

Report – Getting Back On Track

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Director of the Getting Back On Track Ministry
Warwick, NY



In April 2004, a historic and hopeful “Special Category Workshop” for Second Generation and their families took place in a private location on the east coast. This program was arranged for young people who were raised in our movement and had a sexual experience outside of the Marriage Blessing. Ten years later this precious ministry has grown exponentially, through the efforts

of alumni volunteers and the support of the Blessing and Family Ministry, and is now known internationally as the Getting Back on Track Retreat (GBOT).

The Director of the Blessing and Family Ministry, Crescentia DeGoede, and the Director of the Getting Back on Track Ministry, Maio Baiocco, worked closely this year on how to reframe the national mindset of this very private retreat. Its purpose is to create a safe place to honestly unfold a deep understanding of each parent and participant’s inherent value in the eyes of our Heavenly Parent. We convey a clear path to the Blessing, convey a calling to build a Principled, God-centered family, and discover God’s boundless love and great hope for these young people and their families; despite the past circumstances they have endured.

Historically, participants would have to email the BFM in order to register for the retreat, as it was not publically available, and we found that this caused a lot of confusion for possible attendees. With the understanding of the staggering numbers of young people in our movement who are in this situation, this year we decided to advertise this retreat publically, and hold the retreat registration online, through the new BFM website. This allowed for us to synthesize contact information for these families, as well as to advertise by simply sending the web link to pastors and interested parties.

This year the retreat was held at the Warwick Retreat Center in Warwick, NY on July 18th -21st, 2014. The exact location and details of the retreat was sent to participants after they had registered online to alleviate walk-ins or anyone attending who was not a part of this group. Looking back this was very helpful, and we intend to hold online registration from this point going forward.

On the morning of July 18th, fifteen participants (six parents and nine children) from around the world arrived in Warwick, NY, and were greeted by our GBOT Ministry staff with food, coffee, and their Welcome Packets at registration. As a part of the registration process, all participants agree to sign a contract, (which we refer to as “The Deal”) which is a commitment to confidentiality, respect, and abstaining from any drinking, drugs, or sexual activity for the duration of the retreat. Happily this year we did not have any problems with any of the aforementioned retreat rules, and The Deal was respected and upheld by all attending.

We started our program with a circle of open sharing by all attending, including parents and staff, to identify what brought us here. The sincerity and motivation of each participant was carefully clarified, and all participants were sworn to respect the privacy, integrity, and confidentiality of each family involved. Every effort was made to protect the sensitive situation of each participant. This set the tone for the weekend for that of open honesty. Allowing each participant to express their heart in ways many had never done before. The moments between parent and child, hearing each other’s experiences in such a safe yet candid way was particularly moving.

During Friday evening and Saturdays content, participants listened to presentations from BFM Consultant, Rev. Phillip Schanker on:

“Love That Works” a sociological study of the pitfalls of premarital sex with content from both the Free Teens curriculum as well as the Divine Principle.

“The Ideal and The Reality” a broad look at the Principles of Creation with a heavy emphasis on the realities we face in our society today.

“The Problem with Self-Centered Relationships” a statistical analysis of sex in our current society, historical evidence, and sociological studies used to support the Divine Principles understanding of the Fall of Man.

“My Heritage and Legacy” an expression of their value as a member of the Unificationist tradition, and a closer look at the meaning and value of the Blessing.

Saturday evening was closed with a sincere honest personal testimony given by Maio Baiocco about her journey through Getting Back On Track and back to her faith. We have found that having at least one testimony from an alumni staff member is profound in demonstrating hope and possibility for their own process. Mrs. Baiocco’s testimony was well received, and sparked several deep on-on-one counseling moments between staff and participants that evening.

Sunday Morning opened with a presentation from BFM Consultant, Debby Gallery on:

“Forgiveness” a clear and concise understanding of the meaning of forgiving others, and the difficulty we all face when forgiving oneself.

This was the first time we included this presentation in the GBOT retreat, and it was incredibly powerful. All of the staff members present were blown away by Mrs. Gallery’s ability to navigate this essential topic, and the following group discussions were profound for both parent and child. We intend to make this a permanent part of the GBOT program going forward. Not only was it powerful, but it lead perfectly in to the next segment of the days content which is a process of confession and renewal.

Sunday afternoon opened with a reflection presentation and activity from GBOT Director, Maio Baiocco:

“Going Back to Go Forward” an analysis of one’s personal confession:

Hurts (identifying things you have done that you need forgiveness for personally),

Hang-ups (identifying resentments and people in your life that you need to forgive)

And Habits (identifying the negative habits in your life that you are not proud of)

This was the first time we asked parents to participate in this activity, and it was really helpful for them to identify where they also have some work to do. Many parents were moved when they realized that they not only wanted to forgive their children, but also needed forgiveness from them.

From there all participants were lead through a presentation from BFM Consultant, Debby Gallery on:

“Getting to Where You Want to Be” a clear education on how to make S.M.A.R.T. goals, the pitfalls of beginning anew without a defined plan, and ultimately developing a Personal Spiritual Plan consisting of 120 days of conditions, broken up into three 40 day periods, and a year of sexual abstinence.

Throughout the remainder of the day, staff worked closely with both parents and children to develop their spiritual plans, outline their goals for each 40 day condition, and identify mentors for each participant. Upon returning home, these mentors will be their primary support over the next year.

The evening closed with S’mores around the campfire, singing songs, and ended with a ceremonial burning of their confessions. The campfire was both an emotional release and a lot of fun for staff and participants alike.

Monday morning’s content consisted of a presentation from BFM Director, Crescentia DeGoede on:

“The Matching and Blessing” a defined path for matching and Blessing, and the various options available to them, and Mrs. DeGoede offered practical advice on the matching process.

