

# CONNECTED

YOUTH FOR CHRIST of Northern Ohio - Newsletter

*Connecting Teens To Jesus Christ And His Church*

March 2022



## Hey Coach! | Steve Pausch

Where have all the kids gone? Can you remember the days of going to the mall, or the local parks and seeing BIG groups of teens hanging together? The pandemic has changed the habits of kids, and it is rare nowadays to see large groups of young people together, except at school.

In this ministry we have always gone into the world of the teenager and built relationships in order to invite them to meetings and events. We volunteered in lunchrooms and classrooms to help and to get to know kids. Regulations have changed now and that access has been severely limited.

With these new restrictions and limitations, how are we to gain an audience with teens so that they will trust us and listen in a new ministry area? We have the opportunity in the detention centers where we minister, but it seems outside of there, teens get out of school and head home to their computers for social interaction.

Since 2003, I have coached sports at the high school level as a way of maximizing my time with students. Trust becomes almost instantaneous as a coach, and you have contact daily with a large number of students. I have been out of coaching since 2019, but I am going back into a school where we once did ministry. Now maybe more than ever, it meets a need in the lives of kids and our ministry. Coaching is our foot in the door, and we are looking forward to growing next school year.

This model has been effective with our ministry in Wadsworth, also. Please pray for us as we look to positively impact young lives for eternity while coaching sports this Spring. There are separation of church and state issues, but that does not forbid a follower of Jesus from being involved in the lives of teens and finding ways to talk about faith. For 3-5 hours a day I put on a different uniform and get into the world of local teens just as a missionary would do with a people group in a far away land. Play Ball!

## Smaller and Deeper | Laurie Beal

Over the last few years, our teen parents group at Garage Ministry has slowly caught up with the national trend of declining numbers in teen pregnancies. In the last 13 years, we've had approximately 120 moms, maybe 30 boyfriends and over 200 babies come through our ministry! One year, we had a roster of 30 local girls in the group. Currently we have 6 gals and a couple boyfriends and some adorable babies!



Due to work and sicknesses and school schedules, we often just have 2 to 4 young people at the weekly meetings. Usually in ministry, leaders are working creatively to increase numbers when they start to decline. Teen parent's groups do not fall into that category, obviously! But I still find myself missing the big groups and the noise and the energy and the large outings and the tons of stories every week. It's honestly been a big adjustment in mindset and planning of the meetings and the store set up, etc.

There are pros and cons, for sure, to the different group sizes. A decade ago, a group under 15 was a rare occurrence. Now we have small group every week. We are able to dig in deeper in our conversations, hear what others are saying a bit better, and build tighter bonds with the young people.

Our last meeting really made me stop and thank God for the current season we are in and for the amazing bonds He has brought about with this current group. And even apologize a little for sometimes wondering if the small number in attendance was maybe not "enough?"

In lieu of a traditional lesson last week, we had the gals and the leaders share a turning point, or a verse or a moment in their life that caused a shift or a stirring in their relationship with Christ ... basically something that was life-changing and something that caused each of us to truly feel God working and PRESENT in our lives.

Wow! The things that were shared were so impactful, sad, joyous, raw... and encouraging to each other. The scripture shared brought Hope. There was not a dry eye a in the circle within just a few minutes of beginning. We heard of heartache and abuse and turmoil and waiting and pains and disappointment that those we loved in that circle had endured. But then, we also heard of the peace and the triumph and the reconciliation and the healing and the love and the victory we all have in Jesus! We shared about baptisms and verses others had shared with us and being healed of burdens and the discovery of our true worth and the value of a prayer life and moments where we clearly felt God undeniably showing up. And in hearing those things from others, God revealed those same promises and the same HOPE to each of us. I'm so, so thankful that I have these amazing relationships with every single young mom and young dad and mentor and baby that comes on Monday nights. We are blessed to do life WITH each other! I praise God for bringing exactly who He wants and how many He wants to each and every meeting!

