

Last year's British STF graduates share about their experiences on the program

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From 2017-2018, four British second generation members took part in the gap-year program STF. We catch up with some of last year's graduates who shared about their experiences and the lessons learnt on the program.

S. Fobbie, 20, first year:

My main reason for wanting to go to STF was so that I could have the opportunity to re-connect and invest my time in working for both God and True Parents, seeing how I always had a difficult time doing that back home.

Through STF, I had a lot of chances to do a variety of things including fundraising, witnessing and projects in Africa and Korea. Because I took responsibility over my own actions, I don't regret any of those experiences, whether they were good or bad. I felt that all the special moments happened only because I stepped-up and made them happen and in return, I was able to learn from them and create unforgettable memories.

Looking back now, I'm glad and grateful that I had a chance to meet everyone [on the program] because I learnt so much from nearly everyone. You get a chance to meet lots of amazing people from different countries, all with their own stories and different perspectives on God and True Parents.

Through fundraising and witnessing, you go through both good and difficult times, in which all sides your personality show, whether you want them to or not. Everyone gets a better look into who you are and with that, you understand, develop and grow all together.

Before STF, my life of faith and my knowledge of True Parents wasn't that great. Now however, I feel that I can understand True Parents in a more profound and clarified way which has helped me improve my own relationship with God.

One of the more practical things that my experience in STF has taught me is the importance of taking responsibility and how it helps those around me. Now that I've realised the benefits of taking responsibility, I've decided to take on some roles at university and I'm doing whatever I can to support people in general.

S. Baylis, 20, second year (team leader):

I didn't want to do to university yet, as I felt my faith was quite new and fragile, so I wanted to strengthen it and discover more about our movement and myself. STF was the best option for me, a whole year and

quite intense from what I'd heard.

I'd simply say God is always waiting for you to come back to him, even if you've never been close or had much of a relationship with him. I could learn how God has really been there in my life and has guided it in many ways.

Man, I loved it, I really enjoyed spending time with other BCs and building deep relationships. Lots of memories!

In brief, I would say my STF experience was pretty incredible, STF gave me the means to just focus completely on my faith which is a pretty rare opportunity and so much came from that. I discovered a lot about myself, my parents and God.

I honestly found it [a second year of STF] tough, but worthwhile. I think it's a huge responsibility to try and help others in their spiritual growth, you're definitely not ready but you try your best. I felt pretty insecure at the start, but as time went on it got better. During that year, I focused a lot on my relationship with my parents which was really beautiful.

I wouldn't say that STF is impacting me a great deal now. But that's down to me. My time was amazing, but heavily guided and supported. I think it's tough to keep the same energy and standard at home. But I see STF as just the start. I managed to gain core beliefs and now it's time to build on them.

Thanks to everyone who supported and helped me out on my journey of faith.



C. Lall, 21, third year (commander):

Before STF, I felt like I didn't have my own opinion, especially when it came to God. I didn't really believe in God that much, I was very skeptical. So, going on STF I just wanted to understand why my faith is my faith and have my own experiences.

The reason I did a third year was because of how successful my second year was, and I felt I wanted to continue that. My main motivation was for the first years going on to do a second year, it was more about people, to be able to help them to love their first years and also themselves. I wanted them to grow, and as cheesy as that sounds, I really wanted them to have that concrete experience that they could take home, in the same way I did.

Talking about my third year is a very bittersweet experience as it was a year that was full of difficulties. I think the most difficult thing about it was trying to merge STF and real life. I think that is the greatest challenge as a third year. Having to manage STF and having to manage yourself and your own life, which are two very different things.

As a third year you are more on your own, while sometimes you have help from the director, you have to rely on yourself and be a self-moving engine. I felt respected [as a third year], but I felt I had a lot of respecting to do with myself.

Sometimes when you try to help others a lot, you start to lose yourself. As a third year I felt this quite deeply. While I felt I was losing myself at times, but at the same time, it was very rewarding [doing a third year].

I would have been happy if I went home after my second year, but at the same time, I think my third year helped me go back into real life, it was a transition year, it didn't feel like I was on STF or at home either.

People have the expectation that STF will solve your problems, which is not true. People have the expectation that their life will be perfect, or they'll be able to apply what they learnt. Doing a third year helped me see things realistically. I think that helped me apply what I have learnt over the three years. For anyone who goes on a program, it is all about how you apply it, it is not how you are told to apply what you've learnt. In the end, it is really up to you.

STF has helped me in my confidence, my belief in myself, and motivation wise. I came back with fresh knowledge of what I really wanted and what I really needed in life. I could practice how to be a better person and the only way that you become a better person is to apply, not the experiences, but the knowledge you gained.

I always had this quote in my head throughout my three years. William Haines once said it during a lecture on my third year: "Refusing to accept defeat is the definition of a life of faith."

We want to wish last year's graduates – Sheku Fobbie, Francis Dirnhofer, Stephan Baylis and Cha-Eun Lall – a warm congratulations on completing their STF journey and send our best wishes to Amabel Vitai, who is currently witnessing in the Czech Republic as part of the program.

For more information on the STF gap-year program, please visit: www.stf-europe.com/?fbclid=IwAR3Wr3yFXp3-a4HckE6BmvhNWLVKj5d8FbJYbc-eLotl47Co7M0vl9C_TpY

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