

CONNECTED

YOUTH FOR CHRIST of Northern Ohio - Newsletter

Connecting Teens To Jesus Christ And His Church

June 2020



This Changes Everything! Or Does It? | Steve Pausch

It seems all we hear every day now is how everything we do will be different as a result of the virus that has infiltrated America. The way we are doing ministry has definitely changed over the past few months, but **not everything has changed**. Teens are still looking for answers, and teens are still looking for a place to feel like they belong and to have someone listen. We have been doing the best we can with virtual groups and sending notes and making phone calls, but there is really no substitute for face-to-face ministry with teens. We are slowly beginning to have meetings with teens in small groups with proper safety measures and equipment in place. It is going to be different sitting in a small group wearing masks and taking hand sanitizer breaks regularly, but the results will be worth it. We are hearing from teens and parents how much our ministry has been missed and how excited they are to have things open again. Please pray with us as we enter into this new phase of sharing Christ with teens face to face again.

It all started with a garden! We read in the Book of Genesis that God planted a garden in the east and then placed the man and woman in it to work the garden. We have been given a special opportunity this summer to have a garden spot in Brunswick to work with young people teaching them to garden, utilizing the harvest to help others, and teaching great Biblical and life lessons around the gardening experience.

We are in the process of raising some funds to purchase plants and the necessary fertilizer to get things going. We will soon be planting the garden and will have teens help with the process and the upkeep throughout the summer. We have found hundreds upon hundreds of lessons to share during our "Garden Time" that will lead young people to an understanding of how things grow but also how God intends for us to live.

Here are just a few of the garden examples that will help us tell God's story...

- * the importance of soil types and preparation and how the people around us affect our growth.

- *the importance of water and how God is living water for us

- * We also will talk about roots, weeds, nutrition and harvesting and how God has His hands in all of it!

It all started with a garden and this garden will continue to teach and grow the mind and hearts of young people this summer. If you would like to make a special gift toward The Garden we would be encouraged and blessed to see how God uses your gift to help others in so many ways. God bless you.



Living the Call of Christ in the Midst of the Hard | Laurie Beal

The last week has been heavy for the United States We shifted overnight from face masks and 6 feet apart... to gas masks and walking shoulder to shoulder in protests. Our world was already feeling separated and unconnected for a few months, and we were **LONGING** for connection again ...but now that we are standing closer we are feeling a very different type of division. And still feeling so separated. On a personal level, this last week has been a very **HEAVY** load to carry and even disorienting. I feel like I've been beat up and then thrown in a hamster wheel spinning 100 miles an hour.

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As many of you know, I'm the mom of a black son. DaQuan is 18. We also have a white son, Mason, also 18. They just completed their very wonky senior year. As we have been on the journey of raising them, we have had a front row seat to racism...to how the people around us respond to one and how they respond to the other. We've seen outright blatant hate and bigotry, and we've seen disguised, dressed up "I'm a Christian so can't be a racist but please don't look at my actions because that would be judging" kind of hate. Both stink. I'm actually in an internal debate at the moment on which is worse. The jury is still out. But we've also seen LOVE...way more love than hate! And THAT is what our family tries to focus on, and that's what we've taught all 4 of our kids to look for and to emulate.. the LOVE of Christ seen through the actions of His people.

But when poop hits the spinning thing and our world around us starts crumbling and my son starts receiving threats from people in our city wanting to jump him and beat him up when he goes out .. solely because he has darker skin...our attempts to focus on love get blurred. It's hard to focus on that when we feel the pressure and the grip of hate, when we see our son the victim of that hate, and when we hear people saying we are playing the race card because we are sharing facts about what is happening to him. Mind-boggling.

So what's a mom to do? What's a person to do that has a lot of teenagers looking up to her and watching her? I'm not quite sure. But, I've jumped in head first anyways and taken the opportunity to make a bold presence on social media to educate, to give ideas on how to TRULY love our neighbor, to more clearly define the gray areas of racism and to take a stance for LOVE and justice for ALL. I've participated in a couple peaceful protests to be the voice of DaQuan who is also recovering from surgery and couldn't go...and also left the protests when I sensed the tide turning and saw the people not about peace arrive on the scene. All of these things added to the weariness I was already feeling last week. We retreated to our lake house for some peace and to get away from the threats and the ugliness so DaQuan, especially, could truly rest emotionally and heal physically. Then, Sunday evening I received a message that would cause me to leave the lake house and head back to Wadsworth. There were rumblings of a group of teenagers, some of them our Garage teens, that, on THEIR OWN had organized a peaceful protest at our downtown square! I also started hearing on social media that they were being taunted and verbally attacked by some of the cars driving by. So, my decision/purpose to leave my peaceful sanctuary was twofold...to go and stand WITH these teens that were boldly standing up against injustice, to thank them, to tell them I'm proud of them...and also to go and protect them if things got bad.

I'm glad I went. It was a beautiful way to end a hard week. I saw kids who had been listening and hearing the pain around them...and responding with LOVE! I saw the majority of the town supporting their efforts and honking or shouting encouragement as they drove by. I saw random people show up and drop off water, cookies, pizza, and a huge box of Taco Bell at almost midnight! And then, the coolest part of the night? I stood next to a young man who I had met a few years ago at the Garage. We had met on rocky terms. Earlier in the week, before I met him, I had spoken to the high school principal about a young man that was physically checking and blocking my son in the hall and not letting him pass because my son was black. I got word the kid had been found and reprimanded. I had never heard the name of the kid until that incident. Then our Friday Hang Out night at the Garage came along, and I introduced myself to a new kid that wandered in and asked his name. I had now heard his name for a second time that week. The short version of the story... I welcomed him, told him we had a common acquaintance, he said he should go, I asked him to stay, he stayed, and over the next few years we had lots of very good conversations, and I gradually saw a huge and genuine change in his heart. And then fast forward to last Sunday night and here we were, side by side, both holding signs that reflected our love for ALL people...black people, included. He looked at me and said, "I've come a long way haven't I?" I responded..."Yes, we have!"

I will try hard to hold tight to that moment...and try remember to pray for those who hurt us, like I had prayed for that teen. Leaning into the ONE that can truly change hearts will be the way we all survive this. "If they are wrong they need your prayers all the more; and if they are your enemies, then you are under orders to pray for them."

-C.S. Lewis

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