

Love perseveres

August 11, 2010

We met him playing basketball in the park and did our best to form a friendship with him. He was one of the most closed-off people I had ever met. He never asked any questions about what we were doing here all summer or offered to let us know much about him unless we asked specific questions. We did not even know his last name until after two weeks spending time with him.

At times, we questioned if we were going about things incorrectly and tried to figure out why this relationship seemed to be progressing slower than we would like. We had to give up our idea of how quickly progress should be made and trust God's sovereign timing. After all, we are to persevere in showing God's love to people, no matter what we see in return.

Despite the absence of depth in our conversations, he continued to hang around us—even knowing we were Christians—and begin to trust us. Slowly but surely, he began to offer us little bits of insight into his life.

Sadly, our time hanging out with him was cut short as he went away to help at his uncle's farm for ten days. The night before he left, he invited us to his friend's concert—a sign he trusted us enough to bring us into his own element and around the people he hangs out with. We praised God for letting us find favor with him finally.

At the concert, we were sitting around talking, and he kept saying how sad he was for us to leave. He even admitted that if he had known we were—as he put it—"religious" that first day we played basketball, he never would have hung out with us. He told us he really did not know what he believed religiously, and he was trying to figure that out.

We drove to his house the next morning to say our goodbyes. Jarred gave

him a Gospel of John and asked him if he would consider reading it. To our surprise, he accepted it and said he would give it a chance.

As we drove away, praying that God's love would continue to be evident in our relationship with him, I got one of the best text messages I have ever received. Our friend told us that he loved us. No one had ever done anything special just for him, but he felt loved and knew we were very accepting of him even though he was far from perfect. I was amazed at how God took just our spending time with him and used it to make him feel all those things in the space of just a few weeks.

This experience brings to me an even fuller understanding of the meaning of 1 Corinthians 13:7-8: "Love always protects, it always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."

Student missionary correspondent Amber Cassady, a communications student at Texas A&M University in College Station, is serving in Colorado with Go Now Missions.