



April 2025

Beyond the Walls | Steve Pausch

YFC has been going into youth detention centers and sharing with the incarcerated young people there since the late 80's. Countless times over the years, young people have talked about how much they need to continue to meet with our mentors when they get out in order to keep walking the right path. But it is rare for anyone to contact leaders after their release, and many of those released end up returning for another stint in the detention center.

Recently, a young lady took getting together upon release seriously upon and even brought family to the table.

One of our long-time faithful volunteers at the Sandusky County Juvenile Justice Center got a call from a young lady. She wanted to get together and continue the Bible study that they had started during her time at the detention center. This call came with an invitation to the girl's home and a time and a date. That's what made this call different. When our mentor arrived at the house she was greeted at the door by her young friend and several large dogs and Grandma. Before beginning the study, the young lady asked if her cousin could join. She made a phone call and within moments her cousin was at the door and ready to study the Bible, too. Upon completion, they set a date to meet again and the young lady asked if her sister could join next time. On the way out, our staff noticed Grandma was sitting close by and had listened to the lesson. Our staff asked Grandma if she wanted to join next time, she declined, indicating that this was a really good time for the girls, but she would stay in the next room and listen. Our leader left the home with a few new friends and a need to order more study books for the ladies in the home and maybe a box of dog biscuits for next time!

Thank you for your faithful support of this ministry that make encounters like this possible.

Pillow Fights and Police | Matt Mountjoy

Things have been a lot of fun lately at The Garage on Thursday nights. We have a growing and consistent group filled with a lot of really neat kids. Much of this current momentum we have started with a special event night that we had about a month ago. It was something that we have done before, but it has been a few years so none of our current group had taken part in it before. In place of our typical Garage night, we had a friendly competition with a photo scavenger hunt. We broke the kids up into three teams, each assigned with a leader as their driver. They were all given the same list of ten tasks they would need to either get a picture or video. At the end of the night, each photo was judged and points were handed out by ranking to determine the winning team. The kids were really into it and every group completed everything on the list – from pillow fighting with a stranger, to “someplace very ‘Wadsworth,’” to a picture of the whole group with a police officer!

It was a very fun night, and while we broke from our traditional routine of having some sort of lesson or talk, the relationship building was huge for the ministry. It gave us an opportunity to get to know more kids and get them excited about The Garage. Clearly, teaching and having discussions about Biblical truth is massively important, but it is ultimately the Christ-sharing relationships that make a difference. That night of all fun and play has led to several weeks with seeing the same faces and many more new kids coming to hang out. Because of a night of silliness, we get even more opportunities to share Christ with kids!

One final note – special shout out to The Wadsworth Police Department for being so welcoming to our kids showing up unannounced and asking for photos. My group was the third group and as soon as we got there, they simply asked “Photo scavenger hunt?” And they gladly sent an officer out! You could tell they got a kick out of it and were awesome interacting with the kids!

Drama | Laurie Beal

Drama. I didn't like it in school and do not care for it in adult life. I steer clear of it...unless I have to hit it head on.

I've been leading the teen parents program for almost 16 years. We've had our share of drama. We have mentored probably close to 200 teens over those years, so drama makes sense, I guess. They are still teens. Thankfully, they've been fairly minor spats that don't last too long or get too ugly. I smell out conflict pretty quickly, and we've always been able to address it, rein it in and redirect the girls (and sometimes guys) back to what's important...their baby and their goals and their relationship with Christ.

Over the last 2 months, however, the drama that has been thick in our teen parents group has been exhausting. Exhausting to the girls and guys... and especially exhausting to us mentors. The first 2 articles of the year have been about all the good stuff happening....goals being set, goals being met...Blessings that we are certainly thankful for!

This article is not about that.

Social media is a good example of how we can tend to only show our good sides to the camera, or the clean corner of the room or the highlights of our family life reel. I'm a rule breaker when it comes to that game...because I know that many people truly struggle with seeing "only good" happening for others when all they are seeing is struggle in their life. I see the effects that phenomenon has on our Garage teens. And I don't like it.

So, when I see a post in a moms group of everyone sharing their "one up" perfect dining room table decor, I can't stop myself from posting a pic of our cluttered table with the caption..."THIS is how we are living today." I don't do filters. I post pics of my worst crazy hair day. I'm real so others feel comfortable with real.

Anyways, back to the drama. We have had a circle of social media jabs, snarky comments at group, stories being told about each other, new best friends newly created each week, depending on what drama was made up about who... and the zinger; CPS (Child Protective Services) calls aplenty have joined that circle. This girl calling on that one. Then that girl calling on that one. I think you can picture the circle, with arrows pointing viciously round and round.

We have been relying heavily on prayer and up front, FRANK, group discussions about ALL that's going on. This strategy has usually worked fast, but this go round has been met with more finger pointing, which we have scooted right past. At our last meeting, I had a dozen different note cards with varying Bible verses that speak into conflict, blaming, self-evaluation, etc. I passed them out to the teens and mentors to read out loud in our circle. By about the 6th verse being read, the gal getting ready to read hers said in an obnoxious tone, "I

feel like this is targeted." (Ummm yes, what took you so long.) I said, "Yes, it sure is, it's targeted at every one of us in this room." Her tone softened as she read what was written on her card and as she listened to the next verses. We then, as a group, unpacked all the drama that was happening.

We did not solve all their problems in that meeting. But we made a dent. And they heard lots of biblical TRUTH and reminders that we should be lifting each other up vs tearing them down. That they already have enough strikes against them, and that they need each other. The night still ended with multiple kids trying to have side bars with each mentor stating their "yeah, but" statements.

Thankfully, we all have a week to regroup and get back at it again next Monday. And thankfully we serve a God who loves us despite our flaws and our drama we bring to the table.

I'm not exactly sure exactly why I'm sharing this, but I think it's a few things.

#1 If you are leading a small group or an organization or a family and things are not perfect/ideal right now, you are not the only one. Hang in there and lean into God for the strength and hope you need! And ask people close to you for prayer!

#2 We need prayer! Please pray for discernment and energy for our leaders as we deal with this. Please pray for our young people to see the yuck for what it is and move on to bigger and better things so they all can feel comfortable and still come to group. Please pray for the little ones who are in the midst of this.

#3 I think I just needed to vent...and be real for a minute.

Matthew 7: 3-5 Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

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