

# Days of Hope

January 2014



Freshwater Spring,  
St. James Campus

*PASSIONATELY COMMUNICATING THE LOVE OF GOD  
TO HURTING KIDS IN A GENTLE WAY!*

## RENOVATING ME

In Philippians 2, Paul instructs us to 'work out your salvation with fear and trembling.' In John chapter 3, Nicodemus meets secretly with Christ, and Jesus assures him that God is offering humanity an opportunity to be 'born again.' *Salvation... making my peace with God... being born again.... Inviting Jesus into my heart.... finding Christ.* It seems we have all kinds of different ways of describing this step of faith that so many have taken, but all of the labels seem to fall short. What is Salvation, actually? What do I have to do to 'get right' with God?

Over the past few months, I have spoken with a number of young people who have echoed the sentiment that we hear voiced by the Philippian jailer in the book of Acts- "What must I do to be saved?" And as I work with these searching kids, I am learning that my simplistic definitions are insufficient to describe the enormity and simple beauty of God's offer of salvation.

### LET'S DANCE

One of the most obvious ways in which my view of faith is changing comes as I perceive the dynamic nature of the invitation. I too easily default into a view of faith that looks like a light switch- a one time limited event that shifts me from category 'A' to category 'B'. I once was lost, but now I'm found. I pray the prayer, I recite the words, I jump through the hoops.

But it is apparent that God is inviting us into something much bigger, deeper, and involved. Jesus is asking me to dance, opening a door to a lifelong journey. God wants to do life with me! I am not 'born again' just so that I can go back to my normal routine with a clear conscience. I have an opportunity to be ushered into a whole different way of life. *The open door of salvation is an invitation into process.* This understanding has transformed my view of myself and the folks we work with. Everyone we see is in process. Some are running from a God who continues to extend

the invitation, others have taken those first few steps and need encouragement to move forward. Still others have experienced incredible spiritual growth only to set it aside as they travel down the wrong road. But each one is in process.

Faith is not a checklist- faith is a journey, a dance. While I sometimes treat salvation like a homework assignment in need of completion, Jesus continues to invite me into a shared adventure; an adventure that lasts a lifetime.

### EXTERNAL VS. INTERNAL

Another huge shift in the way that I am experiencing salvation is coming in a movement away from *external compliance* and towards *internal transformation*. It is so easy to slip into a view of Christianity that embraces all of the observable hallmarks of faith: I don't drink, I don't get tattoos, I follow a specific church attendance schedule, I speak the language, I dress the part. Dallas Willard referred to these external indicators of faith as 'boundary markers.'

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## WELCOME ABOARD!

I am excited to announce the arrival of our newest team member at Days of Hope. Aaron Jeffers brings tons of experience and a unique skill set to our organization, and had already demonstrated an incredible ability to connect with the youth we minister to.

For the last several weeks, Aaron has been accompanying me on campus, working at our services and observing as we visit with kids and staff in the cottages. During a recent girls campus service, we had three young ladies respond to an invitation to commit their lives to the Lord. Immediately after the closing prayer, I was counseling one of the young ladies who had responded. I looked across the room, and there was Aaron praying with one of the other girls!



This is exactly the reason we have been searching and praying for the right person to fill a role as an associate chaplain at Days of Hope. I am praying for a multiplication of this ministry as Aaron trains and goes out to reach out to even more kids who find themselves in residential care. *Will you pray for Aaron in the weeks and months to come?*

**The learning curve:** Residential care is a unique place to work; there is a special set of rules and expectations that come along with this job. Please pray for Aaron as he trains.

**Support:** Aaron is currently serving part time; we hope that he will be able to come on board on a full time basis. Please pray that the necessary monthly support will be raised so that we can make this transition a reality.

**The next step.** It is our hope that as Aaron gets oriented to ministering in this environment, and his support is raised, that Days of Hope will be able to partner with a second campus, and multiply the out-reach of this vital ministry. Please pray with us that the Lord give us direction and favor as we move forward.

