

A Turnaround at Blue Lake Camp

About 20 years ago, a high school youth group headed out on their annual work camp and backpacking trip to Blue Lake Camp.

One of the boys who went along on that trip was from another church and didn't really know the youth or the adult leaders. His name was Ben, and he was, to put it kindly, a challenge. The leaders had been given the heads-up on Ben. He was a troubled young man who was often belligerent toward people in positions of authority.



It was no mystery why he acted that way; his father was serving time in prison. The minister from Ben's church had begged the youth leaders to include Ben because he believed the experience would be good for him.

The leaders, Bob and Margie, were nervous when the trip began, but it turned out to be a positive experience. Ben had a couple of minor outbursts along the way, but Bob and Margie were patient with him and treated him with more kindness than he was accustomed to experiencing.

A few weeks following the trip, Ben got back together with the group to share pictures and remembrances of their special time together. That was the last time the group saw him.

Sixteen years later, Bob went back to Blue Lake Camp. While he was there, he noticed a man working on one of the cabins. He went over to the man and struck up a conversation, and it turned out that it was Ben. His story unfolded. After high school, Ben went into the Marines, and then after serving six years in the Marines, he enrolled in college, where he later graduated with honors.

Currently, he is married, and he is in charge of the local school district's computer labs. He told Bob that the work camp adventure, 16 years earlier, had been a pivotal event in his life. It was the first time he could remember being appreciated by others and included in a group.

He still cherishes the memories of that trip and the way Bob and Margie cared for him. Bob was stunned, because he had practically forgotten the trip, and he had no idea what effect they had on this young man. A camping event had changed that teenager's life.

Followers of Jesus Christ share His love with all people – young people or old, rich people or poor, black, brown or white, from educated families or from families where Dad is in prison – all people. This is our task. This is our reason for being.

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:35 ESV).