“Public Declarations” a guided activity in which participants publically declared a new possibility for their life, and their faith based on their personal spiritual plans.

“Touch Someone Who” an appreciation activity in which participants, and staff members were able to express love and appreciation for one another in a safe and respectful way.

We closed our weekend with personal reflections followed by lunch together. All in all as we reflected in our final staff meeting we came to the conclusion that this was the best GBOT retreat we have ever done.

When I reflected on the weekend, and how each presenter was in charge of a different day, I was surprised to realize that we represented a family. Our “GBOT Dad” Rev. Schanker, offered his wisdom and logical analysis of the Principle. Then the next day our “GBOT Mom” Debby Gallery, offered her emotional support, and ideas for how to renew. Finally our “GBOT Sister” Crescentia Degoede, offered her love and ways that each person could come to the Blessing. It was amazing, and it felt so balanced.

Of course there is always room for improvement, and we are always looking for ways to expand and broaden the whole process, but the introduction of new presentations, including parents in all activities, and having a more balanced program brought this retreat to a whole new level.

Our Staff Members:

Director of the Getting Back On Track Ministry, Maio Baiocco:
-Retreat Director, MC, Presenter, and Group Leader

Director of the Blessing and Family Ministry, Crescentia DeGoede:
-Group Leader and Presenter

Blessing and Family Ministry Consultant, Debby Gallery:
-Parents Group Leader and Presenter

Blessing and Family Ministry Consultant, Rev. Phillip Schanker:
-Presenter

Getting Back On Track Parents Association Administrator, Gary Abrahams:
Parents Group Leader

Blessing and Family Ministry Representative for Los Angeles, Renee Shaw:
Group Assistant and Administrative Coordinator to Mrs. Baiocco

Anonymous Public Reflections (Participant's):

“This retreat isn’t for “fixing” BC’s or anything like that. Workshops in my opinion are only truly meaningful if you have a meaningful peer to peer connection with the other participants, and mentor to mentee connection with the staff. For kids who have struggled with their faith this is THE retreat to begin the healing process.”

“Getting Back On Track, WOW, more deep than any program I was in; it gives you time to understand and reflect on your mistakes, gain and bring God into your life and values. Definitely, now I know everyone deserves a second chance, and no one is perfect. Our main goal is to learn to be happy and find the true meaning of love.”

“This retreat brought clarity and understanding about what I wanted out of life. I was given the opportunity to evaluate what I want, and not anybody else’s expectations. I was able to find a family, support, and network of people who were struggling and going through similar hardships in their life. Throughout the workshop they became my brothers, sister, aunts, and uncles.”

“I saw God multiple times during this retreat. The love, understanding, and support that I felt here was unconditional and unbelievably moving. There was no judgment; no fear of being alone and ostracized. I formed meaningful connections with fellow participants and staff members, and I’m leaving with a spiritual plan that I am confident will help me move forward. I would recommend this retreat to anyone struggling with issues of faith, who has made mistakes, and had regrets. You will NOT leave here regretting this experience.”

“Friendship and Community that I will keep forever. By your openness and compliance in cooperation with the confessions and group discussions that helps others feel the ability to share things with you they could not share ever before. ‘Resentment is like drinking poison, and expecting the other person to die.’ I am powerful beyond measure and I must relinquish fear of attaining that possibility that is manifested in my harmful habits that are true gears of my destructive machine in tact at home.”

“Life throws you a lot of curveballs (AKA challenges). What you do after that shapes who you are. This experience has helped me tremendously to reflect, learn, and move forward with confidence and new insight into who I am. I am very grateful to the program, and the staff who care so deeply!”

“One of the deepest workshops I’ve ever experienced. Right off the bat there was a profound depth and sense of community. We saw each other’s humanity, the very ugliest of ourselves, and through that we knew the love that was expressed was true. Unconditional; no if’s, and’s, or buts. We are loved, enough, and totally worthy. I experienced so much hope and healing that I think too often is disregarded. I would

recommend this workshop for anyone who is looking for healing, hope, a direction/plan to make changes in their life, and/or clarity.”

“I would say that I have been going to workshops since I was a little kid, and it was only a weekend, but I understood more here than in all the other workshops put together! I felt for the first time that I was in the right place at the right time. I met a lot of new friends who all have a big heart, and just take you as you are. I would tell everyone that this retreat is a MUST HAVE in everyone’s lives, and I would say that I never wanted to leave.”

“I’ve been a skeptic of anything Unification-y for a long time. This retreat has really put things in a completely different light, where everything is actually attainable. On top of the refreshing view on a life of faith, it’s provided an amazing community where everyone can be open without fear. Be their true vulnerable selves, and know that everyone is just like them (normal, imperfect, human beings) and nobody is trying to pull something or has ulterior motives. It may be difficult to get here or even just to be honest and open, but it is more than worth it. The people you meet here and the connections you make will change your life in one way or another for the better.”

Anonymous Public Reflections (Parent Participant’s):

“This is the most important opportunity to realize a new way forward in becoming the person that God created me to be. This opportunity for healing should be made available to all Blessed Central Families, Aju!”

“There is hope, there is healing, there is blessing, there is understanding, there is change, there is strength, there is true love, there is God’s Family!”

“It is so practical in showing the universality of God’s truth. Everyone has a piece of it, however, True Father fit the ‘puzzle pieces’ together. And here, I saw how courageous my daughter is.”

“I had an AWESOME time!”

“This retreat has been eye opening for me. I prayed to understand the heart of God. I realized as blessed central families our Heavenly Parent needs us to be real and help him build the kingdom. This retreat helps us realize how to put words in practice, to help identify what is needed, to help our family, and other blessed families deal with issues we may not even know about.”