

Discovery Weekend: Gathered and called to go

March 3, 2020

College students from throughout Texas gathered in Midlothian after what was, for some, many hours of travel to discover where God might call them to serve on mission.

After registration, students joined their assigned discussion groups for fellowship over dinner before large group worship. By 10 p.m., each group departed from worship and my car-full headed down the curvy, bumpy country road to our host home. As we wandered deeper and deeper into what I perceived to be the middle of nowhere, I couldn't help but wonder what I'd gotten myself into.

Our host family greeted us with smiles and snacks—the country farmhouse table splayed with cookies, chips and Dr Pepper in true Southern hospitable glory. Our hosts explained they'd be staying in their camping trailer for the weekend so that we could occupy the bedrooms and proceeded to help us set up spare cots.

Our group gathered for brief introductions, where I discovered I was the only student who wasn't a thoroughbred Texan. Our spirited discussion leaders, Grace and John—who currently serve as full-time missionaries in London—led us in the study of the night's prescribed Scripture before we retired to bed.

Saturday's schedule began with breakfast generously prepared by our hosts followed by placement interviews and diving into *Tradecraft: For the Church on Mission*, which would become our official how-to on all things missionary. After watching the cattle pass the breakfast nook window while biting into a sausage gravy-doused biscuit, I felt a bit out of place as a self-

proclaimed urbanite.

Following lunch, we headed to the hosting Baptist church for the missions fair where we shopped for God's calling. We listened intently for God to speak through the mouths of mission leaders who shared passionately about their projects. Dinner and recreation time followed and as the night came to a close, each group member spoke to the spiritual gifts we had observed



in one another. Hearing from the lips of a peer how they had seen God calling each of us was as touching as the voices of students, parents, volunteers and leaders joining in praise during worship earlier that evening.

Back at our host home, my group indulged in a lively game of Uno, luring even the participation of our hosts' children and Grace and John, whom we had surely already exhausted. Alarms went off early Sunday morning, and we wearily stumbled to repack our belongings before the final worship service and goodbyes.

My expectations for the weekend included services of heartfelt worship, time to pray and to listen to our Maker and sermons that left us giddy to go out into the world and serve God. All of these were met. However, I didn't expect to bond with other students who only days prior had been strangers. I didn't anticipate confiding in one another about the ways in which we feel convicted, tempted and blessed. "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them," (Matthew 18:20). God was there—at 1 am in the dining room among scattered Uno cards. He was there that afternoon when we prayed to be called to a people, that evening when we

prayed for each of us to mature in our journeys of faith, and when we prayed the next day for safe travels home.

By the time we tossed our duffles into the trunk and bid adieu to our gracious hosts, I'd become somewhat admittedly fond of the grassy fields we'd passed back and forth between our host home and the church. I had been called out of my comfortable metropolitan mindset that weekend, called to be among other believers, called to hear the messages of returned missionaries, and called to go and serve this summer. God calls us in such ways that the urbanites may be pulled to the outskirts and the country-dwellers may be drawn to the cities.

Texans and non-Texans alike, we are one in Christ.

That weekend, campus missionary interns, Baptist Study Ministry directors and local volunteers, among many others, funneled their time, prayer and wisdom into our process of discovery and contemplation. The heart of our hosts showed through in the meals they prepared and the sacrifices they made for our comfort. We were served lovingly, such as God has called us as student missionaries, to scatter and share God's truth and love.

My appointment to serve on the Impact Amazon medical team this summer in Brazil will surely draw me further from my comfort zone, but with the support and prayers of old and newfound friends and feeling guided by the Holy Spirit, I will be prepared to "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37).

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