



The Jimmy Brazell Community Impact Scholarship Award

2012 Third Place Winning Essay by Elisabeth Sepulveda (ME)

Some lives are like pebbles. They fall into this world like drops in the ocean, cause a few ripples, and then fade away. Others are like rocks. They fall with more force, create more change, and leave a long impression on the surface of the water. For some special few however, their lives go beyond ripples and last beyond waves. When those lives fall into the ocean, they not only impact the water around them, but cause waves which dash against the rocks and slowly transform the landscape. Just like a stone can impact the water which, through waves, can impact rocky cliffs, these lives reach beyond those they come in contact with, as those they impact begin to impact others. Their influence is grown exponentially, and consequently their impact is increased a hundredfold. Chandler “Jimmy” Brazell lived one of those unique lives. I know, not because I met him or spoke to him or spent time with him, but, ironically, because I didn’t. His life reached beyond those he knew into mine.

When I first heard of Jimmy, it was in conversation with TeenPact friends who knew him and spoke of him with tones of admiration, joy, and respect. I was inspired to hear of someone at the same stage of life who, after similarly staffing for TeenPact not long before, was already walking in his potential and ministering in China. I took the example as encouragement to start considering the ways I could use my TeenPact staff preparation to pour into the next steps of life, and after leaving to serve as a camp counselor for the summer, began to apply the lessons from staff training and classes into daily camp interactions. As I focused on carrying over the investing and mentoring focuses of TeenPact, campers began to open up and share their lives, and some committed their lives to Christ. It was an incredible summer, and as I arrived home and checked Facebook I was shocked to find a newsfeed full of posts about Jimmy’s passing to heaven..... the same Jimmy everyone had talked so much about.

Over the next few days, I began to read blog posts and notes and discovered more about the life of this young man who was truly and genuinely passionate about God. Most striking were the number of specific examples about his openly shared faith, his hope and anticipation for God to work, and his focus on love. Through the posts I found that although he interacted with many people, he invested deeply into each life. Instead of merely meeting people or focusing on the superficial, he spent his time loving them and focusing on the supernatural. His life challenged me, as it had before, but now at a deeper level. Living out the leadership lessons learned at TeenPact was important, but more important was focusing on the heartbeat of life: loving God and loving others.

These past few months, that influence has led me to pray through the focus of my life, and to commit to focusing on God and on who He is--love. In the context of family, this means that instead of allowing my relationships to simply happen, I now am more intentional in cultivating memories, bringing words of affirmation, and supporting the individual goals and passions of each family member. In the context of friends, I have become more focused on pointing each friend towards Christ. Although laughs, inside jokes, shared hobbies and fun times are wonderful additions to a friendship, they do not ultimately address the eternal soul and the most important aspect of a person. In questioning deeper than the surface and seeking to know others at a deeper level, I have found that I have grown closer and discovered more about others than I ever could have imagined. Layers of pain and emotion have been pulled back in lives that I previously would not have guessed were broken, and I have been able to speak encouragement and hope to those going through depression, heartache as families and friendships fall apart, and personal struggles. In these past few months, I have begun to realize just a taste of how Jimmy touched lives so deeply in such a short time, as walls begin to crumble in the face of love.

Although these changes have been rewarding, I have also discovered that truly loving means giving up personal time and hobbies to spend time with others. It has meant giving of myself and changing the focus and priorities of my day. Love is definitely sacrifice, as it says in First John 4:10: *“For this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.”* Love is hard, but it is the heartbeat of the Gospel. It was the heartbeat of Christ’s life. And considering the impact of Jimmy’s, it was the heartbeat of his life, too.

In looking over my life now, I can identify many people I knew who passed away throughout the years. Some were like pebbles and some were like rocks, falling into an ocean causing ripples and waves. Few, however, were quite as exponentially influential as Jimmy’s, increasing their impact a hundredfold. Through living a life of love, Jimmy gave up much for Christ, but as Mark 10: 30 says, no one who gives up himself for the Gospel will fail to receive *“a hundred times as much in this present age.....and in the age to come eternal life.”* As I consider Jimmy’s faith in God, the hope he had in Christ, and his love for God and for others, I pray that my life will be characterized by those focuses, and watch with anticipation as Jimmy’s influence creates waves in my life and in those around me. I can only pray that, ultimately, each one of us will live such a life for Christ.

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13)