

Voices: God changed me through the Baptist Student Union

September 14, 2021

When I was young, I was kind of a lost soul in so many ways. I came from a Christian family and a great church—Cliff Temple in Dallas. But I was really insecure and beset with anxiety attacks and all kinds of questions about what to do in life, who to marry, if Christianity was really “so important” or if I could live as a semi-follower and do what I wanted in life.

While part of the Baptist Student Union at the University of Texas at Arlington, I saw in clear terms Jesus demanded my whole life.

This realization was so profound, I wanted to find a way to serve Jesus in my career and with a Christian husband.

This turnaround and calling came during BSU conventions and events, all of which had such beautiful, heart-captivating music.

The song that grabbed my heart most was “Reach Out and Touch,” written by Charles F. Brown from Texas and sung by The Imperials: “Reach out and touch a soul that is hungry ... a man who is lonely if you care.”

The song went on to say that reaching out meant losing a part of your own self, and those who really care do that.

BSU missions opened the door

I was a child during the civil rights movement and when Lyndon Baines Johnson was president. Racism was a part of normal life, a kind of

blindness in that good people meant no harm. A separated racial divide was normal.

I didn't know many people unlike myself, but BSU missions opened the door to a different view of the world—missions. Missions means loving people different from yourself and opening your heart to find the image of God in others.

On Friday nights, we BSU students went to a local mission at Tarrant Road Baptist Church in Fort Worth. We met African American kids looking for something to do on weekend evenings. Since I was an art major, my job was to do art with the teen girls at the mission and share Jesus in a Bible story.

Art helped them express feelings and opened the door to conversation. I felt more alive doing this than I ever had felt working on school projects, at Six Flags, or in any other opportunities I was given. I felt it was my calling.

We used music, too. Steve Turrentine—now a retired Baptist pastor—played guitar, and we sang a repertoire of BSU songs perfected on many mission trips and at lunch meetings. Music bridged so many gaps between strangers.

The teens and children loved to sing. Many were far more talented than we were and knew songs from their churches. God used this beautiful experience to mold me.

God changed me

God broke down barriers with me I can't put back up. Fifty years later, my heart still feels challenged to reach out to meet and get to know others—people of all races, immigrants, the new person on the block, the new kid in school.

My job is to reach out to all people in Jesus' name. If folks are sinners, if they are sick, if they made a wrong turn in life, our faith is all about what Jesus did and what God can do in a person's life.

Our job as Christians and Baptists is to "reach out and touch a soul that is hungry ... a man who is lonely if (we) care." We might lose a part of ourselves, but God will remake us into what we were made to be—vessels fit to carry the gospel.

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