



FROM THE GRAPEVINE

A fruitful selection of stories from the field

Crawling to the Cross **By Rick Mumford**

One night as I spoke at WyldLife camp at Castaway, I shared the Gospel in the context of the man who was lowered through the roof by his four buddies. The paraplegic, his friends, everyone, thought the man's biggest issue was that he was paralyzed. But as usual, Jesus surprised everyone by saying, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." Jesus correctly diagnosed and dealt with the real issue.

I went on to share that we all think we know what our biggest issue is. Our parents are divorced. We're too tall or short or fat or skinny. We're learning-disabled or unpopular. And yet Jesus knows there's a bigger issue. It was true for the paralyzed man and it's true for us.

After I shared this I gave the kids a chance to respond by writing their names on a red paper heart and nailing it to the cross we had on stage. I watched from the side of the club room as kids – some of them crying – individually thanked Jesus for His sacrifice.

The junior higher next to me, Chad Boedeker from Ely, Minn., who was not sitting in his wheelchair at the time, started to move toward the stage. His leader Emmett, thinking Chad might want his chair, leaned over and whispered, "You okay?"

"Yeah," he replied. "I'm just going to crawl."

As Emmett walked behind him and helped him work his way through all the kids, Chad slowly made his way to the cross. He crawled up on stage, wrote his name on a red paper heart and nailed it near the bottom of the cross.

I don't know why it's such a powerful image for me. Perhaps because, like the paralyzed man in the story, this young man realized his biggest issue – and he understood that Jesus is his only hope. That night Chad committed his life to Jesus.

Or maybe it's because we are all the same – broken, hurting, desperate. And no matter who we are, Jesus is willing to accept us and love us right where we are.



Chad flexes before tackling the zip line at Castaway.

A Loaded Truth **By Cory Bordonaro**

Gretchen Sanger didn't pack light when she traveled with young moms to the Puget Sound for YoungLives camp last summer. In fact, when this Vancouver, Wash., leader prepared for the week away, she included a load of small rocks in her suitcase.

Before camp, she painted each one with words like "anger" and "fear," frequently expressed emotions among her high school kids. "I think it's common to women, but especially to these gals. They're all looking for their knight in shining armor," she said. "They're needing love so bad that they're looking for it in the wrong way or in the wrong place and, a lot of times, that's why they've ended up in the situations they're in."

During cabin time one night, Sanger piled the rocks into a backpack and passed it around for each girl to wear. After commenting on the substantial weight of the pack, she emptied its contents onto the floor, inviting each camper to take hold of a rock that best fit the description of how she felt toward her life and current circumstances.

With the rest of camp settled into their cabins, Sanger then led the girls down to the lake and prayed as each young woman threw her rock into the water. "There were a lot of tears," she remembered, "and there was a lot of openness to hurts in everyone's lives."

Together, as they watched the rocks sink to the bottom of the lake, they felt the relief of their released weight. What an example of how Jesus promises rest for those who are heavy-laden and weary from the effects of sin.

Because Jesus often uses physical illustrations to communicate the Gospel, Sanger also prefers to use her surroundings to share truth. After a meaningful week at camp, she certainly wasn't the only one thankful for a lighter load on the way home.



Sanger, with backpack, and the girls at camp.