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

## What Do We Call What We Do? | Herb Miller

I wish I had a better name for our ministry at the Sandusky County Juvenile Detention Center (JDC). It's called church! We haven't found a better name that won't scare kids away. Because of the religious nature of YFC, kids are given the choice of participating in our sessions or not. Most come out of their cells to meet with us, but some don't. I cringe when I hear the officers ask the kids if they want to come out for CHURCH! Not because I think it's misleading or inaccurate. We talk, show videos, read scripture, have lessons, ask for prayer requests and we pray. That all sounds like church. My concern is that we don't know how the kids define church. For most, it's an accurate non-threatening descriptor. Others may have a mental picture of "church" that convinces them that staying alone in their cell is preferable to listening to someone preach at them, or yell at them, or bore them, or whatever comes to their mind when they think of going to church.

Isn't it funny how words have different meanings to different people! I've created and taught Technical Writing courses to many companies in my career. One of the first things I cover is the importance of doing an audience analysis before writing. Any good public speaking class will tell you the same thing. Define your goal. Identify your audience. Learn as much as you can about them. The better prepared you are, the greater your chances of meeting your goal.

I think about those writing classes when I go into the JDC. Admittedly, no one has time to assess the kids we're meeting with. But I think I'm getting better at reading my audiences. If I ask the right questions, and then really listen, I can better discern their level of understanding. I too often make assumptions that totally block the message I'm trying to communicate. For example, I was talking with a young man recently who acknowledged that he knows Jesus. I believe he does. I asked him, "then you know all about His mercy and grace"? He said he wasn't sure what those words meant. I explained that mercy is when God doesn't give us the punishment we deserve. God's grace is getting a gift we don't deserve! He looked at me like I had just shared the biggest secret of life.

When I talk about God, do kids know the God I know? Do they believe that an Intelligent Designer created this world? How do they believe we got here? Do they know what baptism, being saved, discipleship, and born again means? Most every Christian knows how confused Nicodemus was about being born again (John 3)! Jesus took the time to clarify. They were speaking the same language at the end of that conversation.

Fortunately, God can use even my most feeble attempts to represent Him. The Holy Spirit can clarify my message even though it might confuse the kids. God isn't limited by my shortcomings. I believe that all our efforts to understand kids, to acknowledge where they're at, and clarify our message is another big part of showing them how much Jesus loves them. I believe "seek first to understand and then to be understood" is important for every relationship. We are representing Jesus well when we strive to be that intentional in connecting with the kids in JDC.

By the way, do you happen to have a good descriptive name for what we do at the JDC? Let me know.

## Student Spotlight | Matt Mountjoy

I'm excited to introduce you to one of our Garage kids. She has grown into one of our more mature kids that we can rely on to be a leader on Thursday nights amongst the students. The following is an interview with Emilee Patterson!

### **How old are you and how long have you been coming to The Garage?**

"I have been going to The Garage since 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I am a junior in high school, so about 4 years."

### **How did you first end up at The Garage?**

"The Garage has always been a part of my life since I can remember. I remember wanting to go with my older sister when she would attend the middle school nights. When the time came for me to join the youth group in middle school, I finally understood how great it was to be a part of the Garage."

### **What is your favorite aspect of attending the regular weekly Garage Meetings?**

"My favorite aspect of the Garage would have to be the people. I love looking forward to going every week. Everybody there is so empathetic, compassionate and understanding of what it's like to be a teenager in this generation. The food is always a plus too!"

### **What is your favorite special event that you have done with The Garage and why?**

"My favorite special event I have done with The Garage would have to be the white water rafting trip. We had a huge car wash to do our part and help raise money for the trip. The morning of, we packed up our stuff and started our adventure. It really gave me the opportunity to get to know everybody better. I really got to understand teamwork, leadership, and friendship. I also got to witness the power of prayer and testimony."

### **What are you most looking forward to in the future with The Garage?**

"I am looking forward to meeting new people, going on more adventures, and strengthening my relationship with God"

### **What is the most important thing you've learned at The Garage?**

"The Garage has taught me that learning about God can be exciting and fun. We can use the lessons from The Garage in everyday living to be a better person"

### **Have you been changed by attending the Garage, and how?**

"Yes, I have changed in many ways. I suffer with anxiety, so going places isn't always easy for me. Since going to the garage and discussing and meeting with new people it has helped me grow with people mentally, physically, and spiritually. My relationship with God has also changed. It has made me more curious about Him and eager to learn more about Him"

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