with helping the church, whether it was cleaning their technology closet or weeding their community garden. In the afternoon, I was in a group who went to a shelter for the homeless. This taught me a lot, and that not everyone has a house of their own to go to. It was also eye-opening to see how some people live in a neighborhood that isn't the best. For the next couple of days, we visited a church that was a little run-down. Together, our group of 30 filled a huge dumpster over two afternoons that might have taken two people an entire month. We

helped clean dishes, clean the bathrooms and take junk from the basement out. They were so thankful to have us there, and it felt good to know we were making a difference.

When you help others, you get to know yourself along the way. Something our leaders also tried to teach us was that this trip was a huge opportunity to make lifelong friendships. Every night, we would gather together and take a chance to talk about the day, including funny quotes we heard people say throughout the day. We also talked about scriptures from the Bible and how they relate to our lives. The coming together as a group helped me realize how fortunate I am to have the Village Presbyterian Youth Group as a second family.

The last work day, we designed paper bags together. We used the bags to put food in that we delivered to sick, elderly or disabled people. This was one of my favorite parts of the entire trip because it was so extraordinary to see people's expressions when we brought their food. I remember one man in specific who opened the door and had one of the biggest smiles I've ever seen. He asked us how our day was, and it seemed like he

just wanted to sit down with us and talk all day.

Making other people smile is one of the main reasons I come back to youth group. It means a lot to me to see the pure joy on someone's face, and we experience that a lot at youth group. I could definitely tell God was with us on that trip, whether it was running through the rain to deliver those meals, sharing stories at the end of the day, or even just eating lunch at McDonald's on the way there. For it is God who brought us together, and I could never have asked for anything more.

This whole experience was one I will truly never forget. It had a huge impact on my leadership skills and forming me as a person. We had been chosen by God to stand up and make a difference in the world. Before I leave, I would like to end with a verse from the Bible that I found. This verse is one I want to now live by. It goes: "Do not pass by a man in need. For you may be the hand of God to him." (Proverbs 3:27) Thank you!

Lauren Dornbusch

Good Morning! My name is Lauren Dornbusch, and I'm a junior at Shawnee Mission East. Over this past summer, I have

been a part of a great summer program here at Village. A few weeks ago, my Village family and I traveled to the great north, aka Minnesota, for our Boundary Waters trip. This trip is only taken every other year, so it is considered a special occasion. For those of us who went for the first time as rookies, we can attest that this trip was nothing but memorable. We went through everything: from thunderstorms and red lightning, to leeches and hammock time. Through it all, we grew as people, as friends, as wilderness survivalists and as children of God.

I want to share with you two things about that growth. First, how it formed me and second, how it shaped what I see as leadership.

Going to an unknown place can be intimidating at first. Good thing we have God as a guiding hand. This was so true for the Boundary Waters. We are used to being surrounded by nature, but I've heard it said that you have not experienced nature until you have gone to the Boundary Waters — well, I say that. The trees, the water, the harsh elements, they all make up an unknown nature that no one can ever expect.

A big lesson that we probably all learned from Boundary Waters is to be able to adapt with the conditions and be able to adapt to what you have. God made us grateful for what we had. This is especially true on the second day of the trip.

One constant of the trip was change. From beginning to end, we experienced a lot of it. But

all that change turned out to be what made this trip great. I think change is what made the memories that much sweeter.

So anyway, the second day: We had just finished portaging — that's when you have to carry everything in your canoe, and also your canoe from one lake to another. And we started paddling in the next lake, and all we see ahead of us is this dark storm front heading straight towards us. Not only did it thunder and lightning and pour down rain, it was so windy that making any progress was actually not possible. At that point we had already had nine soaked-through packs and two tipped canoes. The truth is that the hardest thing was not paddling; it was staying positive. Early that day, we had gotten lost in nonpassable waters somewhere in Canada that were considered dangerous in the month of July.

Oh, don't worry it gets better!

Then, on the way upstream through rapids, one of the other students, Henry — who called himself our Beverly Hills leader — got a leech stuck on his foot that required a lot of attention and duct tape to get resolved. You think this is the end of this day; not even close.

When we finally got to a campsite, we didn't bother with dinner — we were too exhausted, which resulted in a 24-hour period when we didn't eat. So, you could see why staying positive through that day was our real challenge. Even though we had such a bad second day, all I can remember is all the laughing and joking that followed.

This is where the whole change theory comes into play. Not all of our days on the water were as bad as the one we had on Tuesday, but we changed so much as people. We all learned that we could lean on each other to find help when we needed it. We all learned that we could change the culture of the trip just by relying on others and helping others. It was that simple. We were our own little family. We helped one another, and we picked up each other when necessary.

Going on all of these adventures with my group also taught me leadership. When you're portaging, leadership and cooperation is key if you want to get your 65-pound canoe to the other side of the island. While everyone was equally a leader on this trip, two individuals stood out to me. Henry Kartsonis, our Beverly Hills leader, had been on this trip before, so he helped us learn the ropes. He was never afraid to push everyone forward. His funny and cheerful spirit kept morale to a good level.

Our other leader, Brian Reldsheimer, was our true survivalist. I remember Jenna begged Zach to put Brian in our group. Brian is a fire chief and a former scout, so you could see why he was a crucial player in getting our group out of the Boundary Waters alive. At some point during the week, everyone borrowed — and sometimes broke — something that belonged to Brian. True, he was the one who got us lost in Canada ... but he is also the one who got us out of

Canada. In Henry, leadership was about being fearless to go first and being joyful no matter what. In Brian, leadership was about wisdom and generosity. Because of all that we went through, each person in my group became a leader, and we learned that from Henry and Brian.

