

CONNECTED

YOUTH FOR CHRIST of Northern Ohio - Newsletter

Connecting Teens To Jesus Christ And His Church

April 2026



We Need Your Help to Tell Teens About Jesus | Steve Pausch

I was sitting with 8 young people last week at our teen center, and we were talking as we shared a meal. It started with a casual, "How was your day?", and "What do you have planned for Spring Break?" questions as an opener. Then I transitioned to a question about Easter, and I could not believe what I heard from around the table. Most of the teens at my table were new, but several had been attending twice a week for the school year. Each day, after giving the middle schoolers some time to wind down after school, we gather them into 3 or 4 tables with an adult and have a family style meal and conversation time. We talk through a variety of topics and questions each week as a way for gauging where teens are at, so we can direct our questions to relevant topics. The attention span of middle schoolers is not very long, but we wrestle through the talk time and let them know we care and do listen to them. Not many of the teens we see have a regular sit-down meal at home. so this experience is new and often challenging to them, but we see it as a worthwhile time. It doesn't take much of a distraction in the room to get our discussion off track, but our adult leaders are good at redirecting things. My question was a simple one, or so I thought, but it was very difficult for my table of teens to answer. Easter is coming up, so what is Easter all about? I was surprised that not one of the teens at our table knew the Biblical story of Easter and the death and resurrection of Jesus. We talk about these things weekly, but they were not able to communicate how it fit into Easter. Their understanding of bunnies, and eggs, and candy got in the way of understanding Easter. I attempted to draw the whole table of young people back to an understanding of the Biblical Easter, but there were too many assumptions and ques-

tions that led to more distractions. Please pray for our leaders as they work to fill in the gaps and lead teens to Jesus over the next few weeks.

Over the years, the best method for concentrating on a young person and being able to find out what they are thinking is by taking them out for a dinner appointment. One of our adult staff take 2 teens out to dinner at a sit down restaurant that takes a little while to get your food and talks with them about their lives. We ask about family, friends, and belief systems. This brings us to a point in a non-threatening way where we can ask what they believe about Jesus. Would you be interesting in providing a dinner appointment for the teens we work with? We are looking at increasing our teen dinner appointments this spring and into summer and are in need of some additional resources to make that happen.

Thank you for your faithful support that makes this ministry possible.

The Good News | Matt Mountjoy

“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation’”
Mark 16:15

The Great Commission is the ultimate goal of every Christ follower, and is the formal mission of ministries like Youth For Christ. As such, I try to make sure that in everything we do we always put it in a Gospel lens. To pull back the curtain, those of us in YFC who are ministry directors track how many kids we meet, and are in conversational relationship with and how many kids hear about Jesus. There is a number for kids who are in conversational relationships with the staff and then a subset of how many of those kids are in an authentic Christ Sharing relationship (meaning we have shared the message of the Gospel with them). At The Garage, we try to make sure that these numbers are exactly the same every time. By this I mean if there is a kid who has been around long enough for us to engage with on any level, then they should also have had Christ and The Good News shared with them on some level.

Even with always striving to make sure the gospel is presented on some level every time we meet, there is something so exciting about the opportunity at Easter time to focus in detail and share with them the story of the redeeming work Christ did on the cross and through His resurrection. This is what we focused on this past week and the week leading up to Easter. The really exciting thing this year is that between the Wednesday night and the Thursday night groups we have several kids who have never heard the full Easter story before in detail. On Thursday before I talked, we asked the kids the question of what came to their minds

when they thought of Easter. Laurie had a prop bag filled of Easter things and each time they mentioned one she pulled it out. All of the things that she brought props of they mentioned: candy, eggs, Easter bunny (this was by far the best prop since she pulled out a full costume sized bunny head) but what no kid brought up was Jesus. What a cool experience it was getting to share with them after that moment the true significance of Easter, and what an awesome opportunity we all as believers have to be to share the greatest and most important story in the history of the world.

Hollow Trees and God | Laurie Beal

Ohio weather is nuts. The drastic temperature changes of thirty degrees and more, that happen in mere hours, and the heavy winds have been a constant for weeks. The last wind-storm took out small trees and large branches all through our city. A Facebook poster added a thread just for people to share pics of their trampolines and where they precariously travelled to. There were tons of pictures and they were ridiculous!

One particular tree that was down from this storm caught my attention. It was a huge tree. By the sheer size, alone, you could tell it was decades old ... thus, had weathered many other storms over the years. The roots were long and thick, and the branches were huge and strong looking. I was surprised to see it laying there defeated because it looked so strong. Then, I saw the bottom of the tree. The inside of the several feet wide trunk.... was hollow.

What appeared so strong was, unbeknownst to anyone, withering away inside. It finally had snapped and uprooted under the pressure.

Can you relate? I can. So can the teenagers we connect with throughout the week. Life is not always easy and with all the social media platforms and the demand to keep up with their peers, young people often have a facade going that emulates that everything is "fine." Even when it's not.

We are blessed to have many opportunities throughout the week to touch base with these teens that are trying to appear strong enough to handle the storms coming at them. As we build relationships and trust and friendship, we soon start getting a glimpse of their reality. We then have opportunities to help them develop coping skills and communication skills and share with them our Hope in Christ and how our strength comes from filling that God-shaped hole with Christ.

These young people often don't have many consistent or reliable adults in their life. That means they may not have someone to share their struggles, worries and problems with.

..or their victories with. We are blessed to become that for them. And as you might expect, when they graduate, they still need and want people that care about them in their life. (That topic will be my article for next month!)

Thank you so much to ALL that support Youth for Christ/ Garage Ministry! Because of YOU, and the grace of GOD, we can step into these kid's lives and help them through the storms of life.

God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge! Psalm 46: 1-3

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