

Youth Camp 2018

In August 2018 I was part of an awesome team helping to run a youth Camp. Our theme was 'Truth or Dare' and our aim was to bring young people in to explore and question how we can know the gospel is true and dare them to share it.

Monday

Our first day took place in beautiful sunshine and an opportunity for the young people to relax, go ice skating and bowling before heading off to the camp proper in the evening. There is already a good atmosphere and rapport between everyone and I developed a friendly rivalry in the bowling alley with a young atheist called Josh. We heard a super message on the subject of 'Identity' in the evening.

Tuesday

This was our first full day at the camp and so much has happened. In the morning I had the opportunity of sharing a devotion with the other leaders as we prepared for the day. I emphasised our need for a fresh Pentecost which was well received and people were encouraged. In the morning session one of our leaders, Duncan, gave a challenging talk on what truth is, contrasting the modern popular relativism with a belief in absolute truth. I complimented Duncan's message with a passionate argument for faith in Christ entitled 'The 4 E's' which were the evidence for his 'existence, execution, and the empty grave' along with the testimony of 'early believers'. Later on, another leader reported back that her group of young people had taken it all in and were able to recall all four evidences.

We have a time every day for small group discussions and devotional. My group is a mix of baptised and unbaptised church youth and some from outside the church so it's a really good mix. It's also a great opportunity to engage with people and see the development in their lives over the week. The young people were actively participating in the discussion which was very encouraging.

Our team are also growing together. Every day we have sessions where they get the chance to do some form of physical activity often team based. Today they were challenged to a high level of teamwork as we went through a 'low ropes' type of assault course. It was remarkable how well they took on the advice and began to work with each other and encourage one another. They are really flourishing as a team. Another significant moment for me was at lunch when I sat at a random table and one of the young people wanted to know more about my faith. He had some genuine questions including one about a gay friend and how the church would respond to him. It's conversations like this that really make a difference and that without camps like this might never happen.

Wednesday

After weeks of summer sun it was finally overcast today with a welcome drop in temperature. Together with a couple of the other leaders I ran a music workshop today. The leaders have several things on offer and young people were given the chance to sign up to one of their choice. We had a good size group as we promised to teach them how to rap. The main evening meeting would be the opportunity for everyone to showcase their talents. {No pressure there then!}

I am co-leading our group with Yemi who comes from one of our churches in Stratford. He shared a powerful message in the morning session which really connected to the young people.

Our group devotional time was also good as we encouraged individual engagement and to share how they thought these truths would affect them personally.

The evening main event {we hold one every evening} was awesome as shy people came out of their shell and people discovered talents they didn't know they had. You can see the confidence develop and it also helps us as leaders as we learn more about the young people on camp and how to connect with and relate to them.

Thursday

This was our last full day on camp {Friday we will head off to the coast for a days outing}. Today is also the day we have been building up to as we see the messages building up to a point of decision.

This was such a s amazing day. This morning we had the fourth and final message in the series. We've had four different main speakers and each day the bar was raised higher. Each message tied in with the previous one and was relevant, inspiring and engaging. What then transpired exceeded our imaginations as most of the young people responded at the end requesting prayer.

Josh was deeply touched by a prophetic word he received and asked one of the leaders to pray for him and he searched out the whole 'God thing'.

Another young person was amazed as he received a second confirmation of the exact same word he had been given on a previous occasion.

Independently of each other, two boys approached me for prayer having been convicted of the need to begin sharing their faith. I had the chance to pray for each of them for power, divine leading and courage as well as giving them a word of encouragement.

In our evening session near the end when people were asked to share what their highlight had been, both these boys testified of a new found boldness and confidence they had received.

Among all the responses, undoubtedly the highlight was seeing 3 young people come to give their lives to Christ. There was such a time of divine favour by the end. God was clearly touching the hearts of many young people. This report mentions just some of them.

Steve Johnson