

Gap year term 2

This has been an action packed second term in which I've grown in my faith loads but am also very glad to of had a couple of weeks off to recuperate.

This term started with a whole lot on our identity in Christ and really trying to live this out. This also involved thinking on where the enemy may have a stronghold in our lives, areas we struggle with, like fear, or appearance etc, and also how we were brought up, our family and experiences and how that may of effected the way we are today. This then climaxed in a weekend, called Encounter Weekend. On the weekend we had lots of time to worship and pray, and we also had a few talks on identity. The main point of the weekend, however, was to receive prophecy and prayer over our lives. Before the weekend I had to fill in a questionnaire all about issues I struggle with and also our childhood. The purpose of this was that on the weekend we then received about an hour's prayer for the issues we had written on the questionnaire. This was great and really encouraging and I also received prophetic words over me which is also very encouraging. For the Sunday all of us went down to Cliff College for an extended time of worship and prayer which was great. I felt the weekend was really good for me, I really met with God over the weekend and it was so good to put yourself in that vulnerable position, telling others things which you're struggling with and then receiving prayer about this.

This term I've also been working a lot in my prayer apprenticeship. My leader has been running a course called "The Prayer and Intercession School." In this I've mainly been helping to set up drinks and coffee, but a few times I have been able to lead prayer which was a really good experience. There were about 70 people who were doing the course, so leading active prayer for that amount of people was a new thing for me, a great confidence booster too. During this course many people's prayer lives were changed, and we also saw a few people healed through prayer which is very exciting.

A bit of this term has also been focused on mission. As a group we go out into Sheffield every odd Thursday. Some of these times have been really encouraging and fruitful. A few weeks ago a couple of us went out looking to pray for healing for people on the street. I always find these times scary, but I find once you're into it, it sort of comes naturally. We went out for around 2 hours and during this time we talked to quite a few people and saw 2 people healed, one from a back pain and the other who couldn't walk properly.

Just before Easter everyone on Form went to Warrington on a mission weekend. We were teaming up with a new church plant from St Tom's there. Me and a couple of the other guys, with the leader of the church there, went around the town asking to pray for people and trying to set up new contacts and links for the church. We also helped out with a few jobs which people needed doing who were already part of the church; I got my hands mucky and did some gardening. I found this quite challenging as at times it can seem boring and like I'm not really making a difference, but I've come to realise this term that service and serving is a massive part of what being a Christian is all about and that Jesus is our King, but he also came down to be our servant.

Then, straight after we got back from the mission weekend came the news that a key player in our church had died for an unknown cause. The week that followed was something I've never experienced anything like before in my life. The husband of this woman and the church leadership team decided that as a church we should join together and pray for resurrection. This was crazy for me. I'd never thought of actually doing anything like this before. We joined together as a church every night from the Sunday to the Wednesday and joined in praise, worship and prayer. This time was a real time when it felt like God's presence was so close. It was a real time of faith building and a time when I think most people would agree that this is what church is all about. Jesus tells us that we will know we are his followers when we see the sick healed, the blind set free, people with skin diseases healed and see the dead raised. This time was really good for me; I really met with God over this time and was really uplifted. Although we didn't get what we wanted and she wasn't raised from the dead, I feel that as a body we really came together and have taken massive steps forward.

Once again, thanks for your support and prayers.

Best wishes

Andy Rhodes