

Houston: Learning to love

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This summer was many things—loud, stressful, heartbreaking, eye-opening, lesson-filled, and life-changing. While working alongside 10 other missionaries in the food pantry, during senior adult ministry, at the nursery, and every afternoon at Kids' Club and Youth Club, I have been learning some tough lessons. Learning to lean on God in my times of struggle and feeling alone. Learning not to hit the snooze button 14 times every morning in a room with nine other girls. But the biggest lesson God taught me this summer was something he always has been trying to teach his children—how to love others.



Maggie-Mae Ellison worked each afternoon at Kids' Clubs and Youth Clubs. She taught the children about Jesus. God taught her about loving others. Galatians 5:14 says, "All the law

is fulfilled in one word: love your neighbor as yourself.” An important aspect of this command God has shown me is we are to love others as ourselves, so we first must love ourselves. Learning to love myself is something I’ve been working on for a while, but this summer, God showed how to take that final step. Once I began to love myself, God began showing me how to let that love pour out of me and pour into others.

This was the point in the summer when God pushed me right off my high horse and reminded me I’m not any better than any of his people. After all, love “does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking” (1 Corinthians 13: 4b-5a). Therefore, when truly learning to love others the way we are called to love them, we have to remind ourselves constantly that God views everyone the same, regardless of race, socio-economic class, education level or how “bad” their sin may be. This took a good chunk of the summer, but I finally began seeing what God was showing me using those around me. My take-home for this summer will be learning to love others first and watching the amazing things God does after that.

No matter where I am, I have the ability to love others—in church, in class, walking around campus, at work and anywhere else God may lead us. On a mission trip, it was easy to love those I was working with and serving, because throughout the whole trip, I was praying for those people, and God softened my heart. That’s the key to loving others once I’m home, as well—praying for people daily, whether it’s someone in my class I don’t agree with or just a person I passed walking across the quad. That is something every follower of Christ is called to do. Asking God to soften our hearts and open us up to love everyone we come in contact with is simple but truly life-changing.

Of all the lessons I learned in Houston, loving others was the most important and my personal favorite. Loving others is something I will struggle with—probably my whole life. But this summer, God has shown me

one small step I can take to love others as he has called us to love them.

Maggie-Mae Ellison, a student at Midwestern State University, served at the Mission Centers of Houston this summer with Go Now Missions.