

A Christian School...What Difference Can It Make?

by Michael W. Lee

Just a couple of weeks ago I had the privilege of leading our 11th and 12th graders through a book called Growing up Christian. Upon completion of the book, I asked the students to write a short paper on how they felt the book affected them.

Many of the papers were very encouraging but one in particular I would like to share. It isn't really a paper- its more like a letter. The letter answers the question, "What difference can a Christian school make in the life of a young person?"

It also answers any questions about why we as administrators and teachers spend countless hours and expend endless emotion on the lives of our children. Please praise our God as you read it. Shedding a few tears of joy is OK, too. Here it is.....

This paper was going to be merely about what I learned in class with you, but I think limiting it to just that would be the tip of the iceberg, and I wish to share a lot more with you sir.

(Ha-ha) When I first came to Cherokee Christian School, the facility looked great, the teachers looked unreal, the classes looked like everyone was friends with everyone...and then...my sister and I had the interview with...you. Honestly, you were very intimidating, lol, I felt so nervous, like I had committed a crime and needed to be interrogated. I tried to speak, and what I was thinking in my head wasn't coming out the way I thought it would. I left the building that day feeling like I had failed an important mission or something, but you gave me a chance at your school! I was extremely grateful!

Where I lived before I came to Woodstock, was a terrible place to live. Everyday seemed dreary, there were drugs, gangs, and teen pregnancies throughout Bellaire High School, but no one wanted to acknowledge that. All the churches in

Bellaire seemed corrupt. The preacher and his wife didn't really seem to care about anything but money. Sunday morning sermons were merely whatever sounded pretty and pleasant to hear, and no one seemed to care about scripture, everyone was competing to see who could give the most money to the church. In August of 2004, my best friend, Andy, died. He was hit by a drunk driver just feet away from his driveway. Andy was a strong Christian, and touched my life in so many ways, so seeing that great of a person die because of a foolish person was mind-blowing. I didn't know Christ that well at that point, and no one was there to help. So I kid of lost faith in church. I think the ironic thing is that Bellaire is called the "All-American Town". This summer, my sister, Tracie, invited me to spend the summer with her, and that's when I realized there was so much I was missing out on. There actually were churches that cared, schools that educated and had teachers who loved to teach, and I wasn't awake all night afraid our house was going to be robbed. The only down side was that my mom refused to leave Bellaire—she said she had raised six children there and wouldn't leave unless she was physically removed. So my mother signed some document giving my sister the right to decide my education. She, of course, wanted me to be involved in Christian environment not only at home, but in school as well, and was willing to work hard to pay for it.

After my first few weeks at Cherokee Christian, I felt like I had been a student here my whole life. I loved my classes, I loved the teachers, I loved my classmates, I had an amazing mentor, I loved my after-school job, and possessed such a hunger to learn more about Christ (I would actually stay up until midnight reading the Bible, because there was so much I didn't know and wanted to learn about). I became a very emotional person after coming to CCHS. I found myself crying in

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chapel, or when I was talking to my mentor, but it wasn't an, "Oh, woe is me" kind of crying (also cried a few times during your class discussions as well). There's just something about hearing that Christ had come to earth, lived a perfect life, and then died for the sins of the very people who condemned or doubted Him, that brings me to tears. I know I'm not perfect,, since I'm human (of course), I'm a sinner, and sometimes I feel like garbage [your terminology] compared to Christ. There's this feeling like you don't even deserve to spend eternity in Heaven, but by God's grace, it's possible. All His glory...Wow (teary-eyed again). I think that's why I can't lead prayer in class—I would fall apart and cry before I get anything verbally said (lol). That's something I'm trying to work on. I want to fight the fight against sin, and have the same gratitude toward Christ as I do now throughout my life.

In addition, my whole mentality has changed. Did you know that if you eliminate the television, parties and internet—you will have more time to do things? People actually end up prisoners to prime time TV and their Xanga sites. I haven't watched TC since August, and I don't have a computer at home, so I have lost of time to do school and other things. I realized that if you have more time to do things, then your room can actually be clean. Most importantly, I have

set aside time every morning for Scripture and meditation on God's Word. I found out that if I went to bed at nine o'clock—literally drop whatever I'm doing and go to bed; then I won't complain when my alarm close goes off at five o'clock. Nothing should interfere with your faith, not even your daily duties.

In closing, I want to thank you for EVERYTHING you've done for me. My sister is happy as well, because I'm here in Georgia, and I'm in an amazing school, and I'm around to give a helping hand [working and having two children makes you feel like the ring leader of a circus, because you have so much to do such as cleaning, cooking, work, the kids, etc.—but I am able to assist her, so things aren't as hectic]. Mr. Lee, you gave me a chance to make a difference not only in my life, but in others' as well. You gave me a chance to find spiritual growth in a loving environment. The growth I've experienced in one semester at CCHS is more than I've experienced my whole life anywhere else. My heart is changed, my mind renewed, and my life is certainly engaged. ■

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