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Jacksonville College graduate seeks to be disciple maker

July 1st, 2016 / By: [Kay Adkins](#) / [comments](#)

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JACKSONVILLE Joe Allen was 5 years old when his family answered a call to serve as missionaries in Brazil to the Hunsrik people, a culture that taught Joe about the importance of family and relationships. The Hunsrik people speak an ancient Germanic dialect that had no written form until the Allens began working with Wycliffe Bible Translators and other groups to translate the Gospel of Luke and 70 Bible stories into print and audio formats.

For 12 years, Joe's parents, Daniel and Teresa Allen, started house churches by making disciples in the Hunsrik community. According to Daniel, he and Teresa never considered Joe and his brother John to be 'missionary kids.'

"They were missionaries with us," he said.

As early as age 8, Joe and John played guitar accompaniment along with their father during worship services in the homes of Hunsrik people.

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"In the house churches people would ask questions, and Joe would share insight that God had given him," Daniel recalled. "We could see then that the Lord's hand was on him." By age 14, Joe was leading worship.

Though their work with the Hunsrik people continues long distance and via short-term mission trips, Daniel's failing health necessitated a return to the states when Joe was 17. They live on a farm in Rusk, Texas, and Daniel serves as the pastor of Tyler St. Baptist Church in Jacksonville.

Joe completed high school but was unsure of what to do next until he accompanied a friend to the Jacksonville College campus three weeks prior to the start of the fall 2013 semester. Jacksonville College, the only Christian two-year liberal arts college in Texas, is owned and operated by the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas and has been affiliated with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention since 2004.

"As soon as I set foot on the campus, I felt God say, 'You need to be here. You need to go to college,'" Joe said.

Able to enroll with a full tuition scholarship, Joe is deeply grateful to the college for the training, encouragement and opportunities he received there.

"I got to be in a place that prayed before class and challenged you to grow in your relationship with the Lord. I wasn't a number but a person—every teacher knows your name," he said.

As a student, Joe reciprocated the caring that he felt from his professors. Academic Dean Marolyn Welch told the TEXAN, "Joe is always ready to give a word of encouragement. He has prayed for me during difficult times of caring for my father."

Family friend and faculty member David Heflin described Joe as one who invests his time wisely and focuses on doing everything for the glory of God.

"He had fun doing Christian skits, acting in talent shows and joking with his friends; but because he cared about people, his conversations would always eventually lead to Jesus," Heflin said.

While at Jacksonville, Joe took on numerous leadership roles, including guitarist and president for the Jacksonville College choir and a leader of the student praise band. He often brought the message in the Wednesday chapel service.

Joe also participated in the Jacksonville College Ministerial Alliance—a group of students who sense a call to ministry, support each other and conduct service projects together in the community. Jacksonville College President Mike Smith told the TEXAN Joe shared the plan of salvation at the alliance's community-wide Easter egg hunt.

Smith has often relied on Joe to represent the college at events like association meetings and SOAR, a youth evangelism conference.

"When churches call us and say, 'We would like to have a student preach or talk about the college,' I have called on Joe," Smith said.

In Joe's sophomore year, a spiritual renewal took place on Jacksonville's campus through which more than 100 decisions were made for Christ. One of those decisions was a young man to whom Joe and his family had ministered in Brazil, a foreign exchange student at Jacksonville College.

Joe marveled over God's timing in reaching his Brazilian friend: "He finished his first year, and then he got saved at the revival." Though the Allens' ministry in Brazil seemed to have no impact on the young man or his family, Joe continued, "We saw him come to the Lord four to five years after we left Brazil. Now he is discipling his family in Brazil."

During the college's time of revival, Joe himself became more deeply committed "to be the next generation to impact lives and change the world."

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Though his musical and speaking gifts provide him with public opportunities, Joe noted that his passion is not to be on a stage but to use that as a platform to work with individuals. Outside of their Jacksonville College roles, Joe and his 19-year-old brother John—"The Allen Brothers"—take their own message to heart by taking their music on the road. They have traveled across Texas filling in as worship leaders and instrumentalists.

"While we do this, we are discipling," Joe said. "We will teach people who maybe could not even play, and sometimes we are able to leave the church with an established praise and worship team.

"I want to share what God has done in my life with people—spending time, going to lunch, or passing them in the hall and asking how their day went. That is where disciples are made—taking the time to breathe and invest in people. That's what Christ did, and I want to do the same."

In May, Joe completed an Associate of Science degree with a 4.0 GPA, graduating summa cum laude from Jacksonville College, with plans to major in music at East Texas Baptist University. His dream is to hear Jesus say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

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