



10 weeks. 2 schools. 1 God...

I hate how I forget things.

If there is one thing that I have learned over the LT experience, it is that my ability to recall necessary information can malfunction when most needed.

On multiple occasions, I have forgotten where I have placed various necessities such as my glasses, my wallet, my laptop charger, my Bible, and my nametag for work. This list is by no means exhaustive. I have arrived at places with urgency only to discover that I cannot recall exactly why I urgently needed to be at that place at that moment. To this day, I still cannot completely recite the menu items available in the restaurant where I work at the Holiday Inn.

I have also learned that my memory has proven far from reliable in matters of faith as well.

Since last December, I have been in a very dark season of my life as I am dealing with emotions relating to my past experiences and their ramifications in the present. Out of the overflow of this season has come a lot of dark questions that aim their heaviness at the character of God, and my perception of His ability to protect, assist, and deliver in a tangible way.

Now, these questions are pointing to things that I did not used to question. I used to know the very things that I no longer seem to remember.

I really hate how I forget things.

Thankfully, an important part of the LT program has been our reading of the Book of Psalms. It has truly blessed and amazed me how, each day, I have discovered a psalm (or two, or FIVE) that has directly spoken to some aspect of this season.

When I am feeling scared and am needing protection, Psalm 27 reminds me that the Lord will conceal me in dark times, and that He will hide me as He places me away from danger in a secret place. Psalm 22 reminds me that I was thrust into God's arms from the day that I was born. Psalm 121 reminds me that the Lord stands beside me as a protective shade!



When I am feeling surrounded and am needing assistance, Psalm 37 reminds me that even if I stumble, the Lord will not let me fall because He holds me by the hand. Psalm 57 reminds me that God will fulfill His purpose for me and send help to me accordingly. Psalm 73 reminds me that God Himself will give me counsel that leads me to a wonderful conclusion!

When I am feeling assaulted and am needing deliverance, Psalm 32 reminds me that God will protect me and that He surrounds me with victorious anthems! Psalm 81 reminds me that God has promised to free me from burdensome loads. Psalm 113 reminds me that it is in God's nature to lift the needy from the dirt and the trash and set them in a place of favor!

These examples are only the tip of the proverbial psalmist iceberg that has touched me deeply this summer. My journal is almost completely filled with verses that have impacted me during my reading. I leave LT thankful that even though this season of my life may continue to be difficult for the foreseeable future, God has overwhelmingly reminded me of His nature and His promises on my behalf.

Hopefully I won't forget this aforementioned journal in Virginia Beach. I would hate that.

Franklin Harrison

Forget What?

You're making This Weirder

The past year, from August to August, has been the most exciting, challenging, and growing year of my life. I have spent half the year in China, a section of it at LT and in the middle was a weird transition period. I initially went to China expecting to live there for four years. Obviously that plan fell through.

I was a part of LT two years ago. At that time, I was convinced that God was calling me to go to China. I enrolled in Chinese language courses and studied like crazy, driven to receive a scholarship that was brand new – that I knew God had made just for me. To be honest, looking back I still feel like He did make it for me; He was just doing so to teach me different things and do so in a different time period than what I expected. I wanted to go and find life, whatever real life was for me and what God had for me. I wanted to engage in underground house churches, smuggle Bibles, and just pread the gospel any way I could. But I arrived in China and found out there is a reason underground churches are hard to find; it became impossible to do what I wanted to when there is no place to start. My

college classes and the living situation smothered me to a point where I couldn't stand it; and ultimately, I realized there are so many reasons I want to live in the United States. It's not just I didn't want to be in China; it's that I wanted to grow in my faith and be brought up in a church where I can freely learn about God and how to have relationship with him. While abroad, I was involved in a Sunday morning Western language lecture and music group, but these people were not full time missionaries in China to help build me up. They were teachers with classes, or, if they were missionaries, they were focused on their own church things meeting the needs of the Chinese, not some American kid; I needed more substance.

