

WHAT IS LIFE?

Throughout my junior year in high school I had been looking forward to the Junior Overnight, a retreat that was offered to the junior girls at my high school. The purpose was to talk about how our lives were going and to discuss our problems, concerns, and worries about school, friends, guys, or whatever. We had some great discussions.

I went home from the retreat with a great feeling. I had learned a lot about people that I could put to good use. I decided to put the papers and notes I had received on the retreat in my journal, which is where I keep some of my most treasured items. Not thinking much about it, I set the journal on top of my dresser and finished unpacking.

I was feeling so great from the retreat that I went into the next week with high hopes. However, the week turned out to be an emotional disaster. A friend of mine really hurt my feelings, I had a fight with my mom, and I was worrying about my grades, particularly in English. To top it all off, I was worrying about the upcoming prom.

I literally cried myself to sleep almost every night. I had hoped that the Junior Retreat would have had a deeper impact on calming my nerves and helping me to be stress-free. Instead, I began to think that it had only been temporary stress relief.

I woke up on Friday morning with a heavy heart and a bad attitude. I was also running late. I dressed quickly, grabbing a pair of socks out of my dresser drawer. As I slammed the drawer shut, my journal fell off the top of the dresser and its contents spilled all over the floor. As I knelt down to pick it up, one of the sheets of paper that had fallen out caught my eye. My retreat leaders had given it to me. I opened the folded sheet and read it.

“Life isn’t about keeping score. It’s not about how many people call you

and it's not about who you've dated, are dating or haven't dated at all. It isn't about who you've kissed, what sport you play, or which guy or girl likes you. It's not about your shoes or your hair or the color of your skin or where you live or go to school. In fact, it's not about grades, money, clothes, or colleges that accept you or not. Life isn't about if you have lots of friends, or if you are alone, and it's not about how accepted or unaccepted you are. Life just isn't about that.

“But life is about who you love and who you hurt. It's about how you feel about yourself. It's about trust, happiness and compassion. It's about sticking up for your friends and replacing inner hate with love. Life is about avoiding jealousy, overcoming ignorance and building confidence. It's about what you say and what you mean. It's about seeing people for who they are and not what they have. Most of all, it is about choosing to use your life to touch someone else's in a way that could never have been achieved otherwise. These choices are what life's about.”

I aced my next English test that day. I had a fun time with my friend that weekend and got the courage to talk to the boy that I liked. I spent more time with my family and made an effort to listen to my mom. I even found a great dress for the prom and had a wonderful time. And it wasn't luck or a miracle. It was a change in heart and a change in attitude on my part. I realized that sometimes I just need to sit back and remember the things in life that really matter—like the things I learned on my Junior Overnight.

What things will you focus on in life? Will you continue to keep score and always try to outdo your competitors? Or will you simply play and enjoy the experience? Will you learn to love more and criticize less? Will you choose to touch others and feel the goodness that comes from that unconditional giving? Life is about choices. . .and you must make those decisions for yourself. What will your choices be?