

Anna's Testimony

My name is Anna Choate, and I'm a senior at Nixa High School. I have been a part of Redeemer High School Youth since my freshman year. This past summer Hannah took myself and 16 others to Youth Week at Camp Okoboji, a camp she went to every year growing up. Hannah has always talked about her experience at Okoboji and it sounded like the best place on earth. Needless to say, it was such a great experience it outshined even Hannah's stories.

Camp Okoboji warmed its way into my heart and now holds a very important place. The friendships and memories we made are like no others. The lessons we learned there, we will hold close for the rest of our lives. Our youth group has always been really close and has felt like more of a family than a youth group. But those of us who were on the trip somehow became even closer. We all laughed together and cried together and it was an experience that made us so much stronger in our faith. It was such a special time and place. So much so, that the day we left we were all crying and we went to Hannah and begged her to bring us back again next year.

Throughout Youth Week there were so many people who made a big impact on me. Two of the counselors that had a big impact on me were Shea and Rachel. They would always have the right thing to say. When we were reflective after evening devo, Shea would always sit out on the porch with us and tell us jokes until we were willing to talk or until we were laughing and were able to go back inside for bed. They were always in bright happy moods, and had so much energy. They truly made camp so much better.

My small group leaders Spencer and Brooke also had a tremendous impact on me. We had small groups multiple times a day to prepare for Bible Study. They helped answer our questions and they made us think deeper. This helped us grow in our faith. My small group and cabin friends had such a positive influence on me. It is so crazy how close you can become with a group of girls after spending a week with them. No matter what, there were always people who were there to encourage me and help me build my faith. There was never a moment where I felt alone.

There were so many other people who had an impact on me but there is one last person I want to mention. Our very own Hannah Hayden. Hannah led the main Bible study. The theme for the week was "Give Me A Sign" and our theme verse was Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future". One of the things Hannah said that week was "we don't need a sign, we have a Savior". This led everyone to truly think and reflect on themselves and that really made us grow in our faith journey.

At the end of Bible study everyday, Hannah would choose a couple questions that we wrote down and would answer them for us. It really helped us see how God is working in our lives and taught us how to show His love to our peers around us in our day to day life. Hannah had a huge impact on me and the over 100 other kids who came to Youth Week.

We learned so much at Okoboji, but the most memorable lesson to me was one of the Bible studies. We learned about our theme verse and how in Jeremiah there were so many bad things happening and many people turning to false gods. Jeremiah was dealing with so much persecution and he still followed God's Word. And God provided for Jeremiah and got him through hard times. We all go through hard times but in those hard times we should turn to God and God will sustain us like He did for Jeremiah. That message just really stuck with me because it was something that we could easily apply to our lives.

I had such a great time at Okoboji and I can't wait to go back there. These trips and camps are so much fun, but they also are much more than the games and friendships. We truly learn and grow stronger in our faith. Going to Okoboji really made me reflect on my faith and made me think, "Am I someone who goes through the motions or am I someone who puts God first"? It made me realize I had to make some changes. Since we have returned, I find myself praying more; not just at meals or before I go to bed. I am praying just to give thanks for my family, my friends, and my community. I have been able to trust more in God and His plan. I am slowly starting to realize I am not in control but I know who is. I might not be perfect at it yet, no

one is, but when I look back to before camp and I look at where I am now, I have grown so much.