

GPA's The First Adventure Training Module

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The team getting ready to set out on their adventure.

From October 15th to the 25th the first ever adventure training on GPA was held. A team of six GPA members ventured out into the Adirondacks of NY for 10 days. October 14th was spent preparing themselves emotionally with reflection, and also preparing materials such as food and tents for their quest. Each day during wilderness training this team had a destination point to reach by sunset. Using compasses and maps, they walked up to 10 miles in one day, through high grasses, marshes and rivers too. Each night when arriving at their site, they set up camp and a fire, and each shared what they had gained from the day.

Adventure Testimony

First I'd like to thank God, True Parents, True Family, GPA staff, the Thalheimer family and Tolik oppa for making this Adventure training module possible. I think it is within my family's bones to love the mountains so I as soon as we got out there, I was happy. I had been yearning for the peace and fresh air to fill my lungs that I knew accompanied mountain terrain, yet somehow when we got up there, I grew nervous. The nervousness quickly faded as my enthusiasm blossomed on the trail and upon arriving at the first lake.

Every day we spent miles on the trail, initially we talked up a storm with tons of laughter splashing in, yet as time wore on, we became more pensive and quiet. We started to take the time to focus on our thoughts and to appreciate our surroundings. There are innumerable thoughts I had that I learned from about nature, such as the beauty in contrast, in fact realizing that it is not only beautiful but necessary. However, the deepest and one of the hardest activities we had was the six hour solo. Normally I would be elated and ready to be dropped off to be alone, but I began to itch with fear. When it finally happened, when I was alone, I distracted myself immediately with snacks and HDH which you can do for so long. Eventually, I sat uncomfortably with myself. It would become eerily quiet at times, no splash, no rustling in the lake, absolutely nothing. It was then that I started to look at nature and see how patient it was and how it stood proud, without any boasts, but stood knowing what it was and that it was exactly where it needed to be.

Most of the things I began to notice are all things I lack, patience, and a clear grasp of who I am and really loving myself for it. Nature became a reflection for me to see where I truly was; when everything was stripped away; the noise, the people, and it was just me, nature and God I found out I have a long

way to go in understanding who I am and how I fit in to God's plan. It was a difficult but necessary realization that first I need to love myself and love based off of no other standard except for God's standard. There are innumerable lessons and realizations that I had throughout the trip, but this by far has been the biggest experience to chew and digest. I am so incredibly grateful for everything and everybody that prepared so hard for all of this to happen. Thank you so much.



Going out into the wilderness for ten days was definitely a struggle most of the time for me personally, but looking back I think it was worth it. I actually learned a lot about myself while being out in the woods. I learned that I tend to put limits on myself while being out in the woods. I learned that I tend to put limits on myself and what I have the potential to do. I learned that I shouldn't because my body is so much more capable than I thought. I now believe that the possibilities are limitless because God resides in me. So the next time I doubt myself or lower my standards for whatever reason, I really hope to remember that God is with me. There were many instances where I truly wanted to give up and stop hiking and take a rest. Fortunately, I was pushed by those around me as well as the environment. I had no choice, but to push forward regardless of how I was feeling at the time because in the end it was for the betterment of the whole and even me.

Out in the wilderness I struggled with myself internally. I think my mind was too clouded and blurred with not so positive thoughts. I was too concerned about little external things such as the rain and thinking we have to hike through this? Towards the end, the last final days of the trip we had more solo/reflection time and on one particular six hour solo, I was able to clear up my mind and was able to really feel the peace and comfort of God's wonderful creation. My internal goal for the expedition was to seek God's love through nature. During the hikes and other busy moments of the day I was unable to really set my mind free. I was thinking too much with my mind and not feeling with my heart. I am glad for that great experience and everyone who made the adventure trip possible, it was definitely worth it.

