

A Clear Calling

by Abe Smith
Board Member

I've often heard Christians say that God was leading them somewhere or to do something, and I always thought I knew what they were talking about. However, it wasn't until I experienced God leading me to work with Restoration Academy that I gained a much better understanding. The first time I ever heard about Restoration Academy was during an exercise my men's small group Bible Study was going through at the Center for Executive Leadership led by Glenn Campbell. Glenn took us all through the process of identifying the different gifts and talents God had given us and how we could leverage these gifts for the kingdom. In this process, he also asked us to identify a specific group of people that we had a heart for and were specifically passionate about.

For me, this group of people, this "audience," is the people living in poverty, specifically in the inner city, and even more specifically, young people. Glenn mentioned a couple different ways I could act on this and one of the ways he mentioned was Restoration Academy. I didn't really think much about it at the time, but it planted a seed nonetheless.

Soon after this, prompted by Glenn's exercise and seeing the value in it, our couples' small group went through the same process of exploring how we could all better use our time, talent, and treasures for the kingdom. In preparation for small group one Wednesday afternoon, I spent some time specifically praying for God to reveal opportunities where I could use my time, talent, and treasures to serve in our community. Immediately after saying "Amen," I walked out of my front door to the car and my neighbor at the time, Brian Goessling, is getting out of his car. I say "what's up Brian?" and he says hello and asks me what I have going on for lunch tomorrow. I tell him I don't have plans and he invites me to his school for lunch where they have monthly luncheons to communicate the vision and the ministry of his school and how people in the community can get involved. At this time, I was not even aware that Brian had left his previous teaching job to join the staff at Restoration. When he explained where we were going

I immediately had a huge grin on my face and go on to tell him about how I had just been praying for God to reveal opportunities to serve in the community and that was about the quickest answer to prayer I had ever received.

So, once making it to the luncheon, I was completely impressed by the “presentation” and blown away by the passion and the vision that Carl Lynn communicated. I was challenged by his faith and my heart was touched by the stories a couple of the boys from the school relayed about growing up without a father. I was then completely humbled when I heard about how blessed they realized they were after taking a mission trip to Honduras. Immediately I knew I wanted to be involved in what God was doing through this school.

At lunch I met Ty Williams, who I knew I recognized from somewhere but I couldn't quite place how I knew him. A couple days later I see Ty refereeing some basketball games at Dawson where I play basketball occasionally and realized he had probably refereed a game that I'd played in. While working out, Ty came up to me with his great smile to say hello and thank me for coming out to Restoration and it was just one more connection God put in my life to the Academy. I continued to see Ty about twice a week in the next few weeks and he would always take the time to come speak to me and thank me for my involvement with the school.

About a week after first seeing Ty at Dawson, I joined an associate to meet with a gentleman I did not know on a business matter. After sitting down in his office, I start to look around a little bit and saw several pictures on the wall connecting him Restoration Academy including the basketball team. The business meeting ran long and I didn't get the chance to even ask him what his involvement was with the school. Shortly thereafter, I emailed him asking about the pictures and came to learn that he was the Board Chair of Restoration Academy. God was certainly making things clear to me that he wanted me involved with this mission.

I started working with Molly Stone to find out where some needs were and learned there was a need for a 7th grade math tutor. Math has always been my thing and I love working with kids so I was excited about this opportunity. I began tutoring for Mrs. Hudson's

class and fell in love with the kids from day 1 and each Thursday morning would hop out of bed just a little bit more enthusiastically because I looked forward to spending time with those kids. It seems like every time I go and try to serve and be a blessing to others, I'm the one that gets blessed the most. I am thankful for God for lining all of these events up in order to clearly guide me in the direction of Restoration Academy. I pray God would continue to use me in whatever way he'd like to further the work of this mission and to draw people to Himself for His glory!