



Failure

Adeline* saw herself as a failure. She was repeating seventh grade for a second time. “We recognized her struggles in the junior high school,” her school counselor and teachers reported, “and were concerned that these troubles could lead to greater problems like drug-use and juvenile delinquency.”

When Adeline’s school was given the opportunity to provide a week of camp to students who were struggling, Adeline’s name was on the list. The school leadership was hoping that the camp experience, culture and community could show Adeline that she was not a failure, that she was loved and that she could do things.

“Adeline’s strongest talent was running away,” Her camp counselor said. “She ran away from friendships, from difficulties, and especially from school.”

“I knew the truth about myself:” Adeline reported, “once a failure, always a failure. I should be in the ninth grade, but I’m repeating the seventh grade again because I missed so many days of school.”

“We had a hard week of camp,” the Wanake counselors recalled. “Our first meal was a foil dinner cookout – in the pouring rain. None of our campers had ever been to camp before or started a fire without a cigarette lighter and gasoline. During the week, we had a tough ten-mile hike in the hot sun. We struggled with the fear of the dark and of each other. No one in our group got along with each other. If we the counselors said it once, we said it a thousand times: ‘We are here to be friends with each other because God loves us.’ After the week,” one counselor confessed, “we did not know if camp had made any difference to these hard-to-reach teenagers and to Adeline.”

On the first day back to school in the fall, Adeline went to see the principal. “I know all this seventh-grade stuff,” she said, “I want to be in the eighth grade.” The principal was not going to let Adeline fool him. She had made these kinds of claims before, only to run away when school got hard. “Prove you know the seventh-grade material,” the principal told Adeline, “then we will advance you.” Adeline went to school for two days, then she didn’t attend for four. “I was right,” the principal said to himself. “Once a no-show, always a no-show.” No one could find Adeline. School officials, family and camp counselors looked in all her usual hangouts.

Finally, someone found her, she was in the County Courthouse doing research in the Law Library. Adeline was preparing to take the school system to court. In four days, she had nearly completed a legal brief stating why she should be passed to the eighth grade. “Why did you decide to change your ways?” The principal asked. Adeline answered, “I learned some very important things at camp. I learned that I am important to God, that I have rights, and I learned that I can do something if I want to. Once a failure is not always a failure.”

At camp, Adeline found the love of Jesus: “By the grace of God I am what I am, and that grace was not given to me in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:10)

Your generosity prepares counselors to share God’s love and encourage campers to grow mentally, spiritually and emotionally. Thank you.

*Name changed to protect the privacy of the camper.

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