

Experiencing God's Love

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We had such an incredible time on our Book of Mormon Internship witnessing trip. I have so many testimonies of the goodness of God and of seeing His hand at work during our trip. This is my testimony of how God's love is strong and sure.

As we came home from our trip, I was feeling discouraged and disappointed in myself for not stepping out to witness as much as I should have. Too many times, I let fear and other insecurities keep me from going up and starting a conversation with someone.

At the same time, there were several experiences that we had as a group where some of the interns had incredible moments with God. I heard some of my friends talk about how powerfully they felt the Spirit and how these were life-changing moments for them. I could see God moving in their lives and I could see how He was using them to reach out to others. I had also felt the Holy Spirit, but it felt more like a constant peace and presence of the Spirit in all we did. I knew God was there with us in those moments, but I wanted more. As time went on, I began to think there was something wrong with me and that's why I wasn't experiencing the Spirit in the same way as my friends. I began to feel like I was failing as an intern and in my walk with God.

We got back from our trip on a Thursday, and Saturday morning we left for Iowa. As we were riding in the van, I was sitting in the front row between Daniel and Sam. Everyone was chatting, but I was drowning in the feeling that I wasn't "enough" and that's why I was missing out on what I thought everyone else was experiencing. I was getting emotional, and Daniel noticed. He asked if I was okay. I told him I would be fine, and he assured me that if I needed to talk about it, he was there. I thanked him, but told him I thought I could get my thoughts sorted on my own. A few minutes later, everyone in the van was settling in for a nap, but I couldn't sleep. As my thoughts continued, I began to think I really did need to talk to someone about this. But as I looked at Daniel, it appeared he had fallen asleep—I couldn't tell. I knew he wouldn't care if I bothered him, but I didn't want to wake him up if he was asleep. So I asked God that if Daniel was awake, I would know. Just then, Daniel sat up. I shared my struggles with

him. He encouraged me and asked how he could pray for me. I told him I wanted to experience God's love and presence; and I wanted to know what was keeping me from Him. I know that faith is not based on our feelings, but I longed to feel God's love for me.

Later that night at the Woodbine, Iowa campground. We had just hiked to the top of a hill and saw an amazing view of the surrounding area and a beautiful sunset! We all sat silently as the sun slipped behind the horizon. As I watched, I was praying—begging God—for help with my thoughts and insecurities. I became enveloped in a deep peace and love. I knew God was right there by my side and that He has never and will never leave me. It was the most precious feeling. I thanked God for allowing me to experience Him in this way.

We began to sing songs of praise and worship to God and I wanted to sing For Those Tears I Died, but I couldn't remember how to start it. I turned to ask Sam to start that song for me, but at the same moment, he started to sing it! Later, I wanted to sing I Love You Lord. Seconds later, Elyse asked if we could sing the same song! The whole time on that hill was such a beautiful and sweet time with the Lord.

I shared the testimony of my experience on the hill at one of our services. After the service, Daniel shared with me that he had felt prompted to pray for me during our time on the hill regarding the things I had shared with him in the van. This is an added testimony of how God was working—even before I felt His Spirit.

Sunday night we had our service in Lamoni. Michael Jordison shared a few thoughts with the congregation as we wrapped up the service. One of the things he said struck me. He shared that sometimes we may feel like God has forgotten us, but He never has and never will. This was another reminder that even when I don't "feel" God near, the truth is that He is always with me, no matter how I feel.

Later, at a fasting prayer service at the Foundation, we knelt in prayer and I became overcome with those same negative thoughts. I felt powerless to combat those thoughts. I began to pray out loud. When I said, "Dear Heavenly Father," the noise in my head went silent. I wasn't even praying specifically about the things I was struggling with. I was overcome with incredible peace. It was so strong that it almost felt heavy, like a weighted blanket. That peace stayed with me the rest of the day. And since then, I've had a foundation to stand on when those thoughts have come again.

A few of us interns recently attended the Casting Crowns concert after a Royals game. For their last song, they sang Nobody. In this song, there's a line that says, "So when I hear that devil start talking to me saying, 'Who do you think you are?'" When they sang those words, Molly and I made eye contact—I had shared this testimony with her the previous day! Those words were yet another reminder that the thoughts, feelings and insecurities I had been struggling with were times that Satan was trying to distract me from what God has been doing in my life.

I KNOW I am a child of God. I KNOW I am loved, forgiven and chosen.
And I NEVER have to doubt this,
no matter how many times Satan throws his darts at me.