my time with Toni convinced that a vital channel of Christian formation here at JBU is not only in the sending of our students — to missions, to study abroad programs, to inner city ministry — but also in the re-visit that experience that has left a profound imprint upon her life…which is not a bad thing. But it is a profound avenue of Christian formation. I came away from it? And how was she different because of it?

Listening to someone else’s story is such a simple thing. But it is a profound avenue of ministry, a chance for them to review the ways God has been at work in their lives.

Judy Lanyon’s JBU journey began more than 20 years ago when, as a high school graduate, she considered enrolling at the main campus in Silsman Springs. “I initially wanted to go to John Brown University when I started college, but due to other circumstanc- es, I was unable to enroll.” Instead, Lanyon found herself driving along the interstate in central Arkansas in 2007 with a couple of years of college under her belt, but no bachelor’s degree. When she saw a billboard about the JBU Advance Program in Little Rock, she decided it was time to finish her degree at the university that captured her attention two de- cades ago. Lanyon started in the LR-49 cohort in January 2008, and has found the Advance Program to be a perfect fit for her lifestyle.

“I can’t say, in the traditional college setting, trying to work and raise a family while finishing my degree would have worked as well as the Advance Program has for me,” Lanyon said. “Going through one class every five weeks with the same students makes it so that anyone can obtain their goal of finishing a degree.” It was that goal of finishing her bachel- or’s degree and the desire to show her children the importance of education that motivated Lanyon to enroll in the JBU Advance Program. “The first night of class, everyone shared that they were at JBU to fulfill a dream. That was me. It took me a long time to get here. I had to show my kids that education is valuable, that it was important enough for Mom to go back to and to sacrifice.”

The Advance Program’s cohort model has helped Lanyon and her classmates in LR-49 form a lifelong bond. “You walk in with apprehension and fear, looking at this group of people they’re telling you you’re going to be good friends with, and thinking 18 months is a long time,” Lanyon said. “You begin the program, you begin to get to know the people, and you be- come a family. That is more important than anything you could do, having that group of people that you get to know and can rely on, and you e-mail and you can vent your frustrations and your fears and know they’re feeling the same thing.”

To Lanyon, the support system af- forded by the JBU Advance Program extends beyond the cohort. “This Advance Program is amazing,” Lanyon said. “The support isn’t just from your classmates, it’s from your professors. They care about you. They’re available. They will listen to you. You have staff in Northwest Arkansas that you can e-mail and their immediate response is genuine concern and genuine prayer.”

While the program has been aca- demically challenging, Lanyon is happy she made the choice. “Looking back on it, I wouldn’t change a thing. Any sacri- fice I made to get to this point was well worth it. You study hard, you keep up with the reading and the homework and finishing a degree.”

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