



# ASLAN YOUTH MINISTRIES

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Dear Friends,

Greetings from Aslan! Recently, I had the pleasure of leading a group of Aslan kids on a ski trip to the Poconos. It was a wonderful trip, despite the fake snow and bitter winds. What made the trip special were the kids. Jamal and Shantel are two in particular that come to mind. Jamal is a beginner snowboarder and Shantel seemed confident enough on her skis. After warming up on the bunny hill, I suggested going to the top of the mountain to try some longer trails. Reluctantly, they both agreed. Flanked by two volunteers, we set out on the chair lifts for the summit.

At the top of the trail, Jamal and Shantel both looked a little scared. They didn't realize the summit was so high and the trail was so steep. After explaining that the only way to the bottom was going down the trail and encouraging them to rise above their fears, a look of determination crept across Jamal's face and he set off down the mountain on his snowboard (he fell twenty yards later, but he got right back up and continued down the mountain). Shantel was still weighing her options. After a tremendous amount of encouragement and half a dozen guarantees that she wouldn't get hurt, Shantel tentatively pointed her skis downhill and pushed off. When we all safely reached the bottom, Jamal and Shantel were beaming with pride. They chose to overcome their fears, and as a result they were able to enjoy skiing down the mountain. Jamal was so excited he wanted to go back to the top and go down the hardest trail while Shantel said she was happy with her accomplishment and wanted to go back to the bunny hill.



Jamal snowboarding down the mountain!

On the ride back from the ski trip I looked back at all the kids sleeping, exhausted from a long day of skiing. I was reminded that in some small way Aslan was equipping these children to confront the darker fears that await them back home. I have no illusions. The panic one feels before skiing down a mountain or riding a bike over a huge bridge or traveling to Haiti doesn't compare to the fear these kids face on a daily basis when they walk through their neighborhoods. For example, several weeks ago, two young men were brutally gunned down on Red Bank's Westside, right around the corner from where we meet for our programs. The

day after the shooting I dropped in on the Right Choices Bible Class program to talk with the kids. Fear and shock were visible on many of their young faces. I wanted to take each kid into my arms and tell them everything was going to be all right. They didn't have to let fear rule their lives!



Two teenage girls from our Right Choices Bible Class program

The relationships we build with the Aslan kids and the programs we run create the opportunity for every child to discover that they were not created to live by fear. They have the opportunity to choose to live life filled with a hope and a power that frees them from the shackles of fear. Everything we do is aimed at building their confidence and empowering them to live life to the fullest.

Many of us struggle with fear too. In the weeks and months ahead, the grim economic news will continually threaten to overwhelm each of us with uncertainty about the future. We will lose countless hours of sleep worrying over our latest 401k statements and retirement accounts. We will be tempted to cut back donations to our churches and worthy charitable organizations such as Aslan. In many ways it's as if we are like Shantel at the top of the mountain, staring down a long and treacherous trail uncertain if we will make it safely to the bottom. We too are confronted with a choice. Will we let the fear and uncertainty of these perilous times determine how we live or will we rise above our fears and live life to the fullest?

I want to encourage you to place your hope in God's economy, which is not ruled by the latest quarterly earnings report or the ups and downs of the stock market. On the contrary, to paraphrase the Apostle Paul, God doesn't give us a spirit of fear, He gives us a spirit of power and love and a sound mind. It requires a subtle shift in our thinking, but when we place our hope in God's economy we are freed from the anxiety and uncertainty that plagues so many people.

At Aslan we are choosing to place our hope in God's economy. We pray that you will join us. Jamal, Shantel, and may other children are counting on us!



Doug and Jamal taking the chair lift to the top of the mountain

In His Service,

*Doug*

*If you would like to receive our newsletter by email please fill out the response card and mail it back!*



\* We've changed the names of Aslan children to protect their identities.



*A higher standard.  
A higher purpose.*