



July 23, 2018

## The Gospel Portrayed (by Debbie)

In my final weeks of serving at the challenge course, I had several highlights. I'd like to share one of them with you through the eyes of our X-Project Challenge Course Intern, Josiah. This was part of his blog about the X-Project students' experience at the challenge course upon their arrival for the summer.

*There is something magical about being physically involved and challenged. At one point, the interns were ushered into the forest and presented with a 12 foot wall. The goal was simple: Get everyone up and over the wall. We had only known each other for less than 24 hours, but now we had to come together as a team.*

*Everyone being at different levels athletically meant that we had to plan who would be left to scale the wall all alone at the end, with only*



*hands reaching down from the top to assist in the climb. After our initial planning phase, we began lifting people up and over. It got more and more difficult as time went on, and we ended with just one person left at the bottom of the wall. But our planning did not help us much.*

*The problem was that even with a running start and a good jump, the last one on the ground,*

*Lindsey, was unable to reach our hands and be pulled to the top.*

*Had we labored all that time for nothing? No. We were determined to make it work. So one of the guys who had already made it over, Matt, climbed halfway down. Hanging on to the top of the wall, with help from the others that had made it over, Matt became the bridge that Lindsey could climb over to reach the top. The impossible became possible!*

*At our debrief time after the wall, we gathered in an excited circle. We felt that we had really conquered a difficult obstacle. Even those who had considered not participating had made it over.*

*But here's the thing that really made this event so impactful: Lindsey, who had just used Matt to climb to the top, explained what that moment meant to her. Even using all her strength, she could never make it to the top. She could try over and over, but each attempt led to failure. To her, Matt allowing himself to be the bridge so she could reach the top was a powerful representation of the Gospel. In fact, every single one of us were hit with this image of what Jesus did--He bridged the gap between us and God, earth and heaven.*

*And therein lies the beauty of the challenge course: the truths of life are often mirrored in these courses. The physicality of the challenges manifest dynamic metaphors that go right to the heart. We already knew what Jesus had done, but that day we felt the power of His sacrifice.*

In my fourteen years of leading the challenge course, I never had a group talk so openly about the comparison between their wall experience and the Gospel. It was truly a blessing! This is why I have loved serving in this ministry for so many years!



## Passing the Baton

Ed and I have officially passed off our responsibilities with Athletes in Action to other people.

For me, I was pleased that God completed Skylar's support team and he was able to report at AIA three days before my last day. Fortunately, he had come into the office a couple of days earlier in the month for me to train him on all the administrative parts of his role prior to my last week. He and

Brandon will carry on the Challenge Course ministry from here on out.

Ed officially ended his responsibilities as a staffing specialist with AIA as of July 1. He has been assigned to work with the JESUS Film Project in their mobilization department. We will share more details about his role in our next letter.

We are spending these next two weeks packing and preparing our home for renters. God has provided three AIA interns who will be renting our house for the next year while we are in Florida. We will be moving into a furnished apartment when we arrive in Orlando.

Our plan is to be packed up and ready to move by August 5 and arrive there on August 8. This will give us time to settle in before the Lake Hart STINT begins on August 15.

### *From The Heart (by Debbie)*

*I feel so grateful to the Lord for all He has accomplished through me in my twenty-seven years with Athletes in Action and the last seven years of Ed serving with me. He has provided many amazing relationships, some of whom were like family for me. He also lead me through many different roles within this ministry, the longest of which was my last fourteen years directing the challenge course. As I look back, I see so many faces of people whose lives have impacted mine and vice versa. To God be the Glory for all the good things that came out of our time with AIA! We are leaving as changed people, and my heart is full!*

*I know that God is not finished using me. I am looking forward to new ways that God will reveal for me to serve. For the next year, that will be to focus on the young life with whom God has entrusted us, Hannah. She is three and very energetic and strong willed. She keeps me young!*

*We were particularly encouraged by the GO Team at Faircreek Church who recently hosted a reception for us. We will miss this church family and all of our partners and friends here in Ohio! We are **EXTREMELY** grateful for ALL of our partners and appreciate your continued support in this next phase of our journey in serving the Lord.*

## Praises

- ❖ God has given us clear direction on our next step in ministry.
- ❖ We were both able to finish strong in our roles with Athletes in Action.
- ❖ God's provision of three interns to rent our home for the next year.
- ❖ God provided the remainder of Skylar's financial partners so he could report before I left.

## Prayer Requests

- ❖ Stamina, wisdom & good use of our time over the next two weeks as we pack and prepare for our move to Orlando.
- ❖ Pray that we will grieve well as we are leaving behind an excellent church family & many good friends in OH.
- ❖ Safe travel as we drive to FL- Aug 5-8
- ❖ For Hannah to be a good traveler and adjust well to all the changes that she will experience over the next few weeks.
- ❖ Adjustment to life in FL for all of us: new relationships, church home, etc
- ❖ Pray for Ed as he meets his new work team and begins his new role with the JESUS Film.

## Upcoming Plans

**Please pray for our safe travel and getting settled in Orlando, FL**

- **August 5:** Depart OH (making stops in Franklin, TN, Huntsville, AL & Valdosta, GA)
- **August 8:** Arrive in Orlando & move into our apartment
- **August 15:** Lake Hart STINT 2018 Welcome Picnic
- **August 17-19:** Lake Hart STINT 2018 Kick-off Retreat
- **August 23:** Ed's first day in the office at Lake Hart