What does this have to do with LT 2010? I had such a naive faith going into China. I thought everything would be perfect as soon as I got out there, but it wasn't. And I realized that I had not only what I wanted, but what I needed back at Ball State University. This revelation wasn't fully understood until I was at LT. Coming back from China I felt defeated, let down, and almost abandoned by God. I came into LT being so angry and frustrated that I didn't even want to deal with God. Fortunately, there is no place to hide at LT. LT is many things, but its name may be mislea-

ding. To think that we are doing some sort of singular activity to make us better leaders is kind of silly. LT pushes, and stretches, and forces you to tackle your God-issues. LT can put you in a situation where you can no longer run and hide, pretending everything is OK. Here, you must face your faith struggles. And in facing them, we are brought to our knees in desperation for God. It isn't easy, but it is necessary; and our faith is stronger for it. The breaking and death of ourselves to bring us closer to God is in no way a pleasant process. But students have a stronger faith; a more mature faith that allows them to be better leaders. That is what happened with me this summer; and that is why I think this program is called Leadership Training. Yes, we learn more about the Bible. Yes, we do community service. But the focus is on us and our relationship with the Almighty and by us getting closer to him, we are getting closer to a perfect love and grace. This increased closeness is what brings us into men and women of God and stronger leaders in our lives.

Ben Mahoney



One area of focus for LT this summer was to gain experience in sharing our faith in Jesus Christ with our friends and others that we met throughout the summer. On the first Project Day, we talked about how to effectively communicate our testimonies and we practiced sharing our stories with other LT'ers. Several times this summer, we went to the boardwalk to interview people about their views on religion, and often these interviews would lead to spiritual conversations. Once, Ben, Franklin and I had a really great conversation with two men on the boardwalk. They shared with us their experiences with religion, spirituality and God, and we had the opportunity to share with them how we experience God, and what the death and resurrection of Jesus means to us. It was a great conversation and experience, but a couple of other conversations stand out even more.

I have befriended several of my co-workers and, even though I

was only here for 10-weeks, I was intentional about being real and transparent in order to develop deep and lasting friendships. I have become friends with one girl who works as a server in the restaurant; she has also developed friendships with several other LT'ers. She came to one of our main sessions and knew we were participating in a Christian program. One day, both of us were looking for a quiet place for lunch.

Instead of eating alone, I suggested we eat together. We had the chance to get to know each other better and she asked me, "So what is your testimony." (This showed me that she was already having spiritual conversations with other LT'ers.) I shared with her about how I came to have a relationship with Jesus Christ, and trust that the only constant in my life is God. She responded with tears and a sense of connection, because she has a story very similar

to mine. She told me that she knows God is real and she knows that He wants her to participate in His story and have a life with Him, but her fears and a sense that she is not ready is holding her back.

Another co-worker has been a friendly face to me at work since the first week. His smile is infectious and his hard work is always an encouragement to others. One afternoon, I went to the break room for lunch hoping to find a quiet place to be by myself. Instead, I found him sitting at one table talking on his cell phone. My first inclination was to find another place, but I choose to stay and sat at the same table with him. He got off the phone shortly and struck up a conversation with me. We started talking about our desires to travel and he told me that he wanted to visit Mecca, the holy city for Muslims. This led our conversation to

Evangelism

spirituality and he shared with me his reasons for wanting to travel to Mecca and the role it plays in his faith. Then I had the opportunity to share with him my belief in God and how I have a personal relationship with God through my acceptance of God's grace though the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This was the first time I ever had a conversation with a Muslim where I felt like I was able to clearly explain what makes my faith different then theirs. Neither of us was ready to end the conversation, but we had to return to work. So we agreed that we should get together again to continue the conversation.

This summer as an LT community, we took bold steps in sharing our faith and living transparent lives. I am so thankful for the opportunities provided to me to share the hope I have in Jesus. In the past I would often shy away from developing deep and transparent relationships with my co-workers; however, this summer has taught me how to live a life among those who don't have faith in Jesus and allow my life to be a testimony to His work in me.

Deirdre Hunter



*John Stevens
reading from Mark
on the boardwalk.*

LT is an acronym that stands for Leadership Training. After you experience the program, you could just as easily describe it as Life Training. We attempt to create opportunities where participants and staff alike can mature in their faith. This takes place through scheduled times of evangelism on the boardwalk, or social gatherings with non-LT co-workers, or learning during main sessions. This also takes place in the subtleties of everyday life: cleaning your roommate's dirty dishes, facing the demands of a new job, or making new friends in a new location.

