



October 2020

# Days of Hope

## The Biker

by Jon Wells

One of the unique aspects of my role here at Days of Hope is the opportunity to visit an array of local churches that are connected with this ministry. I speak each year at churches large and small, in cities, towns, and country roads all across the state. We connect with many different denominations in our mission to bring the gospel to hurting kids. These opportunities to visit and worship with various congregations give me a unique perspective on worship in the church.

A few years back I spoke at a Methodist church. I later shared with the pastor that the part of the worship experience that was particularly moving to me was the congregational recitation of the Apostle's creed. The pastor chuckled with surprise, reflecting on how that component of the service had become well-worn tradition that was disliked by many in the church. From large mainline denominational churches to small house churches, I have had the privilege of joining in worship with hymns, choruses, responsive readings, communion, and more. These varied experiences have left me amazed at the unity and the diversity in the body of Christ. We do not seem to do everything the same way, but these diverse forms



create a beautiful mosaic of faith in our communities. Recently I visited a church and had a completely unique experience that I want to share with you.

As I drove up to the church that I was scheduled to speak at, I passed by a guy who was walking his old, purple bicycle up the hill. While I parked and gathered my things, he pulled that bike up under a tree, dropped the kickstand, and walked into the church. The bike was a sight to behold- a vintage specimen that gave me flashbacks. Banana seat, big ape-hanger handlebars, white mag wheels, this thing was in immaculate condition.

I spent the next couple of minutes greeting various people and finding a place to sit. I chose a seat up front across the aisle from the biker. He looked to be in his late forties. He was wearing a dirty, button-down mechanics shirt, an old pair of polyester slacks, and gray Velcro tennis shoes. I made a point of talking to the guy for a while about his bike. He was really proud of it. He had gone through the whole thing; taking it apart, cleaning, and greasing it up. He told me it was worth \$8000. I shared with him how I had ridden a similar bike as a kid. I told how I spray painted my bike blue and red and pinned baseball cards by the spokes to make them rattle. He clearly disapproved of my bike abuse, noting

Continued on page 3...



Program Director  
**Jon Wells**  
jon@daysofhope.net



Chaplain  
**Sean Wilson**  
sean@daysofhope.net



Chaplain  
**Logan Stark**  
logan@daysofhope.net



Treasurer  
**Jo Ann Davidson**  
joann@daysofhope.net

Visit us Online!



www.daysofhope.net

We are currently scheduling speaking engagements. If you are interested in inviting one of our chaplains to come and share with your church, class, or community group, let us know!

PO BOX 12  
St. James, MO 65559  
573.578.3259

# Working in Residential

by Logan Stark

Before the craziness of 2020 kicked off, I got to experience what it's like to be in a residential behavioral center. From January to March, I served as a youth care worker. I went through a two-week orientation before officially working in the facility; it was a culture shock.

Every kid and teen I came in contact with had experienced some form of brokenness. Many of them had been abused one way or another, and almost every arm of the girls was covered with scars. I was called quite a few names that would have gotten my mouth washed out with soap growing up. For these kids, they were words that came out as natural as it is for me to breathe. I was a witness of the effects of sin.

At first glance, it's easy just to get mad at these aggressive, cussing, impatient kids, but I worked at seeing the bigger picture. These kids were survivors. They were coming out of some of the *worst, horrible* circumstances that can be imagined. All of them had been hurt. Many of them backstabbed by people who were supposed to take care of them.

Yes, they were aggressive, but many of them had to learn how to fight at a young age in order to survive. Yes, they were selfish, but many of them learned that they had to look out for themselves because others wouldn't. Yes, they were hard to be around, but many of them had grown up in unsteady environments. They had experienced people coming in and out of their lives as often as the weather changes; they needed to test to see who would be willing to stay with them.

Being a 5'9" male, I made an easy target for many of the guys to pick on. Young men on the unit were aggressive both to release some frustrations and to not be the bottom of the pecking order. I connected with a few of them, but I was better at relating to the preadolescents, or 'pre-ads' as they were called, (two boys younger than 10-years-old), and some of the girls who were on suicide watch.

The pre-ads kept me on my toes. They were full of energy. Though they showed signs of abuse, they were still kids who enjoyed watching cartoons, coloring, and playing ball in the gym. One of them would frequently shout out profanities and would run up and down the halls when we transitioned to meals, school, or meds. There were a few times I heard coworkers say, "I'm glad he's not my kid." That may have been true, but I hoped he didn't hear them. He had already been a victim of a family member, and I hope he wasn't growing up hearing how others were grateful that he wasn't their son. Though he gave me plenty of exercise, there were also times we bonded through Lego building and talking about sharks.

