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Philadelphia Missions Trip  
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# Testimony

## My Adventures in Philly

Philadelphia is not Northern Virginia. In fact, Philadelphia is so unlike Northern Virginia that I was shocked to find such a city in the United States. However, there was one thing that was similar to home - and that was God's presence and love for the city.

At first, I thought God had completely neglected Philly - He could not have loved that city like ours. The sewage, trash, and homelessness that filled the streets were horribly displeasing to the eye. How could a city that God loved be so dirty?

But then God showed His handy work in many ways.

When we arrived at Philly, the house surprised me the most. The house we were living in for the week was not in the best condition. It was beat-up, smelly, and overall, just plain grimy. We were sharing the house with not only the staff, but also another missions team.

We were then introduced to Lighthouse - a summer camp filled with disorder and imperfect little children - and many many feeding shelters. It was honestly awful... at first.

Once I opened up my heart, it was a whole another world. God was working furiously in these places and I could finally see it.

The children I was in charge of - the five year olds - were a pleasure to play with and talk to. Their dreams and eagerness to try to get to know me was flattering at the least. Their enthusiasm was contagious; I laughed the complete four hours I was with the students. And it wasn't just the five-year-olds who brought joy to my heart.

One day, when the little ones were away at a field trip, I was paired with the 10 and 11 year olds. I had a great time with the kids who opened their hearts to interact with us. I had an opportunity to converse with a girl named Jessica, who only spoke Spanish. I spoke Spanish with her the entire duration (at least, to the extent that I could), and even talked about her relationship

with God. It wasn't the best conversation to have with an eleven-year-old, but it was a good practice for me and a good eye-opener for Jessica. She was able to finally understand why these strange volunteers would come to Lighthouse and spend the week with her.

Moreover, I saw God working in the food shelters. We went to numerous shelters around the city, and each had God moving in them; however, the most memorable one was St. John's Hospice. When we think or talk about hospices, we usually think of places where terminally ill people come to receive help and eventually, die. This was not the case at St. John's. It was a place where men come to get their act together and lead a better life. It was also a place food shelter and we were able to feed more than 300 people that day. This place was most memorable because this was the place where I saw the most of God's work being done. Men were singing and playing the piano, despite the conditions they were in. I saw men coming in with newspapers with many circles around job pages. Most of all, the men were so grateful and thankful when we were serving them. They had so much hope, and for people in that condition to have that much hope, I knew God had something to do with it.

In addition to the work being done in the city, I saw God working in our own missions team. We bonded (a lot more than I had prayed for - PTL!) and were vulnerable to each other. We grew as individuals, a team, and a church. I would share the blessings we shared with one another, but if you have an opportunity to interact with us, I think it will be apparent in our values and attitudes.

Thank you for all those who have supported me both financially and spiritually. I truly appreciate it and I know God has so many blessings in store for you in the future. May God bless you and your family!