This has been my third LT. My first experience was as a student in 2006 and the last two were as a staff member in 2009 and 2010. Both my first and my latest experiences have been affected by two themes: evangelism and homelessness. I wish I could write about both, but with the limited space I have, I am forced to write about just one. The theme I will speak about is homelessness.

In 2006, I had my first real experience with homelessness. At that time we were in Wilmington, NC, and while spending time downtown, we met a man named Byron. He had a medical condition where he could never keep warm. We would be outside in the humid 90-degree weather and he would be wearing a camouflage winter coat.

I ran into him frequently and saw him in various conditions. There were two instances that stick with me. The first was the time that I saw him after having been beaten up and robbed. His face was bruised

and swollen and he had lost his jacket. Who would rob a homeless man?!

The second was a time that some of my roommates attempted to help him out. Byron was not afraid to ask for money. And to some degree, I respect someone's humility to recognize their need and seek the grace of others. One night he asked my roommates for money. They opted to buy him dinner. When they offered him the food, he pushed it back and went chasing after someone else, asking them for money. Hearing this created a great deal of questions and cynicism for me.

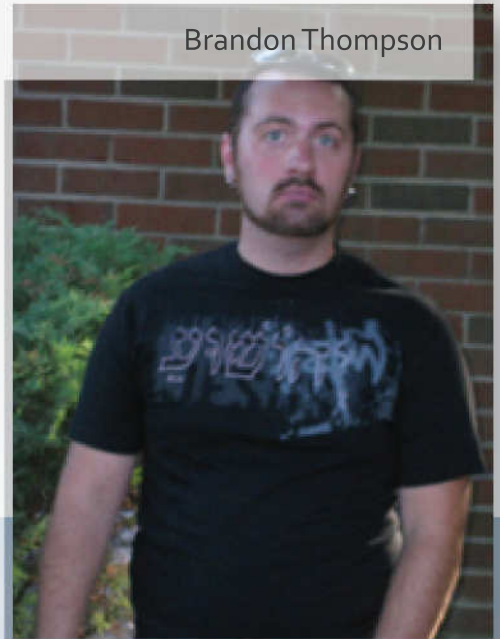
During this past LT, I have consistently interacted with three homeless individuals: Anastasia, Danna, and Fiona. Each of these people is a Christian, and it is encouraging to see faith played out in such a daily way. They honestly have to rely on God for their "daily bread." Without His provision, they would have nothing. But by the grace of God, I and others at LT have been given the privilege to serve them. They have been given food and shelter directly through the help of participants of LT. I am most proud of the provisions offered by certain students who took enormous faith steps in providing one woman three nights of motel costs.

Jesus once told a parable about the righteous and unrighteous. In it He said, "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ...' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25:37, 40). James also tells us, "Suppose a

brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?" (James 2:15-16). Despite prior cynicism, it is hard to ignore such clear passages as these. The plain and simple truth of the matter is that we are told to offer grace despite the outcome.

And I think that is what God offers us through Jesus' death and resurrection. We were poor, helpless sinners. We wandered about in darkness without a home or hope. But God graciously offered us His Son that we might find our way-home with Him and never be in need again.

Brandon Thompson



Point and Flex

LT Director Neil Kring has told us time and again this summer that "LT is hard." I know this to be true; I feel it in my body. Most mornings, I'm up at 4:30 or five o'clock to get to the restaurant where I work on time. I wait tables, polish silverware and glasses, and fold napkins until after two o'clock in the afternoon, when we close the restaurant until dinner. I come home to a house which I share with seven other roommates in two bedrooms. It all comes to me as a to-do list: chores to be done, a living room to be cleaned, and a kitchen in constant disarray. There are Bible readings to be finished, Bible passages to memorize, worship and teaching times to attend, and service projects to accomplish. There's noise, too: the discord of scales being practiced on guitars, ukuleles, and keyboards, jokes being told, and music coming from the many laptops that dot our shared living space. I've been overwhelmed by the grind of it, as I've spent even my days off doing small tasks that have been neglected on work days. I've felt tired and irritable from all of the motion, and I've often wondered, "What's the point?"

