

Initiate Mark Alston

When my Mother enrolled me in the Rites of Passage program, I didn't understand what I had done, I had good grades in school, I played basketball and I didn't get into trouble so, I thought I was being punished for something. She told me I was going to have to get up really early in the morning and I didn't have a choice. Because of that, it took me awhile to begin to like the program and see its value in my life. After some time, I liked having a Champion to talk to, going on the outings, and doing the assignments. Most of all, I understand that the military drills and discipline forced me to become responsible for myself, my actions and developed leadership in my squad. There were so many things that I learned during my year in the Rites of Passage program; however, the most important learning experience that I had was the importance of respecting girls. In the beginning of the program, I would notice many times where girls were disrespected and treated badly by young men, especially at school. I would think it was not good but I wouldn't do anything about it. Now, if I see disrespect shown towards a girl, I don't just turn the other way, instead I go over and try to intervene if I can. I have a mother and sisters and I would not like it if someone treated any of them with disrespect. I also have learned the importance of teamwork, hygiene and the power of learning God's word in the program. The program turned out to be more than just something on Saturday mornings, I realized this when Elder David Medley came to my Grandfather's funeral and represented the ROP program. ROP was a good experience that has given me many opportunities to learn and develop into the young man that God is calling me to be.

Mark Edward Alston, II