

Happy New Year! My name is Matt Cizek, and I am from DuPage UBF. This past weekend, from the 30th of December to the 1st of January, I took part in the YDC conference along with many members of DuPage UBF, and other chapters, both near and far. For me, it was a first time experience that I found to be absolutely wonderful! In a profound way that can only be felt once in a long while, I found myself to be touched/moved by the power of the Holy Spirit! Having not known what to expect, I can truthfully say that my soul, in the end, was gloriously fulfilled!

After arriving at the DuPage UBF house in Glen Ellyn (Chicago suburb), I rode alongside Jeremy Hajek and two other members of UBF, Missionary David Kim and Crystal Perez, on the 3 hour trip to Hillside. Even before the event got started, God drove my desire to want to know him, as Jeremy and I talked much of the way down about biblical/spiritual matters. I was very thankful to have a great friend, and wonderful spiritual guide to listen to.

After arriving at Camp Michindoh (MICHigan/INDiana/OHio) and signing in, I was treated to a fantastic dinner. Briefly, I'd have to say that the food served throughout the trip was especially good, although I wish someone had told me about the ice cream sandwiches before I felt too full to eat anything else! Over the next three days, I got to hear various life testimonies, and messages, from different kinds of people in all walks of life. One in particular that stood out to me was the testimony given by Becky Song.

If there is a better opening night speaker than Becky Song, I personally don't know where to find him/her. Becky shared her story, and showed how strong she had been moved by the Holy Spirit. It was enlightening to me, and played a role in what I would choose as my key verse for the New Year (discussed later). I'd like to believe that

her message of not being afraid of letting your love of the Holy Spirit be known was felt by all in attendance!

Another planned event for the Conference was the Group Bible Study session. My group leader was John Martin (Chicago), and consisted of myself, Spencer (Minnesota), Ernest (Montreal), Luke West (Toronto), Long (D.C.), and a few others of no lesser value. In studying about the story of Joseph from Genesis, some key points to learn were of how God teaches us to handle adversity, and, specifically, how Joseph needed to believe in God in order to overcome his struggles. Not only was Joseph's story inspirational, but, over the course of study, our group was able to relate it to various aspects of Jesus' life. Through this, I personally had a few questions of my own answered, which helped to increase my faith and understanding. I thank Jesus Christ that he put me in a position to learn more about/get closer to him by leading me to such fine people of God! I was especially grateful to John Martin for having the courage to share his story of coming to Jesus, and learned once again of God's grace and the "strength of his might (Ephesians 6:10)." Long's key verse for the New Year also stood out to me. I pray that all members of the group have their prayers answered.

For testimony sharing, I chose Galatians 3:13 as my key verse for the past year, 2010. It states, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us." Amen! I chose this because over the past year, God has allowed the power of his grace to heal me, while also guiding me to actively repent for my many sins. Moreover, in times of temptation, this verse reminds me to be selfless in order to honor another. If Jesus could go through so much trouble for both myself and so many that he did not know, why can't I devote something to him in return? For 2011, my key verse was from

the book of Isaiah Ch. 41 Verse 10: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” For the year 2011, I pray that God empower me to boldly speak, as well as see, the truth! Though I have come a long way, I still sometimes walk around with fear, some of it quite irrational. I am also sometimes better at not being dishonest than I am at being completely honest. However, God does not want me to walk with fear. He wants me to “Fear no evil,” as I, “Walk through the valley of the Shadow of Death (Psalms 23:4).” Furthermore, in order to move forward, I must open up to spiritual leaders such as David Kim more about my past, and anything I am concerned about. I pray that God give me the courage to do what is right, and boldly speak the truth. I may not only be better healed if I do this for myself, but if I can do it for others, perhaps I can lead them closer to God, even if it’s challenging at times.

In closing, I send a special thank you to Jamal Ross (UMKC), and Greg Lewis (TOLEDO), for being especially cordial towards me. I also thank the many sheep, shepherds, and pastors who allowed me to experience such joy. Through them, I hope continually that my soul may achieve “Restoration,” which just so happens to have been the theme for this conference (I am a little late in mentioning it, but I figured I’d save the best for last!) May God bless all of us spiritually and make this a Holy Nation. Amen!