

THE CALLING

It was the last day of spring training for the Washington Nationals in 2008, and it appeared I would be heading to Columbus, their AAA affiliate, to start my 13th season in professional baseball. As I began to stretch with the team, one of the coaches called my name and said they needed to see me in the office. I hustled inside hoping they were looking for a bullpen pitcher in the big leagues, but instead was given my release. My body went numb; my mind went blank.... The game that I poured my life in to for nearly 25 years, was over.

As I drove back across the state of Florida to my home, an incredible amount of peace came over me. A little over two years prior, I had surrendered my life to the Lord on a SCORE mission trip to the Dominican Republic. However, I had yet to let go of baseball. I gave him my relationships, my finances and my time... but I couldn't give Him the game. So He took it. But as I had been "delighting myself in the Lord..." He gave me new desires, and those were to coach baseball at the high school level and pour into the lives of young men. So I called my wife on the way home and told her I needed to stop by Cambridge Christian to see the kids I had begun working with earlier that spring. I felt they needed to see that it's ok when things don't work out the way we plan; He always has greater ones in store. Later that season, our team made it to the state championship game, eventually losing 8-6 to perennial state powerhouse Eagles View Academy. I will never forget speaking to the kids after the game. I told them between tears, that I would never trade another day, month, year in the big leagues for this.

I remained at Cambridge Christian until the spring of 2012 and was able to see God work in many lives over that period of time. However, at the conclusion of the 2012 season, God opened another door to have a greater impact over more players both locally and now globally. That summer, we started a ministry under the umbrella of SCORE called SCORE International Baseball. We assembled 4 travel teams comprised of players from the Tampa Bay area, the Dominican, Venezuela, Bahamas and Puerto Rico, all coached by former MLB and MILB with a heart to see every kid not only be the greatest player they could be, but most importantly come to know the Lord. We traveled the south playing in premier showcase events while ministering to our players and families. Less than 5% of our 80 players knew the Lord at the beginning of the summer, at least half of them surrendered their lives before we finished.

Over the past 4 years SCORE International Baseball has sent over 85 players to the college level and 27 on to professional baseball. We have become known as one of the top travel programs in the country. Much greater than the championships, accolades, scholarships and signing bonuses has been to see complete life change in 100's of players and their families! Outside of the game, we do annual outreach events with inner city families, homeless, veterans and weekly bible studies. As you can see, we are much more than just a travel program.

Throughout the past 4 years, I have exhausted every avenue I could to build a facility here in Tampa with the capabilities of housing, training, ministering to and discipling players from all levels and nationalities. After going down the road 4 different times with folks that appeared to be a no doubt situation, the door was slammed shut each time. The final door left me broken and ready to give up on the ministry completely because of the financial burden as well as the amount of time away from my own family.... But like time and time again God showed up when I was ready to quit and presented an opportunity that would require our complete trust in Him... Selling everything and moving my family to Jena, Alabama to run Baseball Country.

My initial response was, absolutely not! No way would I uproot my family, leave the comfort and security Tampa offers to move to the middle of nowhere, USA. However, my wife and I had

been struggling with a few things in regards to our girls. One was the environment we were raising them in and secondly was the question "did our life resemble one of complete faith." We pour into our girls spiritually, but does our life resemble one of true dependency on Him... Of course we want our girls to see us trusting Him, not just saying we do. As we began to pray through the possibility of selling out and going in to full time ministry, that peace I experienced when I was released back in 2008 overcame me again, and I knew that's where God was calling us to Jena. I waited on Kristen, to see if the Lord would reveal the same calling... Without a doubt, she felt the same leading. Psalm 37:4 is a verse that hasn't left my heart since that night I visited Baseball Country this past November. The more I delight myself in Him, the more He changes my desires to minister, disciple and serve others, specifically ball players.

We are beyond excited to join the Lord in full time ministry. We understand that there will be challenges, but knowing the harvest is plentiful and the laborers are few gives us extra motivation to step out in faith. Eternity is at stake, which is far more significant than our comfortable, secure life we are currently living in Tampa.

His glory,

Sam & Kristen Marsonек

Baseball Country

A ministry of SCORE International

Baseball Country is located in the pastureland of Jena, Alabama. It sits on over 50 acres, equipped with 2 fields, housing for over 100 and an indoor training facility. All distractions from life are removed and the reality of a Creator strongly overcomes those visiting. It's in that environment, we believe the walls of a player's heart will be removed, Truth can be spoken and a response to the Gospel can be made.

Mission: To minister to and disciple ball players from the little league level all the way to the big leagues, both locally and across the globe!

Little League Level

- **Individual & Team Camps**
- **Travel Teams (9u-13u) Spring/Summer/Fall**
- **Host Travel Tournaments Spring/Summer/Fall**
- **Father son Camps**

High School Level

- **Individual & Team Camps**
- **Travel Teams (14u-18u) Summer/Fall**
- **Host Tournaments**
- **Coaches Clinics**

College Level

- **Host Spring Tournaments**
- **Individual Summer/Winter Training**
- **Coaching Internship during the summer**

Professional Level

- **Off-Season Training**
- **Short Term Mission Trips**

- **Men's Retreats**
- **Trophy Whitetail Hunting Trips**
- **Year Round Mentorship Program**

International Level

- **On Field Training and Performance Training**
- **English Classes via On-Line Programs**
- **Co-OP Work Program**
- **Weekly Outreach and Service Projects**
- **Morning and Nightly Devotionals**

Each program will entail the following:

- ✓ **Morning and Nightly Devotionals (Guest Speakers along w/SCORE staff)**
- ✓ **On Field Training/Performance Training**
- ✓ **Co-Op Work Program on Local Farms (Primarily for long term stay players)**
- ✓ **Outreach and Community Service Projects**
- ✓ **Afterschool Mentorship Program**