

Pennsylvania: Heartbreaking and heartwarming events

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I've never felt so drained. I've never felt so exhausted. Yet I'm content. I feel at peace with the fact it is an honor to serve here and to build relationships. It is an honor to reflect Christ's light onto all of these children, teens and adults. It is an honor to feel like I am about to collapse but still feel the Holy Spirit working in me, pushing me through it.



Danielle French's ministry is focused on building relationships with children and teens in the inner city. It is an honor spending the summer working my soon-to-be-shattered body, and slowly fill in the cracks. Fill in the cracks with laughter once the tears are shed. Fill in the cracks with tickle monsters when it's time to put kids to bed. Fill in the cracks with the conversations that come after a girl gets heartbroken. Fill in the cracks with hugs from a child who was a stranger a week before. With quiet time when my body needs a break, and prayer

when I start to lose hope. With smiles on once-broken faces I now get to see every day. With God telling me to keep going, to keep giving all I have like Paul did—to sacrifice my life because Jesus did for me.

Maybe I had to be completely broken apart so that I could be put back together with a life that has these people in it. Put together in a life where faith beats fear every time. Where hope beats defeat every time. Where peace beats worry every time. Where Jesus beats my pride every time.

Last week was the busiest so far, but also the best. So many things have happened. A team from Kentucky came to lead a Vacation Bible School we did from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. every day. While at the park, I had to break up two fights. A World Changers missions team was here all week remodeling the house where we are saying. We threw a block party Thursday night, so we were setting up all week for that. Every morning, we babysat until about 9 a.m., which meant getting up around 4 a.m. We also have to drive the church van around constantly to pick up and drop people off everywhere. Safe to say, we have always had something to do.

The week also was heartbreaking. Richard, a 12-year-old, caused the two fights I had to break up and got in a third one when I was not around. Seeing this side of him and how he handles certain things sincerely broke my heart. We did calm him down, though, and we had a discussion about heaven and God. I got to explain creation and the sin of man to him, but by the time I got to the Good News, he changed the subject. I am grateful for what I got to say though and hope I get to share more with him.

Another heartbreaking event is that multiple people committed suicide from the bridges in Pittsburgh, which is right down the road. Also, one of the girls here is going through a difficult time, losing the only friends she has. Another heartbreaking thing is that one of the girls from a nearby convenience store told me she is going to stop coming to church, because her mom said she doesn't have to believe in God if she doesn't want to. The

heartbreaking part is that this girl is 13, and she has already been baptized, but she was never saved. She doesn't truly believe in God and want to submit her life to him, but she was baptized because her friends were.

Heartwarming things happened, too. One night, 15 people got baptized! I also grew closer to some of the kids who aren't in the church, and when they run up and hug me when they see me outside, it makes all my exhaustion disappear and motivates me. When I don't want to keep going, but I manage to keep going to serve and be selfless anyway, those heavenly smiles are such a great reward.

In my Bible study the other day, the lesson focused on how Joshua wholly gave himself to the Lord. That is my motto, my motivation throughout the day. When I feel like stopping or giving up, I ask myself: "Are you wholly giving yourself to the Lord?" Wow, does it change my perspective. I challenge you with this question: Are you wholly giving yourself to the Lord?

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