

I Can Only Imagine

Surrounded by your glory, what will my heart feel? Will I dance for you Jesus? Or in awe of You be still? Will I stand in your presence? To my knees will I fall? Will I sing halleluiah? Will I be able to speak at all? I can only imagine...

In this popular Christian song, we are asked to imagine among other things, standing in the presence of God, and what it would be like. I would like for you to imagine yourself being in ToCI for Kairos #12 and seeing what I saw firsthand; God at work in His church, through His people, reaching out to His lost children.

Imagine yourself seeing a man studying a ripe red strawberry, tasting its' sweetness, savoring its' aroma and just feeling the joy of a simple fruit for the first time in twenty-four years.

Imagine sitting next to a guy who has been rejected by his family for the last fifteen years; so rejected that he has not received a single visit, let alone a letter. Then, to have placed before him a sack of fifty letters, (one from each of the Kairos volunteers who he met just two days prior) each letter stating over and over how loved he is.

Imagine sitting down to share a meal with a young man and seeing his reaction to the placemat that is before him. This particular placemat was made by a little girl in Sunday school, and its' message to him was this "you must have done something very bad to be in prison, but I want you to know that Jesus still loves you." And, you know that this young man was the cause of an alcohol related crash that killed an entire family, except one. And, a little girl lost her life that night.

Now, try to imagine Tyler's story. He grew up with a father addicted to heroin and a mother with alcohol problems. At the age of twelve, he was trying to support his family in the wrong way, got caught, and sent away. He is now twenty-three and has only known freedom for two of the last eleven years. He had a very hard heart, so all of this unconditional love and forgiveness was completely foreign to him. In all of his years, he was never taken to church or had opened the bible. In our conversations as the weekend progressed, he began to say things like "I am beginning to feel like there is something out there" or "you guys have me at the door".

Saturday is a huge day for the residents to learn about forgiveness. They begin learning how to forgive themselves and others. After several talks and meditations, the day is capped off by dropping a list of those names to be forgiven into a bowl of bleach water. When they do this, the paper dissolves and a pastor prays for them.

Tyler shared with me that his paper was blank because he still could not forgive even one person. I suggested that he go up, and drop in the blank piece of paper, and tell that pastor that he just could not forgive at this time. He liked that idea, and just before we were set to go, he asked for my pen, and then showed me what he wrote. It was "God, show me how to begin to forgive." After the forgiveness ceremony, we all prayed, and they left to go back to their cells with more cookies.

Sunday morning, I saw a small change in Tyler that kept growing as the day progressed. Sunday evening at the closing, he shared that two of the Kairos brothers had prayed with him, and he had accepted Jesus as his Savior!

Love Wins!

Please keep men like Tyler lifted in prayer. Prison is a place of concentrated evil that will prey on a new believer in Christ. On behalf of all the inside brothers, I want to thank you for your support.

Grace and Peace,
Butch Blankenship