

CONNECTED

YOUTH FOR CHRIST of Northern Ohio - Newsletter

Connecting Teens To Jesus Christ And His Church

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You Might Be Missing Out—Talking to Teens | Steve Pausch

“Can you really have a conversation with the teenagers today?” I was recently asked that question by an “older” adult when talking about our work at YFC. My answer was a bit surprising to this person. “Yes, we actually have very good conversations and in-depth ones, too.” The start of another school year is here. Every fall since 1984, I have been running ministry for high school and middle school students, and we are gearing up to get that started again. There are certain aspects of teen ministry that have changed over the years, such as access to information, even if not always correct information. The teens we work with have many different answers to every question right in the palm of their hand with the technology available today. They have to filter through all the answers given before settling on which they accept, but that is where the relationship with one of our caring adults make the difference. Our staff are there to help when a teen gets several cloudy answers to an issue, and the relationship carries a tremendous amount of weight in deciphering differing opinions. It’s not just an answer on a page but a person and God’s Word shared through that relationship.

When was the last time you had a conversation with one of those “scary” teens? Give it a try. I was just talking with one of our adult leaders the other day who is very heavily involved in the ministry, and we talked about what a privilege it is to be let into the lives of teens. We get the opportunity to listen, guide, and direct them toward success in life and an eternal future. The window into the lives of young people we are provided is a direct result of your prayers and support. Thank you for making it possible for this ministry to be involved in the lives of hundreds of “scary teens” every week. You are right there with us as we walk and talk through the ups and downs of teen life in America. God has given us a unique opportunity to see young lives impacted. Thank you for making it possible.

Go talk to a teen today! They don’t bite...usually.

Deep Questions | Matt Mountjoy

As we are gearing back up and diving full swing into the new school year, I have recently been reminded about how what we do is so much more than on property and on official ministry nights. The goal is to build Christ sharing relationships, and while we do minister to them directly throughout the week, it is those deeper connections where kids can come to us and ask questions about life, God, and more. What they really value from us is trust, consistency, and genuine care for them. It is here where they see that we truly love them, because God loves them and has shown us how to love.

There is one young man that we have worked with for many years, and he has always been a deep thinker. He has struggled on and off with mental health issues, and also been desperately searching for meaning and truth. There have been many times when he seems so close to leaning in to God, and other times where he goes diving into conspiracies, or new age philosophy, or even looking for deep meaning in post modern nihilistic cartoons. So we are there for him, regardless of where he is at, ready to support him any way we can and share truth with him any time we can.

Recently, he had been really struggling, and he reached out to several of us who have built relationships with him throughout the years. We've been able to come alongside him and love on him and show him his value in God. The coolest thing is that recently he really wants to read through the Bible and do a really deep dive. Before he began, he asked me for some tips when reading the Bible, and I was glad to share with him overall themes as he goes throughout it, and the general flow of Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration. Since then, about every one or two days, he will send me questions asking about incredibly deep things and thoughts. It has been a mix of testing the limits of my theology degree bouncing around the Bible as he asks insightful questions from accounts in Genesis and how it plays into what Jesus has done, and trying to get him to focus on the main point of the Bible and the Gospel. Whether it has been in the middle of an hour-long conversation explaining how Jesus death on the cross was not a failure but in fact brought the redemption through the defeat of death in the resurrection, or fielding a question on why humans no longer live hundreds of years as they did pre-flood, I truly feel blessed to be in the position I am to pour God's love and truth into this young man and the countless students that we get to meet and know in the ministry at The Garage.

Boundaries | Laurie Beal

Boundaries. There are MANY books written about them, including whole series. I've read them. There are MANY sermons and lessons given on boundaries. I've given them. And we've probably all had conversations about boundaries. I have them regularly.

A quick Google search gives this definition for boundary: "A line that marks the limits of an area; a dividing line." Sounds simple. More importantly, the Bible gives valuable instruction in this area. I would guess that Proverbs 4:23 is probably the most used verse when trying to give Biblical advice on boundaries. "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Then there is Galatians 6:5, "For each will have to bear his own load" and Matthew 5:37, "But let your 'yes' be yes and your 'no' be no." Again, sounds kinda simple. Kinda.

I remind our mentors, often, about the importance of boundaries. I remind myself.

BUT...things aren't as simple as they sound when it comes to ministry... especially when ministering to young people. There are often breakdowns and emergencies amongst this people group that is trying to navigate anxiety, depression, social media, troubling thoughts, worries about the future...and the present...and the past. These teens are also in the process, hopefully, of trying to decipher.. "what EXACTLY is an emergency?"

Often, we have to help them figure that one out. And we have to figure out how and when to step in to help.

Then there's the boundary of, "When is a Garage kid no longer a Garage kid? When they graduate? What if they drop out? What if they move? Are they still our 'responsibility?'" And remember, to some of these kids, we have been the only thing in their life that resembles a caring parent figure. And how do we look at our kids when it comes to caring for them? My mom and dad still think of me as their little girl and I'm 56! And they would still show up ASAP if I needed them...and they do. And I do the same with our four, ranging in ages from 23 to 34.

And speaking of family, THERE'S a boundary we talk about often in ministry... "Family first." I say it often to our mentors that I lead. Actually, I say it a lot, to lots of different people.

BUT, let's define family. Back to Google ...and one of the definitions that I found for family is "a unit that provides love, support, and stability to its members." Hmm. That grays the lines a bit more. We ARE family to these teens we choose to embrace. In fact, LOTS of teens over the years call us "family" and call the Garage "home."

So after saying all that above, it brings me to a recent phone call. We were at our family dinner that we have EVERY Tuesday at my parents' house. Fifteen of us make

every effort to not schedule anything on that day. We soak up the true blessing of family and kids and grandkids!!

It's my favorite day of the week. In fact, everyone in the family says that same thing. We were gathered at the table and I had just taken a few bites and my phone rings. I usually ignore my phone Tuesday evenings. But, I was prompted to look at it, led to answer it and heard a desperate voice on the other end.

Long story short...I may have broken every boundary I have in place?... I left dinner immediately, drove 20 minutes away while talking to this young person who graduated not too long ago and promised not to do anything to themselves til I got there, picked them up at the All-American Bridge and drove them to the emergency room where they were immediately admitted to the psych department.

This young guy called a few days later and thanked me. He said he didn't know who else to call and that he didn't think he'd be here if I didn't answer.

Boundaries are a good idea in theory. But boundaries are wavy and not clearcut when it comes to embracing people like Jesus would. I will continue to try and keep them, AND I will continue to use discernment when it comes to decision making. I thank God that he led me to answer that call. I thank God that young man is alive and getting help.

I collect heart rocks. I have for years. Here's a picture of some that I've found this summer at Lake Erie. I think their wavy boundaries and wonkiness help explain the heart boundaries we need to have when loving "Garage kids!"

Thanks to all of you who expand your financial boundaries beyond your family and help us do what we are led to do, to embrace our "family!"

Psalm 133:1 "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity."



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