

I make my way to a middle seat in the long row of tables, pulled together by waitresses to accommodate the group. I squeeze in, shoulder to shoulder with others. My sister, Connie, sits to my left. Everyone is chatty, laughing, grabbing menus. At one point Connie leans over to me and whispers “We’re outnumbered.” I look around, noting that the young men around the table far outnumber the ladies. In a community that knows what it looks like for many men to be absent, the weight of this comment is not lost on me. I look up. Across from me are Ty and Lynell. We’ve known each other since we were kids, growing up in Kids Club and Youth Group together. We all remember some of the earliest days of ministry in Totus Park. After competing in foursquare, we’d sit on the ground together drinking CapriSun, listening to the Bible story, and pulling cheatgrass out of our socks. Now, we work together. Running Kids Clubs, organizing crafts, overseeing foursquare.

There are others at the table, over a dozen of us altogether, a growing group of young adults, many of whom are now taking on meaningful roles in the life of our church and community. Some of the young men and women are new to the group, new to church. They joined us for an afternoon of games and burgers for dinner. This past year, we’ve watched our group of young adults grow, not only in number, but in their willingness to serve, lead, and invest in our church community. As I look around the table, I wonder what the Lord is doing; the work that remains quiet, unseen, in the hearts of those sitting with me. Over the years, I’ve been learning what it means to surrender my work to the Lord, trusting that “He who began a good work will bring it to completion.” (Philippians 1:6) And so, we pray for the grace to faithfully step into the work God has given us without presuming to know what He will do with it.

Twenty years ago, if someone had told me I’d be sitting across from Ty and Lynell, fellow believers, coworkers, all of us answering the call to pour ourselves out for the community of White Swan, I could have barely pictured it. We had no idea how the Lord might use those ordinary afternoons in Totus to begin something that would continue into our adult lives. So now, who knows what the next twenty years hold? For Ty, for Lynell, for any number of the young adults sitting together at that table.

Since returning to the work with Sacred Road over four years ago, one of the recurring themes for me has been seeing things come “full circle.” By God’s grace, I feel like I’ve been invited simply to witness His redemption story unfolding before me. I see the work of His redemption in individual lives and in the community as a whole. It’s humbling and encouraging beyond words. Since that burger dinner with Connie, Ty, Lynell, and the others, we’ve had a full, busy summer of ministry. Each of us has been serving the children and teenagers of White Swan in consistent ways. This summer, I found myself seeing that “full circle” theme again and again, not in dramatic moments but in ordinary acts of faithfulness.

Connie is one of the key staff members on our Youth Ministry team. She coordinates Youth Worksites in the summer, helps organize our weekly Youth Group meetings, and serves as the director for our youth Discipleship Groups. I worked with her on Youth Worksites several times this summer, watching her coordinate transportation, feed the youth breakfast and lunch, teach them skills on the site, and guide them through the day with so much love and poise.

I’ve had the privilege of watching Lynell work with the youngest boys in our church family each Sunday. My own son, Judah, is now one of the boys in his Sunday School class. I first met Lynell when he was Judah’s age. There is something deeply encouraging about watching the little boy I knew through Kids Club now help teach my own son about Jesus. Week

after week, I witness Lynell pour into the lives of these young boys. Honestly, I bragged on Lynell to every team that came to White Swan this summer, using his story as an example of Ephesians 4:12 lived out right in front of me, as we “equip the saints for ministry, building up the body of Christ.”

Immediately after a summer with Sacred Road, trying to process everything can be difficult. It's hard to know where to begin. Right now, I find myself looking back at that crowded table; where Connie and I found ourselves outnumbered by a generation of young men who are pouring into the next. I don't know what the Lord is doing in the heart of each of us who sat there that evening. I don't know what He might ask of us, or what stories will someday be told about the things He has done. But I have seen enough to know that He is near, and that He is more faithful than I can even realize. I trust the One who began the work. And so, we prayerfully keep showing up, planting seeds, and equipping the saints. Further up and further in.