

Steamers and Sodas | Levi Blakesley

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SPEAKERS

Levi Blakesley, Blake Smith

Blake Smith 00:27

Hello, and welcome to Steamers and Sodas, a Project Zion Podcast series featuring energy packed interviews full of ideas focused on ministry with and by children and youth. I'm your host, Blake Smith, and I'm here today with Levi Blakesley. Welcome Levi.

Levi Blakesley 00:44

Hello.

Blake Smith 00:45

So Levi, before we get started, we always like to let our guests tell a little bit about themselves so we can get to know you better. Would you mind doing that? Tell us a little bit about yourself.

Levi Blakesley 00:54

So I'm going in 10th grade, I play trombone, I do a lot of biking, hiking and painting. I live in Crawfordville, Florida. I was born in Michigan, then I moved to Pensacola. I'm part of the War Eagle marching band. You know, pretty cool like that.

Blake Smith 01:14

Is that like Auburn War Eagle.

Levi Blakesley 01:17

No, same picture. A lot of it is the same.

Blake Smith 01:21

Awesome. So the War Eagle is your high school mascot? Right?

Levi Blakesley 01:27

Right.

Blake Smith 01:27

So I happen to know, because I know a lot of your family members, you've got a pretty long history in Community of Christ with the family, right?

Levi Blakesley 01:35

Yeah, I've been going to Community of Christ events ever since I was born.

Blake Smith 01:40

So what's it been like for you growing up in Community of Christ. And you've you've also had, as you've said, you've had experience in a number of different communities. Um,

Levi Blakesley 01:51

it's very welcoming. Each group kind of welcomed me in, welcomed me in a different way. And it was all positive. I felt like I can have support from each one of them and still learn.

Blake Smith 02:02

Great. How old were you when you left Pensacola and moved to where you are now?

Levi Blakesley 02:06

I was eight years old. Moving into fourth grade. That summer.

Blake Smith 02:12

All right. So most of your life, you've been where you are over in [Crawfordville, Florida], Crawfordville. Florida. Okay. So I understand,. I've heard some stories, since I've been down at the campgrounds, Bluff Springs, and, actually where I grew up, but I've been hearing some stories about you and your gift for invitation when it comes to camp. I'm interested to hear why is camp so important to you? What is it that that makes you want to invite other people to go?

Levi Blakesley 02:42

I just feel like camp really excludes you from all the stress that you've built up over the year. And then you get to see all your friends and family and have a week of fun.

Blake Smith 02:53

Awesome, awesome. Well, would you mind sharing your story with us a little bit about... about your invitation? What got you bringing them in, and who you invited? And what was the response? All those kinds of things.

Levi Blakesley 03:06

Well, it started off last year, I brought three people to camp that were pretty close. And I've just gotten used to being around them. So I just said, hey, why not bring some more friends on top, expand our little group. And then this year, I brought three of those same people. And then I also invited, I also invited seven other people, four of which were able to go on and the others wanted to go but due to school constraints and other scheduling problems they couldn't.

Blake Smith 03:41

So you had up to seven come with you this year.

Levi Blakesley 03:44

Well, six, [six?]including me.

Blake Smith 03:47

Okay, all right. And put a little strain on the car bringing everybody down

Levi Blakesley 03:51

We're all jammed into one round.

Blake Smith 03:54

So did you make up your own cabin unit or did you have other, was there room for other guys to be a part of the cabin?

Levi Blakesley 04:00

We were one of the smallest cabins we could have had I think four people if we wanted to, but I just think that they just put us all together and didn't add any extras.

Blake Smith 04:10

Is... now you said the three came the first year and they came back ... is there something that that made them, in specific you can think of, that made them want to come back that they enjoyed.

Levi Blakesley 04:21

They really enjoyed our counselors and swim time and all the free time we had, because we had we did a bunch of games and they're messing around house staying up late.

Blake Smith 04:35

I'm not familiar with what camps are like at Bluff Springs anymore. Is there a fair amount of worship and class time as well? Or is it more free time?

Levi Blakesley 04:45

They have a worship class in the morning and the afternoon and they're about two hours. And then we have our individual classes that we get to choose that are kind of like electives in school, but then the rest is mostly free time.

Blake Smith 05:00

Okay. And so they, it's a good enough balance that you feel comfortable that you're not like bringing them to somewhere where they're just getting bombarded with religion.