God did us a real favor on this trip. He kept us safe, and he kept us happy. We prayed in times of hardship and in times of triumph. On the last day, we praised God for finally giving us the sunlight and warmth we needed to dry our wet clothes and sleeping bags. We praised him when we finally saw the other group for the first time in five days.

Coming back from the Boundary Waters, all of us returned with a new sense of purpose and leadership in our lives. One thing I love about Village trips is how you can integrate what you learn into your life both at and away from the church. We can become better people in our community and better people for our friends and family. I truly miss the Boundary Waters with all my heart — not because of the hardship, but because it was so easy to connect, to know that you were being formed and shaped.

I pray to God every day about how I would do anything to go back, just for a day. This Boundary Waters trip was one for the books, and one I will never forget. Thank you!

William Muller

I was asked to come and talk to you guys about Montreat, a

youth trip we take every year. For those who do not know what Montreat is, let me tell you a little bit about it. It is a place just outside of Asheville, North Carolina, in the Appalachian Mountains. It is a big youth conference that brings together about 1,600 kids and youth leaders to meet and talk. You get randomly assigned a small group with no one else you know, which can be kind of intimidating. Over the week, you and your small group grow as one; you talk about pressing issues in each other's lives and outside of our lives. It is an experience that you will never forget. You are truly left wanting to come back, and you leave transformed.

Montreat matters because it is a place where everyone can decompress and expand their faith in God by meeting new people and hearing stories from service every night.

Now, let me run you guys through the guys' daily routine.

The guys' daily routine consisted of waking up at 6:00 a.m., putting on clean clothes and making our way up to breakfast at the girls' house. When I say we went up to breakfast, I mean it. The girls' house was on the top of Mount Everest; it was terrible. To make it "easier" for us, we would cut through yards to get to the road leading up to the girls' house. At about a third of the way up, you were sweating profusely ... at least I was. We would reach the house, walk in and start making ourselves some breakfast. Then all of a sudden, girls would start coming out

of nowhere from upstairs and downstairs, and they would all ask the same question: "Why are you guys so sweaty?"

After breakfast, we would head to Anderson, which is where everyone gathered for morning Keynote. Then we would split into our small groups, then get lunch and meet back up with our small groups later that afternoon. We would then head back to the guys' house for a little bit before we would then go back to the girls' house for dinner. To end the night, we would have service in Anderson with our guest Pastor Cece (she was awesome), and as a group, we walked back to the guys' house. We would have a group discussion about our day and sing.

For those who were here a few weeks ago, we heard Rodger talk about Noah's Ark and being a magnetic church. I want you to try and remember what he said: He said that opposites attract. Well, that describes Montreat pretty perfectly. It is a place full of completely diverse people meeting and getting to know each other. You can tell how special this place is by the expression on everyone's face. This being my first year going, outside of hearing stories from people who had gone in the past, I had no idea what to expect. Now I understand why people go back year after year.

When you arrive, it is like being home for the first time. There is both something new but familiar about the place. When you arrive, everyone is just so happy and inviting to see

you. You become so distracted by meeting people, you start to forget that you are 14 hours from home. You get the sense that you were meant to be there. This is very important because it causes a magnetic community that you just do not get anywhere else.

Then last week in worship Rodger talked about “Leading as Loving.” Rodger then told a story about how he went to a youth conference and how his group fell asleep during some of the services in the morning. Well, that must be a requirement for Christian youth conferences because there were some tired kids and adults in the mornings at Montreat. Over the course of the week, it was the goal of one of our interns to get a picture of everyone sleeping during morning and evening worship. I distinctly remember tapping her on the shoulder to let her know that Zach was asleep.

It was a sure bet that someone was going to be asleep most mornings and evenings. Except that on the last night, no one fell asleep. Our guest pastor for the week, Cece, gave a sermon about how we are all our own unique puzzle piece and how you might be a corner piece (outlining the structure), or an edge piece (helping start something), and/or a middle piece (where you help paint the picture). She talked about how you are a unique puzzle piece and that God has a plan for you.

For the longest time, I thought baseball was my calling; that my puzzle piece was to play college and professional baseball. I totally thought I

knew what picture I was a part of. But come junior year of high school, I realized that I was not meant to play baseball my whole life. I saw that I was not going to fit in this puzzle and that I needed to take a step back and look at all my options.

Maybe you have experienced this in your lifetime as well — where you did not get that job you wanted or that promotion you were gunning for, or your child has an unexpected injury, meaning they can’t play that sport anymore. My parents have had that happen to them. It was right before football season was about to start. I was excited, I could not wait. It would be my second year of tackle football. In late July, I had a back injury, leaving me temporarily paralyzed for about eight hours. I found out that I ruptured the sheath protecting my spinal cord. This meant that I could not play any contact sports for the rest of my life. I could do most water activities. This was hard on my family, but we made it work. It is like I said earlier: God has a plan for you. Whether you see or not, God has a plan for you.

My experience at Montreat is a memory I will never forget. I plan on going next year in hopes of making more new friends and new memories. Thank you to Village Church and this congregation for sending our youth group on this amazing experience. It was an honor to speak to you guys this morning. Thank you very much and have a good day!

This sermon was delivered at Village Presbyterian Church, 6641 Mission Road, Prairie Village, KS 66208.

The sermon can be read, heard or seen on the church’s website: <http://www.villagepres.org/current-sermonsermon-archives.html>.