

Mission New Mexico's Impact



Church, Volunteers, Camp Reach Student

The name and identity of the main student described in this article is withheld upon request. The BCNM felt that his story was still powerful without his identity and shares it here for our readers.

First Baptist Church of Tucumcari is impacting lives of middle school and high school students through Wednesday night ministry. This past Sunday, the life-changing decision that one student shared with the church reflected the dedication of an entire church and the important role of summer camps.

During the school year, the church runs two 15-passenger vans and one seven-person van to pick up students from the community whose parents don't attend church. "These kids are not being fed at home. We feed dinner to about 100 children and students every week," pastor John Hinze reported. The middle and high school student group consists of 40-50 students.

One particular young man started attending the youth group after Christmas. His family does not attend church. He expressed a desire to join the student group and became a consistent attender, engaging in spiritual conversations with the small groups (which the church calls pods). As he continued attending each Wednesday night, he developed relationships with the varied group of student ministry workers.

One evening, Hinze was visiting individually with the student during a student group meeting. The student expressed that he was going to give up on God. He told the pastor, "I don't believe that God is listening to me when I pray." Hinze returned the comment with a question, "Why do you not believe that God is listening to your prayers?"

The student's response revealed specific issues about which he had been praying, without any visible response. As a result, he felt that God wasn't listening to him. Hinze guided him through a discussion about how to pray and what signals to look for to identify answered prayer. He challenged the young man to persevere and not give up.

The next day, the student called Hinze to tell the pastor that he had decided not to give up on God. Two weeks later, that young man was on a van with eight other students from his church to attend Lives Ablaze 3.0 Camp.

The camp is a ministry of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico. It was completely sold out, with a waiting list of about 40 people wanting to attend, but beds weren't available. The camp was one of a series of three similar camps planned to handle the number of students wanting to attend. Lives Ablaze 1.0 was held at Sivells Baptist Camp. Lives Ablaze 2.0 and 3.0 were held at Inlow.

Stephen Parker, sponsor for the Tucumcari group for the camp week, and a civil engineer who works with the students, drove the van. Parker takes a week of vacation to take First Baptist's students to camp. He takes a personal interest in the students, mainly working with middle school students. He's a Bible teacher for them on Wednesday nights.

Monday evening at Inlow, the young man listened to a message about spiritual justification, the spiritual process that makes you legally right, where the consequences of sin are removed, Parker said. Next, Tuesday, the topic was regeneration. That message explained that every person is sinful and there is nothing good inside anyone, initially. But, when someone—even a student—chooses to believe in, trust and follow Jesus Christ, not only do they receive forgiveness of their sins, but they also experience the regeneration of being "born again," the preacher said. "We become someone new. We get that life-change with us."

The message resonated with the young man. The preacher did not offer a traditional "altar call" for students to physically respond to the message during the worship service. Instead, he encouraged students who wanted to make some spiritual decision to go to the youth sponsors who were waiting in the side aisles. The young man found Parker, his sponsor.

Parker said the student explained that, "he has asked for stuff and asked for stuff and it never happened." He wanted to be a completely different person, Parker recalled. He had seen things inside of himself that needed to be changed and had asked God, but felt like nothing had changed. So, sitting at a picnic table outside the auditorium, he and Parker prayed together. The young man gave his life to Jesus Christ.



Mission New Mexico funds from New Mexico Baptists support the Inlow and Sivells camp facilities. Significant Mission New Mexico funds have been invested at Inlow, where this young man met Jesus. Improvements keep camp facilities available and useful for camps like Lives Ablaze.

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