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Ask anyone you know, and perhaps (if you are on the ball) they will tell you that you're a 'really good Christian.' They love your boundary markers! But assembling a 'resume' of all the right boundary markers is not the same thing as experiencing a renovation of the heart, mind, and soul. One impresses men. The other delights the Father.

Jesus said as much when he encountered religious folks in his day. "You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self indulgence" (Matt 23).

This is not to say that the boundary markers are altogether bad. But salvation is something different from these outward things. True faith is something that works its way from the inside out, not the other way around. If I am to have boundary markers in my life, I hope they come as a result of the internal work God is doing in my heart, and not the external expectations that religious folks lay on my shoulders.

### OBJECTIVE VS. SUBJECTIVE

I have to admit, I prefer to camp out in the objective world. I want my faith to be rational, reasonable, observable, and logical. I often yearn for this kind of faith; I want to be able to diagram it on a chalkboard! But I am coming to see that much of my walk with Christ leads me into the subjective. Salvation is truly relational, emotional, and deeply personal. I prefer rational debate; unpacking doctrine and analyzing arguments about faith. *But Jesus keeps drawing me into very private conversations in the deep places of my soul.* I want to play religious games in shallow waters that make me look intelligent; He is drawing me into deep places where I find myself out of my comfort zone.

This is because Salvation is not a class-action lawsuit. Being born again is not a group project. My wounds and my brokenness are totally unique, and my journey of faith is equally distinctive. I believe that Jesus is firm on this point- another man's settlements will not suffice. Neither are my intelligent ramblings adequate. When I take a step into relationship with the Creator, He moves toward the heart of me. He begins a deep work in my soul, a dance of restoration, a journey towards renovation. *He calls me to come away and be alone with Him.*

I just want to roll on a new coat of paint; He insists that we inspect my crumbling foundations. He is interested in a more significant transformation. You and I can only get so far with a rational faith and admirable doctrine; at some point Jesus invites each of us to jump out into a deeper place.

### HIM OR ME?

If Salvation is about the renovation of my soul, the restoration of who I am, then I must come to some settlement on who the general contractor is. Who is the foreman of this project? I am sad to admit that too much of my spiritual life has consisted of my best efforts to renovate myself, and all of my straining falls short.

In John 8, Jesus declares, "If the Son sets you free, you are truly free."

What if I set myself free? The very notion is ludicrous. Salvation is in Christ, of Christ, by Christ. He alone can restore the long-broken parts of me. He is truth when I am confused, He is light when I cannot see. He is life, there is no other. And I am learning that being 'born again' is much less about what I can accomplish, and much more about His presence and His work in my life.

## A CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER

# SOLE HOPE

**Sole Hope** is a nonprofit organization that hosts shoe cutting parties here in the US. Participants bring old denim or other heavy materials, trace and then cut out patterns, pinning them together to form shoes. The patterns are shipped to Uganda, where Sole Hope employs widows and other needy individuals to assemble the cut patterns into shoes. By combining the provided patterns with recycled rubber soles, these folks fashion simple shoes from the donated items, learn a trade, and earn a living in the process. Sole Hope then delivers these shoes to needy communities, providing education about foot care, cleaning the jiggers out of the feet of the local children, then giving them shoes to protect them from the harmful parasites that burrow into the skin.

For more info, visit [solehope.com](http://solehope.com)

December 25th was a special day! Our Christmas Day celebration was a great success, with most of the youth on campus spending time with our volunteers, playing games, participating in a service project, and opening up some small gifts in their stockings. I want to thank the folks at First Church of God in St. James for helping us out with our stocking preparation this year, Ashley Smith and the Sole Hope organization for their support with our service project, and all of our volunteers who came out and spent an important day with a bunch of kids who had no one to visit and no where else to go.

All in all, our residents cut out enough patterns to make about 75 pairs of shoes for needy kids in Uganda! None of the groups spent more than about half an hour cutting out patterns. Each child seemed to benefit from focusing on the needs of others less

fortunate, rather than marinating in self-pity. We had tons of fun with the bungee run and games from Hi Striker, and I even got a few minutes to speak with each group about God's love for them in spite of difficult circumstances.

