

I climbed out of the white twelve passenger van trying to hide the heartbreak I experienced due to the end of the trip. I had spent the last week on a Navajo reservation in Arizona with fifty of the most Christ-centered, incredible, crazy people I think I've ever met. It hurt to leave this place where it was so easy to be all God, all the time. As I hugged each of my new friends, I thought about what life at home was going to be like. Would I lose my fire? Would things change in me and God's unreal relationship? I didn't want this trip to be over. I wanted to live in a place where the temptations of the world couldn't bring me down. I was so close to God then and I really didn't want it to stop.

Over the next few weeks of the summer, as my bags were unpacked and the trip was put in the past, I began to realize that I **had** to maintain my relationship with God. I couldn't just sit around hoping that God would stick around. It wasn't going to be easy. I knew that. But, I figured that it might be worth it to put forth some extra effort to gain some eternal benefits and to continue on the relationship that had grown so much in so little time.

So that's how it began. I started to pray, and read my bible, and memorize some scripture. I think people saw a huge change in the new Lauren. The old me hardly wanted to go to youth group on Wednesday nights. The old me struggled with a lot of things and tried to blame that on God instead of going to him for comfort and forgiveness. You see, I was the type of person who came to church and went through the motions but wasn't a true Christian for a long time. My life hasn't been a cake walk, and I've been through my share of rough spots, but that's something I realize now that I should be thanking God for, because only by being tested do you get any stronger.

I began to see God in every part of my life; that tree, in my best friend's laughter, and basically everywhere. It was an incredible change that God had performed in one week. I never thought that God could pull a complete one-eighty change on me. My friends and I started having long, passionate talks about our Lord and Savior and I started what I call my "Jesus Journal". I use it to write down prayers, record scripture, and to take notes from church. But I didn't know how important it would be until I went on a trip to Lake Palestine with three of my best friends.

We were up late talking one night, and somehow got on the subject of God. We began to talk about how we really should be keeping each other accountable and coming together to worship something really worth it. I got out my Jesus journal and showed it to my friends for the first time. They agreed it was a great tool to build my spiritual life and record the changes in heart, but there is more to a relationship with God than that. A journal wouldn't help me to change lives. Action was the only way that I could fulfill God's commandment and spread the Good News.

So one of those girls, and two other seventh grade guys, and I started a student led bible study, and let me tell you, my spiritual life has sky rocketed. Last year was all about me and now God fills my entire schedule. It's crazy that you can love something as much as I feel that

An Article by Lauren Atchison

God and I love each other. I can talk to him like he is my best friend rather than a stranger who I've never seen. My confidence that he is actually here, working in my life, is so huge because I can feel a connection with him. God is pulling on my heart and changing my life in substantial ways that I can only describe.

One of my friends recently told me that life is kind of like a longer mission trip because our only purpose here is to serve other and bring people to Jesus and one day we'll be going back home to God. I think that's a great way to put it, because we owe it all to God that the things we do on mission trips or at church functions we should, in reality, be doing at home too.

My dream right now is to become a teacher and start a school in a foreign country where people don't know about Christ. I'm hoping that God will put that plan into action and allow me to combine my loves for God and kids. That may seem like a big dream for a fourteen year old and sure it is, but I'm worshiping a God who is much bigger than that. Like Paul says in Philippians 1:20-21 "For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life bring honor to Christ whether I live or die. For to me living is living for Christ and dying is even better" my life is going to bring glory to God whether I live or die. Is yours?