Once, on a Sunday afternoon during LT 2008, in the apex heat of a Carolina summer, Jenna Caracciolo told me about a professor at Virginia Tech who'd been a holocaust survivor, and who'd stood at the doorway to his classroom during Cho's rampage while his students escaped through the windows. She told me this, and I began to think of how memories break open over us: plastic wrappers filled with wet, rancid memories lifting up and ripping open, absolutely covering us in their sticky filth.

Think of this man, his hands, his head, his breadth.
Breath.

Point and flex. I was learning to dance five nights a week at my health club, back when I lived in South Korea. At first it was considerable pain, fingertips to the floor, plie, lifting myself onto my toes, straightening my legs at the knee. At the height of the stretch, my body would scream. And it would scream as my height would go higher and higher. "One foot behind," I'd understand the teacher say from a mixture of Korean, English, and French, "point it behind," and up, and up, and flex. Sweat flowed down my nose to the floor, landing in a puddle between my fingers. I thought, Which is harder, point or flex? During the months I trained my body to remember, accomplish, and ultimately master this posture, I began to see the difference in the muscle tone in my calves, thighs, and lower abdomen. The difficult work fostered a hardness, trading what was soft for what was beautiful. On the days when the pressures of LT are too much, when I'm tired and want to give up and cash in, I still think of the professor. What was born in him during the Shoah that led him to be able to live down one atrocity and

then let go during another? I think of him, his hands across the breadth of the door jamb, craning his head down the hall one way and the other as bullets came closer, like footsteps. I think of the river of his memories flowing from darkness to darkness, water flowing in rivulets and jetties around his knees as it rose. I think, how he died for his students, falling from the windows like angels to the earth. I think, who died for him, chased from one place, hunted in another.

I think of hardness; I think of beauty.

I point and I flex.

Joel Miller

JEANNA'S PSALM

Praise to my God, my loving Savior,
whose power is great and merciful
who reveals Himself to me.

Before I call He will answer:
He is listening when I'm still speaking
when darkness seems to be my closest friend.
The Lord's love will shine through

In the times that I feel dehydrated from
the fall of my tears.
My thirst will be satisfied through Our For-
giving God.

When loved ones die and friends fade away,
Only God will stay.

I will praise God through the sunshine,
The pain, the joy and the rain.
For nothing is impossible with God!
I will sing praise to my God as long as I
live!

What God has taught us

Growing what?

Describing 10 weeks of someone's life is certainly not easy and the same goes for describing LT. There is so much involved in attending LT, that is easily overlooked or appreciated. Most importantly, I would have to say that without this experience in Virginia Beach, I wouldn't be the same person I am now. I know, you're probably thinking: "Yeah, how cliché, LT changed your life for the better," but I can honestly say that my faith has taken a step in my personal motivations, and has made my faith my number one priority. As a Christian, I have never truly understood the meaning of committing my life to Christ, and to

this day I am still searching for the true meaning of that statement. But my time spent here in Virginia Beach has helped me to evolve in my understanding of it.

Believing that God exists and is connected to all things are both fairly common beliefs for some people. Practicing one's faith is the most difficult aspect of believing. During my time spent here, I have discovered what it truly means to practice my faith. Learning how to do that is something that just can't be picked up going about one's everyday routine. Effort and perseverance must prevail as one's divine motivation to practice a belief. The reason I felt



that this was necessary to proclaim was simply because I could not have discovered this without this experience. Okay, perhaps I could have eventually figured it out, but it would have been discovered purely on the everyday experiences of my life and not because of what I challenged myself with. LT was a challenge, but it prevailed as a necessary tool to evolve my understanding of my faith.

I chose LT for the beach. I chose LT for ten weeks spent with new friends. I chose LT for a new development in understanding my spiritual life. I chose LT for Jesus. I chose LT to break my habits. I chose LT for a fresh start. I have fulfilled my reasons for being here and to come to LT with any other self-fish reasons in which I might have believed before, had left my thoughts by the first week.

