

Rethinking Calling

YouthDownSouth interviews Luke Walker, a Salvationist and the youth director at the Tampa, Florida corps.

YDS: Please tell us a little bit about yourself – in particular please tell us your testimony.

LW: I'm Luke Walker, I'm 28 and I am the youth, college age and young adult ministries coordinator at the Tampa Corps.

I was born in England and brought up in a Church home with my parents being Ministers (not in the SA). I think I grew up with God always around me, I'm not sure I would say it was 'forced' on me but it was a big part of my life from day 1. When I look back I don't think I had a very personal relationship with God and was one of those kids who made a decision with Christ when I was just a small child and probably didn't really understand all the ins and outs of what it really meant to be a Christian. I just glided through my teens going to church but not really taking in what was going on and again not having it be anything personal.

When I was 19 and finishing up College in England in 1999 I decided to take part in a program called Camp America. This is an organization that sends young people to the US to work at a summer camp. I thought it would be something fun to do for a summer before I had to join the 'real world'.

I applied and then went through a big interview process in London where camp directors from all across America fly in to do interviews. Before I went my parents told me they would really like me to work at a Christian camp but at the end of the day it was my decision. I really felt this was the first time they were giving me the opportunity to decide about my Christian life and where it was headed.

I interviewed and was accepted to do Soccer coaching at a camp in North Carolina and so thought I would be heading there for the summer. However as I was going through the paperwork the camp director suddenly said I should go look around and see if there was anywhere else I thought I might like to work instead. So off I went but was ready to leave and just get placed at a camp by the organization when someone by the name of Paul Brackett came up to me and asked if I would be interested in working in Florida for a summer. I instantly thought of beaches and warm weather and quickly said yes. I interviewed and loved the sound of the place and when I found out it was a Christian camp I thought my folks would be happy too. It just so happened that I got the very last available spot as a male counselor.

I really feel this moment was the catalyst to a vast improvement in my Christian life, it gave me an opportunity to go away and work in a healthy environment and see how God could work in my life as well as the kids I would be around.

YDS: Why are you a member of The Salvation Army?

LW: I became a member of the Salvation Army because it became my Church home and I felt that was where God wanted me at that moment in time.

YDS: How did you first come into contact with the SA?

LW: My first summer at Keystone was my first interaction with the SA, it was all very new to me and at first I admit I was a little taken aback by the uniforms etc.

After my first summer at camp I came back for a couple more summers before ending up at a couple of Corps' doing work at after school programs. After this I ended up falling into the job of Community Center director at the Tampa Corps and after a couple of years in that job moved into my current position.

YDS: What do you believe it means to "be called"?

LW: Well for starters I don't think being called always means becoming a minister, officer or missionary which I think a lot of people feel.

I believe God calls EVERYONE to do something be it any number of areas of our lives. I do believe to be called means that God has a specific plan for you and a specific direction for your life. The calling is that thing God chooses for you to do with your life. The most important thing to remember is that the calling from God is his way of using you for HIS glory. It's the way he wants to use you to further his Kingdom.

YDS: Do you believe that you are called?

LW: I believe I am called to full-time ministry. I truly believe this by the fact that had you asked me while I was in High School or College if I would be involved in ANY way with Church I would have laughed at you. My spiritual life was that unimportant to me.

Seeing the work God has done in my life and continues to do in me just continues to confirm I'm right where I need to be doing what God wants me to do.

YDS: If you were to give words of advice to a young adult to figure out what God wants him/her to do in life, what would you say?

LW: Pray...it sounds obvious but it's important and then be open to every avenue. We can think and try to figure out what we are doing in life as much as we like but God uses HIS timing and not ours when it comes to showing us direction. Until you are given that specific direction from God then do what you are currently doing for his glory. It took me years of going around in circles before I figured out what God wanted from me and not only was it something I never expected but it was on the other side of the world.

YDS: What ultimately led you to the profession you are in today?

LW: Seeing the impact I have on kids. I always thought I was pretty good with kids from my time as a soccer coach in England but I don't think I really realized how much more I could be doing in their lives other than just teaching them how to kick a ball.

Knowing that I'm not even close to being perfect, knowing I've messed up numerous times would actually help me help kids who go through all the same situations I've seen myself in.

Even when I think I'm in the wrong business or not doing something right God ALWAYS presents a way of telling me I'm doing just fine. Be it through a kid's smile or a simple thank you from a parent.

I know I'm truly blessed to be doing what I'm doing

YDS: What is the most successful thing you have accomplished as a professional?

I'm very proud to see some of the significant changes in the lives of some of my local kids in the Tampa area. In particular, one child who comes to the corps programs went from being one of the local boys who would just come and play basketball, would spend a lot of time arguing and cursing with his friends in the gym to being one of the counselors for our summer program this past year. Seeing the changes he has made but also seeing how amazing he was with the kids and to see the kid's just fall in love with him was a very proud moment.

YDS: What is your take on ministry as it relates to your career?

LW: Everything we do should be a ministry. It shouldn't matter what job we are doing, we should have opportunity to minister. I think we often mistake the word 'ministry' and

often think it is always a full-time paid vocation. We can minister in many ways, be it through specifically talking to people about God but also just by the way we carry ourselves. Obviously being at work takes up a massive part of our week we get the perfect opportunity to allow the people we are around more than anyone else (our co-workers) to see how God manifests himself in our lives.

YDS: What is your favorite Scripture verse?

LW: I actually have two:

Psalms 51:1-2 which says: 'Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt, purify me from my sin.'

I love this because I just think it is David at an all-time low and just laying everything out there for God to take. It's David admitting he messed up and confessing it all to God asking for forgiveness. This is something I think we can all relate to and is the key to us having a relationship with God, especially when we first turn our lives over to him. It's us saying 'I messed up, I'm sorry...please forgive me'. It also shows us how truly wonderful God's forgiveness is.

Luke 11:10: 'Those who ask will receive, those who seek will find and doors will be opened to those who knock'.

I like this just because it is a verse full of promise. It tells us that whenever we turn to God when we are in need he will ALWAYS provide.

YDS: If you could give words of wisdom to our readers, what would you say?

In everything you do, do it for his glory and to further his kingdom.