Looking back and thinking about everything I went through and experienced over the past ten days, I can say without a doubt that I am extremely grateful for my experience in the Adirondacks. Even though I was not having fun the entire time, I know that I gained a lot from the trip and had a great time overall. I was able to learn things about myself and my character, both positive and negative. I now have a renewed appreciation for nature. I have never been somewhere where there are so many colors in the leaves and trees and it was absolutely breath taking. However, the most significant thing I gained from my experience in the wilderness was a greater openness to God. Throughout the trip I was questioning whether or not I have ever felt God. On the last day during solo time, I was able to come to the realization that I have felt God and that I always can. I realized that God is always trying to reach out to us and have us feel his love and embrace but we prevent that from happening by putting up barriers and getting distracted. All we have to do is open up and forget about the small things that distract us and push us away from God. Once again I am very grateful for the opportunity to have gone on the wilderness challenge and will not forget my experience anytime soon.



Adventure reflection

I am really happy that GPA added the adventure module to the program. I know that there are so many things from the trip that we will all remember and cherish. More than anything, I really valued just the fact that we had so much time to think in such a peaceful environment. Every day as we were walking, we had several hours to think to ourselves and it was completely up to us what we wanted to be our focus. Even though we had a general routine, there was still so much freedom and I was able to dwell on a lot of questions that I had for myself that maybe I didn't find time to think about before. In a way we were all like our own leaders because we decided what we were going to put into it and what we were going to get out of it without anyone really pushing us but ourselves.

I think the fact that we didn't have the distractions that we would normally have really helped. I was actually happy to leave my phone and many other things and just live simply for a few days. It's so different from any of our lives normally because the only thing you have to pay attention to is the path you're walking on but otherwise you have complete freedom. Sometimes the hikes were long and maybe a bit steep but I think that one thing I could learn is that it would be as difficult as I made it. If I spent the whole day just thinking about the finish line, then of course it was much more strenuous than if I just took in what was around me and focused on the time I was in. More than anything, it's just mental strength.

I can definitely feel God a lot when I am in nature. I think the fact that it is so pure and everything works together harmoniously makes it so beautiful. And even though it works perfectly, it still completely embraces me even though I am not perfect. I feel free to be myself and I can appreciate the beauty of everything around me at the same time. The world is so massive compared to myself and when I look out into something so huge, I feel like I am the only one in it and it is like God made it just for me. I think feeling God's love through nature can teach me a lot. It helps me to love and appreciate myself which in turn will help me to love others more. Only God's love is perfect and I can't expect to get that love from any human being, so the more I can receive it, the less dependent I will be on receiving that love from others. It wouldn't matter if people disappointed me or didn't give me the love that I might expect or want because it would already be fulfilled by God.

I can see a lot about myself from this trip. Definitely one of my weaknesses is constantly losing focus on what is important. It wasn't so hard for me to get past the physical challenges of the trip and not think about the pain or struggles but at the same time it would be good to not let my mind get distracted by unimportant things or thoughts and be present in what I am doing. If I was focused every moment and constantly trying to learn from the activities we were doing, then I would get a lot more out of it. As a team, I think that we worked really well together. We generally did things in a way that was most efficient for the whole team and not just ourselves. We helped each other out, not just because we felt we should, but we had to in order to make the things we did possible. Also a big part of being in a team is having the humility to accept help from your teammates. As a leader too, I felt like humility was really important. Especially since most of us didn't have experience in doing anything like this, there were definitely mistakes that we made along the trail. It was a good experience leading and I can learn from the others' leadership as well. I think that I need to be more accepting of criticism and learn from the mistakes that I do make. I could learn from other leaders to be constantly aware of how the team was doing instead of setting a pace that was good just for me or only taking breaks when I needed one. I think

that from leading, I was also able to see how I needed to be a better follower. It was nice to have the people following me paying attention to where we were going and what we were doing as well because then there wasn't much pressure and they could catch my mistakes. Overall, I am really grateful to have gone on this trip and I think that I could gain a lot from it. I think we can all really appreciate more the little things we had to go without while backpacking now that we are back. It was nice to be surrounded by so much peace and I hope that I can remember that feeling throughout the year.