My name is *Andrew Turner*: booyah.

continued...

Trusting God

I made a promise to God a long time ago to go wherever He sent me... and for this summer, that meant LT 2010. I knew that without a doubt all the way back in December, but I never could have known how LT would be so precisely positioned in my life to be what I needed. I came to LT with an idea of what I thought God was going to do in my life this summer. To be honest, there was a simple thing (that didn't seem simple at the time!) that was blocking my view of how big He is and how much He could truly do in me this summer.

From the very first night, God has been calling me to just wait on Him; wait on Him for answers, for the right times to work through certain things, and for His faithfulness in answering prayers and needs. And as I did – as I finally just dropped my own agenda and let God take His rightful place in my life – He taught me more and did more in my life than I could've ever imagined. This summer, He has taught me how to live in His freedom; free from fears, free from living up to the expectations of other people, free from hesitations. He has taught me to be secure of my identity in Christ and the person He has created me to be. He has taught me how to let the peace of Christ rule over my heart. He has shown me how to live as a passion-filled servant. He has shown me why He created us to be relational beings – to live in community with each other, to be built up by one another, to truly seek counsel from others, and to learn about ourselves in the process. He has walked right beside me as I struggled to accept the hardships of seasons in life and learning spiritual disciplines. He has been so faithful in providing for me

even when I thought time was running out and in giving me the gift of joy no matter what the circumstance. I have learned so much about balance in life, trusting God, and His unfailing love.

Through learning all of these things, God also gave me wonderful opportunities that stretched me and challenged me in wonderful ways: opportunities like being a Lifegroup leader to two of the most wonderful women I know, stepping out of my comfort zone and having the most incredible experience of singing as a worship leader, and finally having the courage and excitement to share my faith and my story with anyone I met. I finally feel like I have truly taken off my old self and put on the new (Colossians 1).

And remember that one simple thing I thought God was going to do during this entire summer? He worked that one out in no time... and did so much more.

Lesley Stowe

Speeches

I love speeches. I love being inspired by great ones, critiquing bad ones, and even trying my hardest to be the next great motivator. But there is one speech that has always touched me more than others. In his last speech before his death from testicular cancer in 1993, Jim Valvano, the fiery Italian ACC basketball coach, inspires people to never give up. Here's one of my favorite parts: "I just got one last thing, I urge all of you, all of you, to enjoy your life, the precious moments you have. To spend each day with some laughter and some thought, to get your emotions going. To be enthusiastic every day...and as Ralph Waldo Emerson said, 'Nothing great could be accomplished without enthusiasm,' ...to keep your dreams alive in spite of problems, whatever you have. The ability to be able to work hard for your dreams to come true, to become a reality."

Now, I don't think Jim Valvano was a prophet, but what he speaks about here is something God has worked on in my life at LT 2010. It is no secret that God ripped open the wound of April 16, 2007 in my heart again. I came into LT never having experienced healing from the tragedy 3 years ago. But through his wonderful grace and power, he has brought me through the necessary trials and pain to experience joy once again. And I am grateful for this. I am going back to Blacksburg with confident hope in the Lord and a sense of his love that transcends any rationality. Thanks to many of you, especially the men of Condo 10A, I have experienced more genuine laughter than at any point in the last 3 years. I cry joyfully whenever I hear of God's great works (yes, I was in the infamous "back row" during Matt Pardi's talk). I look for the good in others as best I can...even in Flanders. I desire to have everyone know the love of Christ in their lives. These are all things I did not experience 10 weeks ago. Words cannot express how great God has been to me! I am not the man I used to be, and I am thankful. God has brought great glory to himself through me this summer. He has brought himself great glory through all of you this summer, and he will continue to do so when we leave this place. I encourage you to do as Jim Valvano says: enjoy life! Laugh, cry, and think. Life will take bad turns, devastating turns, but we have a reason to be joyful. And my hope and prayer is that you will remember that for the rest of your lives...we are God's adopted children! I leave you with one last thought from Jimmy V:

"I look at where I am now and I know what I want to do. What I would like to be able to do is to spend whatever time I have left and to give, and maybe, some hope to others."

John Stevens