I want to thank each of you who contributed in some way to help make this event a success. We had some amazing people show up on campus and simply love and serve the kids, others sent checks to cover the expenses of the event, still others prepared food. We had an army of stocking stuffers make small work of that task, and of course some amazing folks at Boys and Girls Town who made the whole thing possible in the first place. Thank You!!!



### Time to Connect!

We are currently scheduling services for the 2014 calendar year.

We would love to visit your church, Sunday School class, or community group and share with you the great things that God is doing through Days of Hope.

*Call or email to schedule a date!*



**Chaplain Jon Wells**

[jon@daysofhope.net](mailto:jon@daysofhope.net)

**Associate Chaplain Aaron Jeffers**

[aaron@daysofhope.net](mailto:aaron@daysofhope.net)

PO BOX 12  
St. James, MO 65559

[daysofhope.net](http://daysofhope.net)

573.578.3259

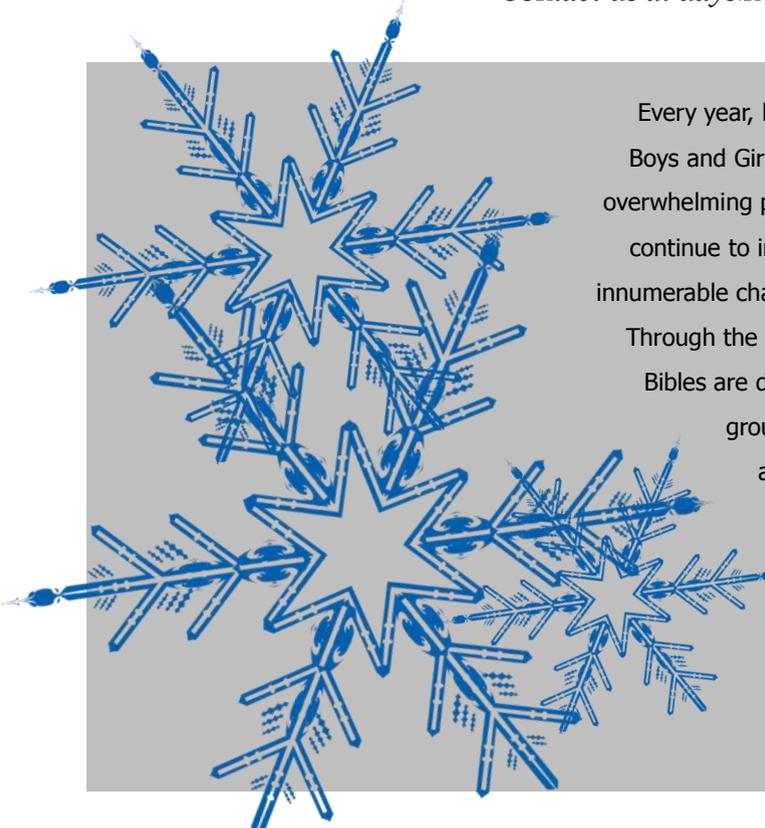
Check out our website at

[Daysofhope.net](http://Daysofhope.net)

*You can access this and past newsletters, enjoy one of the Chaplain's Blogs, and read more about who we are and what we do!*

Interested in receiving our e-newsletter?

*Contact us at [days.hope@gmail.com](mailto:days.hope@gmail.com)*



Every year, hundreds of children and teens are sent to Boys and Girls Town of Missouri to receive help with the overwhelming problems they are facing. At Days of Hope we continue to insist that God's core solution to all of these innumerable challenges is found in the person of Jesus Christ. Through the ministries that are offered at Days of Hope, Bibles are distributed, pastoral counsel, services, and groups are provided, and these children are given an opportunity to respond to the gospel message.

THANK YOU FOR HELPING  
US SHARE THE LOVE OF GOD  
WITH HURTING KIDS  
IN A GENTLE WAY!