



# TEAM FOCUS ALUMNI

July/Aug/Sept 2018

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11*

## THE HOLY LAND EXPERIENCE



### ***Walking In His Footsteps***

Greetings friends! The fall season is finally here! We hope you and your family enjoy the beautiful, cool weather, and take advantage of the fun festivities that your community has to offer.

As we kick-off this Issue, I am thrilled to share the experiences that took place during a life changing trip. In June, twelve Team Focus members were invited to participate in the first ever Team Focus Leadership Summit in Israel. It was an incredible experience as our group

embarked on a 10-day expedition. We explored key biblical sights such as the Western Wall, the Mt. of Olives, Golgotha, the Garden Tomb, the Dead Sea, the Old City of David, the Valley of Elah, the Holocaust Museum, and much more!

After four connecting flights, passing through nine different time zones, and spending (approximately) 24 hours in a plane — we finally arrived in Tel Aviv. As weary as we were from our long travel the group could not have been more enthusiastic to step foot on the soil of Israel — it was a surreal experience for us all. Each day was packed full of fresh spiritual awakenings, lively cultural experiences, and exciting group excursions. It was truly amazing to see the Bible come to life right before our eyes.

Words cannot begin to describe the sensation you feel as you immerse yourself into the land containing the timeless stories of the Bible. The most profound place we visited was Golgotha and the Garden Tomb (pictures on pg. 3). Although, dominated by the pervasive sounds of buses, curious tourists, and the flashes of cameras there remained a quiet inter-stillness as we pondered the suffering that Jesus endured for us on the cross. Upon entering the Tomb, we could not help but stand in sheer wonder at the magnitude of the matchless sacrifice, power, love, and grace that He displayed — it was a beautiful moment. Before departing, we had a communion service at the site of the Tomb — an event that many of us will remember for the rest of our lives.

A few days later, we found ourselves sailing together on The Sea of Galilee (which, in America might have been referred to as a large lake). The sea was stunning. The bright emerald green waters were very calming as we sang praises. You could almost picture Jesus walking on the water and calling out to Peter — it must have been terrifying, especially at night. Isn't it interesting that God will often "call us out" although the ground He asks us to walk on could actually make us sink — the thought of trusting in Him can be quite frightening at times, but the results of "walking out" in obedience could not be more rewarding and sanctifying.

Additionally, we had the privilege to visit the Knesset which is their legislative government building — similar to that of the US Congress. We listened to Josh Reinstein, Director of the Knesset Christian Allies Caucus, share his mission to build direct lines of communication



with Christian leaders around the globe. Mr. Reinstein was named one of the 50 most influential Jews in the World by Jerusalem Post. We also had the unique opportunity to learn from other governing officials and key leaders about the many conflicts that face the Nation of Israel, namely, land rights, border control, riots, and neighboring enemies, to name a few. It was an honor to hear the unabashed passion they have for defending the freedom, values, and heritage of their citizens.

The trip concluded with a surprise outing to the Dead Sea, (where you do in fact float on the water); along with a game of basketball inside the walls of Jerusalem — we titled the game, "Holy Hoops". Before we left for Israel, we all had a set of presuppositions: it's too dangerous, it's too hot, it's too tribal, etc., etc. We could not have been further from the truth. The beauty of Israel is breath-taking. It is a plentiful land rich in culture, technology, and geography. They have solved the biggest problem of the Middle East, water — through a technology called desalination (which filters water from the sea and makes it drinkable). They hold one of the highest amount of Nobel Prize winners per capita. They also invented the drip irrigation system which revolutionized the agricultural industry. The list of inventions, contributions, and accolades go on and on — Israel makes the world a better place. But, most importantly, going to Israel will radically change the way you walk with God, as you behold firsthand the magnificence, symmetry and complexity of the blessed land in which He walked. I consider it to be one of my life's greatest blessings to have visited the place where the greatest act of love was ever demonstrated — the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I encourage you to learn more about Israel and join us as we stand together to support the Holy Land.

