

### Sage continued

More than his incredible knowledge and wisdom, it was his listening and caring heart that made a big impact. We talked tonight at the Garage about those people who truly understand the grace and mercy given to them by God through His Son Jesus. These people in turn share that grace and mercy with others. Tom was an incredible example of this. It was through this way that God continued to use his servant even after calling him home. Last week, as we met with the kids and celebrated Tom's life, four kids made a declaration of faith! As Tom rejoices in Heaven with his Creator, please continue to pray for his family and all those who will miss him greatly and praise God for the work Tom did for The Kingdom in his time here!

### Brunswick: Manna from Heaven = a Pizza Button | Steve Pausch

Each day after school the kitchen in our teen center is busy making food to serve the young people who arrive. On a recent Thursday, the oven decided it had completed its life cycle and stopped working. In desperation, our staff attempted to make oven ready pizzas in the microwave to feed the herd of young people who had just arrived. The teens were very gracious as they ate what had emerged from the microwave oven.

With many teens to feed in the week ahead, Stacey, our Brunswick ministry director, took to social media. She posted about our need for a stove and within minutes the need was shared thousands of times across the web. A response came in from someone who had not supported our ministry in the past or even knew about our work. This family had recently needed to change up appliances and was looking to sell their beautiful stove and range hood. When they saw the post about our need, they decided to give the stove, hood, and dishwasher and deliver them to our teen center. A father of one of our students hooked the stove up and it was ready to get to work.

You know the story of the Israelites from Scripture... The Israelites are wandering in the desert and God sends manna and quail from heaven to feed them. We feel we were blessed to have a gift from God through his people and this one came complete with a special button for chicken nuggets and pizza already on the stove. This is just another example of all the ways that God's people help sustain this work with teenagers every day.

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February 2022

### Loss of a Sage | Matt Mountjoy

This past month, long -time Garage mentor and friend, Tom Shurance passed away after a battle with COVID. The incredible impact that Tom had on the Garage and in the community will be felt for a long time, and forever in the work he did for The Kingdom. Years ago, I did a men's Bible study from the book, Fathered By God by John Eldridge. The book discusses the spiritual maturation of a Christian man. It begins with boyhood and moves on to cowboy, warrior, lover, king, and sage. The general idea is that there are phases of growth emotionally and in leadership, but one important thing is to have people around you who are in a phase above you that can help you grow. The final stage according to this book is "Sage." This is someone who is older, wiser and really pours their wisdom out for others. I have been blessed in my life to have a few of these men, including my own father and over the past few years Tom had become a Sage for me in my life.

Tom meant many things for the people at The Garage, but for me personally in that Sage role, he was someone whom I could lean on for many things, particularly answering some of the tough questions. Most people know that I'm not short on words, but the kids would all be able to tell you that if I ever was stumped or didn't have a quick answer I'd give a quick glance over and simply say, "uh, Tom?" Over the past two years it had kind of become routine after the kids all left for Tom and I (sometimes joined by other leaders) to walk to the end of the parking lot and just talk. We'd unpack the events of the night, talk about life, or on some occasions he'd lovingly correct me on a mistake I made. I'll never forget one night after I had been talking about Jesus being arrested in the garden I said something along the lines of "the soldiers arrived with Judas and arrested Him." As we walked later that night he looked at me and said, "Now you know, it would've been the Temple Guard and not the soldiers arresting Jesus." He gave me his signature grin, and I knew my theology professors would've shaken their heads at me and I had to laugh and confirm I'd messed up that fact.

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## A Life Lived Well | Laurie Beal

We recently lost a vital teammate and mentor and amazing friend to all at Garage Ministry/YFC. Many of you joined us in prayer for healing and a miracle for Tom Shurance over the last weeks. We thank you for that. But, as his dear wife, Lilly, so aptly said, "God's miracle for Tom was to send him to Heaven instead of leaving him here any longer to suffer." In that miracle for Tom, there are mixed feelings for us whom are left here on earth. We rejoice that he is with our Creator and that he has undoubtedly heard "well done, good and faithful servant." Yet, we also grieve and, selfishly, want even more time to spend with Tom. Even with the eternal hope we have as Christians, we still find it hard to process grief and to mourn the loss of those we love. It is hard enough for those of us who have the faith that we will spend eternity with Christ and fellow believers, but it is even more difficult to face for those who aren't secure in knowing Christ or understanding His promises of eternal life.