I really enjoyed the Adventure Module and I feel like I personally gained a lot from it both internally and externally. I am really thankful for Tolik Oppa, Uncle Phil and Will for all of the things they taught us and I know they put a lot into this module and program. The equipment and food we received for the trip is something I am very grateful for. I haven't had the chance in a while to spend so much time in nature and forgot how much I loved fully being surrounded by this beautiful creation. You can fully be yourself in nature. You are dirty and it doesn't matter what you look like, you are with the same people for 10 days all the time so you can really see everyone's character. Sometimes that is a good thing and sometimes it can be a bad thing. Either way I think fully being immersed in nature teaches you a lot about yourself and about others. In the beginning of the trip I didn't really feel like I was experiencing God as much as I would have liked to, other than the fact that I was surrounded by everything He created and put so much love into for me. I tried to invite God into my day and really try to see Him in everything around me. I can't say I was successful at this constantly, but I really tried to make an effort to do this so that I could get the most out of this 10 day trip. On the first night I was sitting by the lake looking at the stars praying and for some reason I got the strongest feeling that I was exactly where I was supposed to be. I have had that feeling a few times on GPA so far, which is always a nice way of being reassured that I am being lead in the right path even when it is not my choice to do something. I am very thankful for the solo time we all had by the lake for 6 hours because that is where I think I experienced God the most. I made a fire during this solo time and I thought it was a nice fire that I would have liked to share with someone, but I was all alone. This got me thinking on how God must feel. He has made this beautiful nature for us and hardly anyone takes the time to thank him or tell him he did a good job. It's like giving someone what you think is the best Christmas present ever, that you worked really hard to find and when you finally give it to them they aren't as excited as you think they would be or they never even use it. That feeling is not a good one to have and I'm sure that God feels much worse than this. I was thinking of all the effort God put into everything that He has made and that even just a flower is so much more amazing than anything a person could make. If I make something that I worked really hard on and am proud of, it is always nice to have someone to enjoy it with or even have them notice what you have made. I know I get a lot of joy from other people, so I'm sure God is the same way and wants to enjoy what He has made for us with Him. I'm happy I was able to spend so much time in nature and enjoy what God has given me. In that solo time I think I came to understand God's heart a little better. I learned a lot about myself during this trip. I know that if I set my mind on something and really want to accomplish it, I can do it. I like to challenge myself to do my best and push my limits. I often have a very positive attitude, but at the times that I don't it can be pretty hard to motivate myself. I think a lot of your day can be affected by the attitude you have on things, so I always try to look at things positively whether or not I want to do them. I tend to think externally a lot. I noticed myself not thinking about God or True Parents a lot of the time and just thinking about what food I was going to eat or when we were going to take a break from hiking. I wish I would have taken more time to look around when we were hiking to fully take in everything that was around me at times because I'm sure I missed some amazing things. Working together as a team was a big part of this trip. I personally think the team I was on, which was the sister's team worked very well together. We get along really well and want to do our part in the team, so I can't say I struggled within my team. We would do whatever the team needed without really thinking twice about it. I think when we were leading on the trails we could have communicated with each other better and planned things out a little bit more beforehand. When I was leading the group I tended to set the pace for hiking too fast. I realized later on this was selfish, but I am so used to doing things quickly that I didn't notice I was going too fast and that it would tire out the group. Being a leader you have to be humble and work off of the other people in the group. Even when you are not the leader, you can still lead in some way. Great followers make great leaders. I realized I was not as willing to lead or pray as much as some other people in the group were. I know that is something I have to work on. The camp fires at the end of the day were my favorite part of the day. Hearing everyone share about their day and all of the different realizations people came to really made the trip amazing. I learned a lot from everyone in the group and it was thanks to all of them that I enjoyed this so much. Something about a campfire really brings people closer together and open up their hearts to one another. We were constantly together so we very quickly became like a family. We were able to share funny stories with each other and also share meaningful ones. I really love the entire group that I was in the wilderness with and I am definitely going to miss the time we were able to share together. I think this trip was awesome and I really enjoyed it. I gained a new appreciation for all of things I have now and I definitely enjoy peace and quiet a lot more. I hope I can keep all of these great memories, realizations and appreciations throughout the year and for the rest of my life.