Be sure to check out the testimonials on the pages to follow, along with the photo gallery of the trip's highlights. My prayer is that there would be such an insatiable hunger in your heart for the things of God, and that by walking diligently with Him you would discover your life's ultimate purpose.

**—Ryan Garofalo, Newsletter Editor**

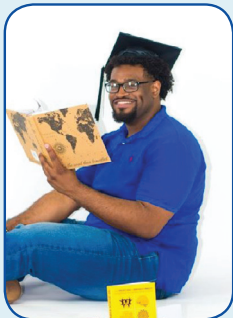
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# Testimonials

**Team Focus Alumni, Paris Coleman; Mobile, AL Chapter - Social Worker (Team Focus Member since 2008)**

To experience Israel means to step into your spiritual "garden" of faith and hope for the future, and then to water that garden with plentiful blessings. That's



what the Lord did for my spirit by the time that I left the Land of Abraham and Isaac. When I got there, I was nervous. Sure, I was blessed with an incredible opportunity, but was my spirit ready to take advantage of it?

Did I have all the tools necessary to truly absorb the knowledge and understanding that God intended for me?



The Western Wall (Mobile, AL Director: Aaron Dias pictured, bottom left)

The answer was "yes". Standing where He stood and seeing the Bible come to life and play out, really changed my mentality about what it meant to walk my path in the faith. Being home after my trip to Israel brought so much clarity and wisdom to my life that I am still working through it all, even months later. I know that I will be working through

it for years to come. The impact that I took home was having a better understanding of my purpose through God's Will.

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*"When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."*  
– Viktor Frankl

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Walking in my destiny really changed the way that I experience the world around me. I see His blessings in people's lives through different eyes, I taste the fruits of His labor in my home, I feel the Holy Spirit moving through my life with protection, guidance, and prosperity. He is leading me on His path and I not only accept it, I embrace it. I want the Lord to put me in the right places to bless others and serve Him, and I am so pleased that God would entrust me with this destiny.

I hope that others can get the chance to experience God in Israel and in their homes as I have.

**StandWithUs**  
Supporting Israel Around The World

StandWithUs is an international, nonprofit Israel educational organization. Founded in 2001, staff and volunteers are inspired by their love for Israel and the belief that education is the road to peace. StandWithUs is dedicated to educating people of all ages about Israel and to combating the anti-Semitism and extremism that often distorts the issues.

For more information, you can visit their website at [www.standwithus.com](http://www.standwithus.com)

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*"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*  
– Genesis 12:3

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**Team Focus Member, Elijah Samuels; SC & OH Chapters - Senior at Ardrey Kell High School; Charlotte, NC (Team Focus Member since 2011)**



Our trip to Israel has been a dream come true for everyone involved in Team Focus. This summer on June 12th we made our way to the Middle East. Being a faithful organization we are called to bless Israel

and support the Jewish people. As having Jewish roots in my family, and having faith in Yeshua my heart yearned to make my way to Israel. Our dreams were fulfilled and expanded by seeing the monumental landscape and history of Israel. I myself felt more connected to God and his people. As Americans, it is vital we pray for Israel and become advocates for God's people. I encourage you to go back and read the Old Testament and see the prophecies that are being fulfilled each and every day in Israel and in our lives.



The Garden Tomb – this is believed to be the Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea; where Jesus was buried, and 3 days later resurrected.





# Photo Gallery



The Sea of Galilee



The Garden of Gethsemane



Golgotha (the location where Jesus was crucified)



The Valley of Elah (the location of the battle of David and Goliath)



Empty rocket shells launched at Israel from Gaza



Our group on the Mt. of Olives



The Mount of Olives (where Jesus ascended into Heaven & will return) Kidron Valley, and the City of David



Dome of the Rock / Temple Mount





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