Levi Blakesley 05:10

Yeah, it is, it is pretty good balance. It's a pretty good balance, it does get long towards the end of the week, because we're all tired from cranky. But that's with anything.

Blake Smith 05:22

I've noticed this particular week at reunion that a lot of the youth participate in the campfire and prayers, invitation to prayers and things like that. Is that pretty typical? [Yes.] So that's not a problem when you're inviting friends, thinking, "Okay, what are they gonna think?"

Levi Blakesley 05:43

I mean, of course, they're they're kind of standoffish when they first come, because they don't know anyone. They're new to this all. But they are welcomed right in.

Blake Smith 05:53

Awesome. So what's your goals for next year, how many people you're going to invite?

Levi Blakesley 05:56

I'm going to, I'm going to try and invite 14 and see if I can manage 10. Because I think that'd be really fun.

Blake Smith 06:03

That would be awesome. Now, I have to admit that when I was going to camp, I didn't often, I think, maybe invited a couple of friends over all the years. And I would imagine that there are young people who are listening to the podcast, that might benefit from any advice you might have for young people who are thinking about inviting their friends to camp. Anything that works for you in the invitation or information that you share that really gets your friends excited?

Levi Blakesley 06:32

Um, I know my friend group, we're all about going around doing stuff. So it was really easy for me personally, to let , to invite them. But what I would say is, talk to them about the fun stuff first. Get them super interested. And then yes, there are a couple of downsides, like not being able to sleep, but once they get there, they'll enjoy it, and then they'll be glad they came.

Blake Smith 06:57

So you can always tell them that they can sleep the next week, right? Just go for it for a week, and then they can get some sleep later. Alright, so what do you think that camp leaders and church leaders even should know about creating an inviting environment where you're comfortable, or other other young people would feel comfortable inviting their friends?

Levi Blakesley 07:21

We really, I like the balance that got now but I feel like there's ways they could improve it so that it was more, more even church, and fun time. So that we had more interspersed areas so that it was more fun. So we could have more people interested in more activities, more other games and shows and stuff like that.

Blake Smith 07:42

Okay. So on a bigger scale outside of camp and maybe even just talking about the church in where you where you attend, in Crawfordsville. What hopes do you have for for Community of Christ going into the future as you think about your future in the church?

Levi Blakesley 07:59

Um, I hope we can involve a lot more youth, because I know archers personally, It's really just our family youth, and then one other family with youth, but I know there's certain what we can, we can definitely achieve that it we just put a little effort into it.

Blake Smith 08:17

Okay. Well, I know you're talking a lot about, you know, it would be good to have especially for inviting friends to have more fun and more things that connect what kind of what kind of things opportunities, or ministries or activities do you hope will be made available for young people going forward as we kind of reimagine what the church looks like?

Levi Blakesley 08:39

Even if it's just as simple as setting up, you know, event days, where you're just playing games, and then maybe like an hour of church service, and then food, more games, it could even be as simple as that. But that'll keep them going.

Blake Smith 08:52

Good. All right. What would you like the church leadership to hear you say, if you were, if you were going to sit in front of one of the big wigs at the church? What would you want to say to them?

Levi Blakesley 09:04

Mission conference should have scheduled dance breaks in between sessions, so that we're more active and we don't have people fall asleep.

Blake Smith 09:13

Dance breaks? Say more about that. Do you have a special kind of dancing you like to do

Levi Blakesley 09:19

No, but they've got those big speakers and big projectors in the Auditorium. So I mean, they might as well.

Blake Smith 09:24

They can have a little fun with it. All right. Well, what we try to do before we close out and is to say, you know, just ask you if there's anything that you'd like to talk about, that I haven't asked. [No] No, pretty straightforward, then. Well, Levi, I really appreciate you taking the time to sit down with me and record this episode for Project Zion. I know that it's going to be helpful for not only other young people that are listening, to be encouraged because of the things that you're doing, but it also will help the church leadership as they look to make ways to welcome in a new generation. So I really appreciate you being here with us. And, I thank our listeners here at Project Zion Podcast for joining us for this episode of Steamers and Sodas. If you'd like to find other episodes and listen in to what's going on with youth

ministry in the church, you can find that at projectzionpodcast.org. Just go to the series drop down menu and look for Steamers and Sodas. If you have ideas or thoughts for future episodes, don't hesitate to drop us a line. You can find us on Facebook, comment there or comment on our website. This is Blake Smith, wishing you a great day and we hope to have you join us for Project Zion Podcast in the near future.