

Letters of ENCOURAGEMENT

God Loves You



No Matter What

August 9, 2023

A Note from Max Andrick

Hello Friends!

Lakeside Institute is the name of the camp we attend as a youth group every summer. I have had the opportunity to be on staff for over ten years. This year I was given the privilege of being the chaplain for the week.



The scripture of the week was Isaiah 43:1:

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are mine."

In the months preceding camp I studied and prepared and prayed that God would give me the words to share to invite the campers into a deeper relationship with Christ. Wow! Did God deliver in a big way.

I had planned and written five sermons, one for each day of camp. The topics were Perspective, Sheep, Courage, Gratitude, and The Valley.

The typical camp day starts with a devotional time, followed by breakfast and fun with friends around the table.

Well, that is what everyone did except me. I rose before everyone and went straight to South Auditorium to pray, center myself, and polish my presentation.

As the campers and staff filed into the space, I grew increasingly uncomfortable with what I was going to say. Was it the right message? Was this going to connect with the campers? Was I going to embarrass my family who are there? And so on.



As the last song played and the campers sang “Reckless Love” by Cory Asbury, **I knew God had this and I just needed to get me out of the way so I could be his instrument for the week.**

I am slow to understand God’s will. I often must receive the gentle shove from God to focus and pay attention. Sometimes repeatedly.

During that first chaplain’s hour of the week on Monday morning, with the sun shining beautifully and all 100-ish faces watching me

expectantly, I realized all my preparation and writing were to get me into the space where God speaks through me.

By that I mean I completely lost my place and train of thought.

So, I read the scripture again. **“Fear not, for I have redeemed YOU. I have called YOU, Max. Max, you are mine.”**

I then was able to open up and share portions of my journey of faith.

The blessing for me of this week was to watch the journeys of so many youth and staff hear God’s word in a way they felt. I witnessed so many amazing things — I am still processing and have trouble putting it all into words. Here is one that I can coherently put into writing.

A young man came to camp for the first time. He has already graduated from high school, so this is later than most others (most first-time campers are young high schoolers). He only knew one staff member and one camper.

I met him on the first day as he stood in his room looking lost and nervous. We hit it off, and I introduced him around to the other young men his age. They welcomed him and included him right away.

I saw his face during that first chaplain’s hour. He related to the Spirit. That day we talked about all the things the world and the media tell you about who you *aren’t*. How there is so much noise you start to believe that this is true. He was ready to build his foundation on the fact that he does belong, and he belongs to God.

As the week progressed, I sat in on his small group and listened as he shared his story. Each camper made a circle with chalk on the sidewalk and wrote down words to describe themselves. His were “nervous, alone, and not confident.” Then the rest of the group wrote words of how they see the person: “strong, courageous, loving, kind, and creative.” The two staff members leading the group then wrote “You are a child of God.”

His face reflected awe at the thought that others could see him this way. It reflected awe that God loved him right where he is in his journey. Awe that God will keep loving him as he works to become who he wants to be.

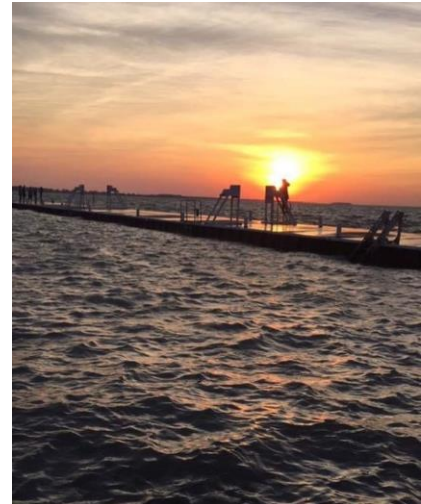
He and I would check in with each other every morning, and every morning he would start the day saying he was blessed to be there at camp. Seeing God in the people around him. He did ask Christ into his life for the first time. He did make a plan to make changes upon returning home. He heard God speak to him, and he acted on it.

I was privileged to watch so many faces during “aha” moments. To watch people reach out with love to repair broken or damaged relationships. I watched campers and staff be the body of the church without using words. **I was able to have a front row seat to God in action.** I witnessed so many people act with courage and gratitude when dealing with each other.

I am very, very full of gratitude to have been given the opportunity to share some words to frame the week of camp. I thought I was giving a message to them. Turns out, they lived the message and gave it back to me.

Like the camper whose face showed the awe of God, I am in awe of the things I witnessed, the power of God’s love. The power of the body of Christ lifting each other up and sharing the heavy load so many of us carry. I watched the campers and staff lean into the redemption and grace of knowing that we are ALL called by name and that we are God’s.

My prayer for you is this: **May peace fall on you like rain, and may you lean into God’s love and share it with each other abundantly.**



In Christ,

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