

YWAM Changing Lives One Disciple at a Time

It's odd to think how I used to spend my Friday nights just months ago. I thought only of myself and how much I deserved a night of fun and relaxation, not even thinking that Friday nights are when many others are just beginning their work, a work that is painful and humiliating but something they do just to survive.

Our YWAM base has a Friday night ministry, reaching out to the people of the streets. This city has a big problem with prostitution and trafficking. It's commonplace and ignored, and almost every night you can see women standing on the roads that cross the nearby border. The goal of our Friday night ministry is simply to show these women that they're loved and valuable, even if they don't think so themselves. We walk the streets, bringing little gifts and conversation, developing relationships that may someday help them overcome the trap of prostitution.

The first time I participated, we stopped at a parking lot less than 30 seconds from our home. This is a common area for prostitutes and clients to gather, and surrounding it are dozens of flats. The windows of those living there overlook the parking lot—through them many young girls see their older peers begin work on the streets. This is where many young girls first start working at night, right next to those they've grown up with. A large cathedral, visible from almost anywhere in the city, stands on a hill just behind the parking lot. It overshadows all that goes on below, but, just like a shadow, the cathedral is ignored and forgotten.

Lots of this nighttime work also takes place on the same street as the city courthouse. Again and again that first night in the parking lot, I saw how the people around these

women had failed or abandoned them: these cathedrals and courthouses were meant to protect people; they now seem like nothing more than empty buildings.

Why were we hanging out in a parking lot in the dead of night, with women we'd never met before? Because the one thing that's clear is that God wants us to serve others. He wants us to care for the poor, the sick, the marginalized and the troubled. It doesn't matter our situation or station in life; if we have the ability to bring good to others, and don't, then we might as well have hurt them ourselves.

Each week of teaching in the Discipleship Training School is different, but certain principles are always clear, no matter the speaker or topic: the value of every person and life; the universality of salvation; and the abundant love and compassion of God.

Jesus loved every single person, especially the broken, the downtrodden, the sick and the outcast. He is our example, and we should all demonstrate this same compassion, remembering that every person is loved and valuable. We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).

In spite of the sadness I felt that night, this experience also gave me hope. I saw women whose nights were made better through simple acts of kindness. The problems seem insurmountable, but if through my obedience just one life is changed for the better, it is worth it. We cannot know the full effect of our actions, but we can know that God has bigger designs and plans than we can see. We each have our own part in doing His work and bringing love to others.