Realizing that difficulty of unpacking grief for non-believers, we knew we had to do something to engage with the many Garage kids, past and present, who reached out and expressed interest in attending funeral services for Tom. We decided to do a celebration of Tom's life at the Garage and invited all 'Garage kids' from many years ago to current attendees. We had 20 young people attend and it was a mix of young people in their 20's that came years ago, current teens and even 2 teens who had never attended before.

Part of the evening was spent reflecting on all that Tom had meant to each one of us. Everyone was invited to share something about Tom and MANY did.

One young man in his mid-20s talked about a small group Tom led for the kids years ago. He said there wasn't that many of them in the group but that Tom put a lot of effort into it and Lilly made the food. He said, "I appreciated every moment of it and I appreciate it now "

Another gal in her 20's talked about how Tom was the only leader who could tell one night when she walked in the door that she wasn't ok. She shared with him about a fight she had with her mom earlier in the day. She told him about the ugly things her mom said about her. She said she would never forget Tom telling her those things weren't true. It that meant so much to her to be heard.

Another gal shared about a time she talked to Tom about finding out that her dad had started using drugs. Tom validated her feelings, yet also talked about the fact that at some point she needed to forgive him. She shared that she kept thinking about that advice and was glad she was able to forgive her dad before he died.

Another guy that graduated years ago talked about loving how Tom would come dressed as Uncle Sy when we did a Duck Dynasty series and everyone called him Uncle Tom. Tom had also taken him and a couple others to do some community work, and he taught them how to chop wood. He

ended with talking about his graduation party and how Tom and Lilly came and stayed the whole time and how much that meant to him even now.

And another of our Garage veterans talked about being in and out of jail and how the Garage and Tom continued helping and talking to him no matter what. He fought back tears explaining just how much Tom had meant to him.

There weren't many dry eyes that night as the teens talked and as the mentors talked about Tom's kindness, him being the real deal, his wisdom, his fun-loving spirit and his being a true mentor to ALL of us. Even one of the 2 new kids who had never met Tom was noticeably shaken .

Matt shared, then, in the lesson about the many things Tom did to make our world a better place and how he always followed God's prompting of showing His love, whether that was here in the US or overseas...at home or with teens at the Garage. Matt discussed the importance of the dash on our tombstones. The importance of doing the GOOD we were created to do and that was intended for us to do while we are here. And ended the talk with the Truth that regardless of how many good deeds we do, the only thing that gets us into eternal life with Christ in Heaven is making a decision to believe in and follow Christ. When Matt asked if there were any present who would want to say that prayer to follow Christ, FOUR young people raised their hands and prayed along. Two were current Garage teens, one was one of the two new kids who happened upon us on that very cold night and the other is a gal that aged out a couple years ago. Even in his passing, Tom's life is making an impact and glorifying God and helping build the kingdom. He will be forever remembered with love and fondness.

\*And just a sidenote. This article was very hard to write because the night was overwhelming and BURSTING with GOD moments at every turn and it's hard to write it all into words. Let's just say God was working in every moment. And Tom certainly was smiling. Two notable points of the evening I want to throw out as prayer requests. One of the former Garage gals spoke to us after the evening came to a close about her being pagan, her love of learning about religions, believing Hades was a kind man and being angry at God. She left the Garage with a new Bible, excitement about reading it and with her best friend who had just accepted Christ as her Savior.

Another prayer request is for the new kids, who slipped in after the talk had begun and slipped out after one of them made a decision to follow Christ, but before we could get their names and talk to them. A police officer came looking for them after they left and one was arrested shortly after for running away.

We are so thankful that God led each one there that night, including the gal that needed to hear that God loved her and was pursuing her despite her worshipping another, and including the boy who ran from something at home, wandered in to our unfamiliar space and heard that God loves him. Thank you for your prayers and your support!