There were a couple of times I was responsible for monitoring a room of girls who were on suicide watch. Because I was kind and just willing to listen to them, I was able to have several conversations about how important they were and that there would be at least one person who would care if something happened to them. It was *tough* having to watch them, and making sure they weren't going to abuse the crayons they were using to color, but I also remember a time when two of the girls just started singing hymns that a chaplain had taught them.

Because of time commitments, I was unfortunately unable to stay at the facility for long, but I got a taste of this culture. It's one which is in desperate need of hope and love. It is most definitely a mission field, and I *can't* wait for the day that I can return to a behavioral facility, to love on these kids and share with them the hope of Christ.

For the wages of sin is death,  
but the free gift of God is  
eternal life in Christ Jesus  
our Lord. **-Romans 6**

how I probably ruined the value by painting it. I agreed that I probably did.

This neighbor in the next pew was a very sweet guy- obviously a special-needs individual. Soon they started the worship service. At the outset of the worship time, a pianist went up to the platform to lead the group in a hymn. Then she sat down and a different lady went up to the piano and played some newer songs. Having led worship services in churches myself, I immediately noted this unique approach to handling the challenges of song choice and worship style. It seemed to work well for these folks.

At some point during this worship service I looked over and noticed that my biker friend was holding a little plastic microphone in his hand. At first I thought he was vaping. When I looked closer it was obviously an old, Radio Shack microphone from the eighties that plugged in to a tape recorder. He was holding it close to his chin, swinging back and forth, tiny microphone clutched in one hand and the cord in the other balled up so that no one would see.

I was speechless as I watched this guy sing his heart out. Almost immediately God began to deal with me. There I stood with too much education and a bunch of self-important considerations bouncing around in my head. While my simple biker friend was pouring his heart out, I'm busy pondering the evolution of church worship in the 21st-century!

I risked another glance across the aisle and watched as he began grabbing tissues from the pew in front of him to wipe away his tears. He was clearly embarrassed and did not want anyone looking at him, but he couldn't help himself. Presently, he went back to singing into his microphone, eyes closed.

The conviction in that moment was palpable. The saddest part of it was the simple truth that between him and me, he was the only one truly worshipping. He was in the middle of a genuine God encounter. I was too busy writing a mental treatise regarding styles of worship, musicians, song selection, and execution. Rather than engage in worship, I deferred to wallowing in all of the stupid, self-obsessed mental cul-de-sacs that we so happily drive circles in. I have to admit that I kinda had a little come apart there in my pew- soon my biker friend and I were both snatching tissues up as the worship service proceeded. I spent those few moments in the worship service asking God to declutter the stupidity that makes it impossible for me to be like this guy.

A few moments later I was invited to come up front and share. My neighbor didn't hang around hear what I had to say that day. As soon as the musical portion of the service was over, he got up, jumped on his bike and went home. As I began speaking I spotted his empty seat and took a mental note- my new biker friend might have been the smartest guy in the room!

I walked away from that experience with a stark reminder that so many of us have forgotten what kind of transaction is taking place during corporate worship services. Perhaps, like me, you are easily distracted by the process and approach. It seems so easy to sit there and assess the process rather than join in. Many of us have become consumers of worship. Using a retail model, we pursue our preferred worship product and feel free to leave reviews wherever we go. Whether you are a fan of responsive readings, old hymns, or the new release you heard on YouTube this week, we all feel entitled to demand a worship presentation that fits our tastes. Like any self-respecting American consumer, we fully expect to be catered to. But what if our corporate song service was not a point-of-sale transaction? What if this was not an interaction between a song leader up front and a consumer in the pew? What if that moment was an opportunity to engage in an interaction between you and your Heavenly Father?

***The Biker continued . . .***

I realize I am walking on thin ice here- people love their favorite songs. But I want to pass along a gentle reminder that I learned from biker friend of mine. *This isn't about you. This isn't about those people up front. This isn't really about which song got picked this week.* That moment in corporate worship is an open door- a fleeting opportunity to push past all of these distractions and connect with your Heavenly Father.

Or not.

---

Every year, thousands of children and teens are sent to the residential facilities we serve 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 the innumerable challenges is found in the person of Jesus Christ.

We are a not for profit, inter-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to address the spiritual needs of children and teens who are in residential psychiatric care at facilities throughout central Missouri. We are supported by the prayer and gifts of individuals and churches in our community. We work alongside many dedicated professionals including educators, therapists, doctors and nurses, child care workers and so many more who strive to help these children who have been scarred by every form of abuse, abandonment, neglect, and harm.

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.