



November 2024

Connecting Teens To Jesus Christ And His Church

Oh, I don't go to church...I'm Norse! | Steve Pausch

Romans 10:14-18 ¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?^[a] And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. ¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

I have been working with middle school and high school students for a long time. In October 1989, I started my vocational ministry with Youth For Christ after volunteering many years in youth outreach ministry. 35 years of being involved in discussion after discussion with young people about anything and everything has been an adventure, but I can say that recently on a Friday night was the first time I had someone tell me they were NORSE, the religious beliefs of the Vikings. We had quite the conversation following that statement. It turns out this young man found his belief system on the internet and explained to me all about the different gods, and what they were for, and how there is a sacred tree called the Yggdrasil which has different realms that come from it and that Valhalla is where you go when you die if you die with a weapon in your

hand. This was a pretty interesting goal for a small skinny young man who plays in the band. This long conversation was very intriguing as we volleyed different aspects of our beliefs back and forth for almost an hour, but the most important statement was his last... “Thanks for talking. No one has asked me about what I believe before.” This young man, like so many others, has put his belief system together from what he has read on the internet or seen in YouTube videos. We ended the interaction with a promise to get back together again and continue the conversation as he wants to prove to me that evolution is real.

Youth For Christ staff and volunteers have discussions with young people every week where we share the Truth of Jesus Christ and help teens realize the Hope that can be found only in Him. Teens today have so much information right at their fingertips, but there are few filters on what is truth. The phrase “My Truth” is often heard when talking with teens. I usually help them understand there is ultimate truth and the best way to explain that is to say, **“What if “My Truth” is that speed limits don’t matter?”** Try explaining that to the police. We have many discussions around many beliefs and thoughts with young people, and we look to steer them in the right direction. Thank you for making it possible for us to have the time and places to engage teens in meaningful discussions about eternity and today.

Community Connections | Matt Mountjoy

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” – 1 Peter 4:10

One of my favorite things about doing a local ministry is getting to talk with people in the community about what we do. It’s even more cool when others get excited about what they are hearing. The best is when they want to get involved! Partnering with people in the community is such an important part of what we do. People often ask of how they can help support us. The most basic and starting point of the conversation is that like most non-profits today, we depend on the generous support of donors. . Then we also have many opportunities for individuals and groups to get involved with volunteering, either regularly or for work projects. Additionally, some people have a particular skill or passion that we can creatively involve.

The last few weeks have provided a few of these conversations, and I'm excited to be able to share about some of these. The first one came from the parents of one of our students in our Wednesday Night Garage program. They have been appreciative for their son's experiences and wanted to give back. So, in an extremely fresh example of this (so fresh the food is still digesting in my stomach) they generously provided tonight's meal for the Wednesday night crew. Things like this are a great blessing to the ministry since we did not have to worry about the planning or expenses for the meal.

In another example, after hearing Laurie speak to a group about The Garage, a local man wanted to find a way to help out. This particular man has a passion for disc golf and plays regularly with a group of guys in Wadsworth. So, it was cool to have someone take a gift that they have and share it with us. They invited our kids to come out for an evening and get some instructions on the sport. We met with them at a local course, and our kids had a fun outing where they got to play and learn about the game. It was a fun, unique outing and opportunity for the kids to connect with people in the community who care about them. In addition to them taking the time to share their knowledge with them, they also were generous enough to donate many discs to the students that they could take with them. They even gave us more to take back for other kids who weren't there that night! It was an awesome night, and another cool example of people who wanted to share their gifts and skills with the kids of our ministry. We are so grateful for those in our community who support the ministry in our mission to develop relationships with teens in order to share God's story with them!

Dads | Laurie Beal

It has been exciting to see what God has been doing in our Teen Parents/Parent Life program, with the addition of the specific programming for our teen dads who started attending weekly about a year ago.

We have offered this in the past, but it had been a while since we had any dads regularly show up. So we had not been focusing on this part of the outreach. Instead, we focused on helping the young moms learn how to be a single mom, while leaning on God for strength. It was a joy to see dads start to show up and step up and want to be involved dads and partners.

We have been able to mentor several young fathers in a meaningful way over the last year. We start our meetings with all of us sharing a meal. We then split into 2 groups. Us gals (mentors and moms) stay in the cafe space and my husband, Jim, and the young dads go into our other cozy space. We have the same questions to answer and talk about for about 15 minutes. Then, we all gather together, again, and share answers and perspectives, hear what the Bible has to say about the topic and then finish with prayer before they shop in our free baby store.

All of our young dads currently involved in the program have shared that they, themselves, have not had fathers whom they want to emulate. These young men have each expressed a deep desire to do better, be better and to give their kids a present they didn't have.... the presence of a dad in their life ...who loves them, unconditionally.

As we cheer them on and agree with them about what a gift that a loving, available, dad truly is to give our kids, we have also been able to introduce the amazing fact that THEY ALSO have a Father who is not disappointed in them, who created them on purpose with purpose, who loves them unconditionally and is ALWAYS there for them and their little families. They each are still processing this fact, and each find comfort in this Truth.

We have seen many changes in heart and behaviors after investing time and God's Truths with these young men. Some of the things that they (and their girlfriends!) have proudly shared about them have been they are spending way less time on their phones, watching less TV and social media, sharing their thoughts and feelings more, helping more with their kids, getting jobs and setting goals.

Something one of the young moms said this week, as my husband arrived, said A LOT about what these young men are getting out of this group experience. She looked over at her boyfriend and pointed to Jim walking in and said, "Your best friend is here!" Her boyfriend also recently had run up to Jim and gave him a big bro hug when Jim picked up a pizza from where this young dad just started to work.

Webster's dictionary define a friend this way: "A person who has a strong liking for and trust in another, a person who is not an enemy."

All glory to God that these young fathers have a safe space to land at The Garage on Monday nights, that they now know of a heavenly Father who has always loved them and always will, that they are learning ways to be the dad God created them to be and that they have another guy friend in their life whom they can trust and is not their enemy!

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