

Lost Then Found

October 30, 2019

This story starts years ago with my pastor, Rev. Stephen Corder (lead pastor of Camelot Christian Center in San Antonio), while he was serving as a missionary in Argentina and operating a group home for children and teens and assisting local churches with their youth groups. While there, Pastor Corder and his wife, Berta, met Gabriel and Daniela Corradini, who are currently serving as missionaries in Spain. During 2017, Pastor Corder was able to visit the Corradini family in Spain to see what God was doing in and through their ministry.

Pastor Corder has a passion to help ministers and missionaries and their children. Recently, the Corradini's teenage son, Johnathan, had made some decisions that were impetuous and flawed. He declared to his family and friends that he was an atheist, and he was loud and proud of this fact. In Johnathan's mind, anyone who didn't agree with his worldview lacked intelligence and an ability to think clearly. On his 2017 visit to Spain, Pastor Corder offered to have Johnathan (then 16 years old) come and stay at Camelot Christian Center during the following summer. His parents also mentioned he was struggling with A.D.D., which was causing trouble with focus and concentration at school. Pastor Corder told the Corradinis that Johnathan could work during the week at the church and stay in an environment where he would be disciplined and mentored. Johnathan came to San Antonio and worked every day with one of the youth pastors doing physical work, landscaping, and construction projects.

Johnathan's first church event of the summer was the 2018 South Texas Royal Rangers Junior Leadership Development Academy (JLDA). Johnathan showed up for the camp on Thursday, June 7, with his attitude on full display and ready to share it with everyone present. His attitude did not improve when he was told he had to check his cell phone in with the camp staff for the duration of the week. The Royal Rangers leaders at camp had been in focused prayer for this camp and Johnathan for months. The JLDA camp does several things to help boys get out of their comfort zone and share their lives to those around them. They are put in groups full of new faces and are expected to become and act as a team. They learn together, compete together, eat together, and overcome obstacles together. Before camp, each young man completes a skills assessment survey, which enables the leaders to put boys with different skill sets together in a small group. This is designed to help boys understand that everyone's skills are valuable to the group and no one person's abilities are more important than someone else's.

The first two days of camp were tough, and Johnathan tested every boundary and caused as much discord as he could amongst his group and even those in other groups. He exercised his God-given leadership skills to inspire other young men to cause trouble and follow his lead. There were lots of one-on-one conversations between Johnathan and camp staff to learn about him and understand him and his anger. Each Saturday night at JLDA, there is an empowerment service with a campfire nearby. The young men are asked to write things down that they are battling with, things they have been through or sins they cannot beat (their “kryptonite”). This year, the young men nailed those papers to a wooden cross. There is a short devotion, and then, the adult staff gets up and leaves without explanation and the junior staff stays to facilitate the remainder of the service. The junior staff is made up of junior high and high school students that have been to multiple leadership camps and have begun the training to lead and serve Christ. One adult staff member stays nearby for the safety of the group, but it is far enough away that he cannot be seen or heard so that his presence doesn’t detract from the junior leaders overseeing the remainder of the service. Then with the guidance of the junior staff, the boys begin to pray for each other to share their hearts and confess sins. Most of the time there are tears during this sharing time. God is faithful, and of the 15 camps I have been to, the Holy Spirit always shows up in a real and powerful way.

This year on that night, to use Johnathan’s words, “God knocked me out of my pants!” According to Johnathan, there was a visible and physical appearance of the Holy Spirit. There was no question God had heard his cry and had come to tell Johnathan that He loved him and that He has a plan for his life. When seeing the change in Johnathan’s life, the other campers proclaimed that they had seen God do a miracle in him. There were many battles fought and won that night at JLDA. These camps always bear powerful spiritual fruit because God is faithful! On Sunday, June 10, Johnathan graduated from the JLDA with over 40 other boys from across South Texas, but none was as changed as he was!

Johnathan went back to the church and shared his story and encounter with God. Two weeks after Royal Rangers JLDA, he went to youth camp and had another powerful encounter with God. He became passionate about his Bible studies and began to study on his own with an intense hunger for the Word and to be discipled. Johnathan’s story is a powerful one. We are thankful for what God did through Royal Rangers camps and leaders that ultimately led to a change in Johnathan’s life. However, Royal Rangers is not the only answer to what you need to disciple young men. Royal Rangers is simply a series of tools and methods that work within the vision of the local pastor and alongside the other ministries of the local church to help build Christlike men.

Johnathan went home to the mountains of northern Spain and was so very happy to get out of the 100-degree South Texas heat. He was energized and excited to tell his friends at home about what God had done in his life over the summer. Currently, Johnathan is at discipleship training school with YWAM (Youth With A Mission) back in Spain.



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