

youth leader's coach

THE STORY OF THE STERN FAMILY

There were four people in the Stern family who were placed in a Nazi concentration camp, a mom, a dad and two sons. During the day they were separated for their work assignments, but the mood was the most tense when they returned to the dimly lit bunker at night where they all stayed.

What was the cause for the tenseness? Well, the youngest son had really weak legs. A form of either cerebral palsy or polio, they weren't sure, and the family knew that eventually the Nazis wouldn't tolerate his lack of productivity because he was basically a cripple and couldn't do as much work, they would find him very easy to exterminate. They had already know several other prisoners who had been sent to the ovens to be cremated. So each night when the Stern family came back together, they feared that he would not return to the bunker, that he would have been taken off to the ovens.

One evening, Mr. Stern came back to the dark bunker and couldn't find the rest of his family and you can well imagine he became frantic. At last he spotted his oldest son, Jacob, huddled in back corner crying. He ran up to him in the darkness and he said, "Son, what is it, what's wrong?"

Jacob said, "This morning, Papa, when we left the bunker they came for David. They told him he was going to another place to live."

The dad said emotionally, "But what about your mother, she was healthy, they wouldn't take her to the ovens. What about Mom?"

David said, "Dad, Jacob was scared and began to cry when they took him away. Momma saw that and so Momma wrapped her arms around him and said, 'Don't worry, Jacob,' the last thing I heard her say to him was, 'Wherever they take you, Momma will go there with you and Momma will hold you very, very close.'"

A bunch of the kids in our youth ministries are not taken to the holocaust ovens, but they need to be held very, very close...not so much physically, as emotionally. They need to sense real family. So it is your huge privilege and mine to be able to create, with the Lord's help, that sense of family and friendship. From my experience of four decades in youth ministry, I'm not sure there's anything that I have ever done that's been more potent in making Jesus come alive than trying not to have just a youth group, but a youth family.



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