



June 2025

The Power of Encouragement | Steve Pausch

**“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.” 1
Thessalonians 5:11**

Does it ever feel like the world around you seems to celebrate when you fail? There seems to be a never ending stream of negativity on the news everyday, and people are ready to point out when others don't reach their potential. This atmosphere is readily evident in the world of high school and middle schoolers, and it plays out every day. When our staff are with young people, we try to change things and be encouragers of others.

One of our daughters recently participated as a runner in the Cleveland Marathon. In the past I have had the race affect my day when we lived on the West Side of the city, but I never really saw much of the race. I knew the race happened every year but never really paid much attention to it. This year was different, because Rebekah was running. We wanted to take on the challenge of catching up to her at many points on the run to yell at her to keep going and encourage her in the race.. We caught her 9 different times along the route at various places before she got to the finish line, and we were there to see her succeed. The Cleveland Marathon is quite an exciting event with over 10,000 runners competing the 26.2 mile course, but beside the incredible accomplishment of running that far, I witnessed something even more life changing.

We would cheer on Rebekah, and then run or drive to the next spot we believed we would see her. When we got to each of these places to get a glimpse of her for a few moments as she ran by, we were amazed at how many people, different people were already there cheering and yelling and holding signs of encouragement. They didn't know her name, didn't know anything



about how hard she trained, but they were yelling just like us for her to keep going. These strangers truly cared about her and her race. From place to place, over many miles, when we would drive to another spot, once again, there would be different people cheering, yelling, and holding signs as she went by.

We were there because we know her and have known her forever and wanted to support her. These people along the route were standing or sitting there for hours along the route to encourage people they never met with cheers and signs and encouragement. After the race, I asked Rebekah how important were all the people cheering to her completing the race, and she shared they were a very important part of the race for her. I was at the race that day because I am a father and I wanted to encourage my daughter, others were there just to be an encourager!



At YFC, I think we are a lot like the people along the race route. We go into schools, detention centers, and to sporting events to cheer young people along in life. We do this because we know what a life of following Jesus is about. We want to share with young people how much of a difference Christ can make in their life and let them know how much the God of the universe cares about them. In a world that seeks to bring young people and old down on a daily basis, we want to be the ones along the route cheering like crazy and believing in them. Thank you for making this possible with your prayers and financial support. Together we are standing along the raceway of life and pointing teens to Jesus!

Reunion | Matt Mountjoy

I have written many times about how rewarding it can be to do this ministry by sharing God's word with kids and trying to make a positive impact on their lives. Through the difficulties and frustrations, it is seeing the change in some that make it all worth it. It is also the hope that we hold that God will continue to work in the lives of the kids as they grow up. Even if we don't get to necessarily see what God has done with the seeds we've tried to help spread or water, He is still working. What a great foundation for that hope we have with such a BIG God, and we don't have to rely on ourselves to actually be the ones to change the hearts of these students! God just calls us to be faithful in sharing the Kingdom and investing in people. Every now and then, we get to see or hear from someone from the ministry in the past and get incredible updates in the way their lives have changed. It is so encouraging for the work that we are called to do.

Shortly after the reunion night I wrote recently about, I received one of these encouraging messages. I was messaging back and forth with a young man who was a big part of the ministry for several years and he reached out to me after he wasn't able to attend. While he was in school, this particular young man was involved in everything at The Garage as much as he could be. His friend group became mostly kids there, he attended all our regular groups, he took part in our discipleship groups, and he came on trips. Overall we got to really know him and pour into his life. As a student he always had a great heart,

but he dealt with some major issues. He got really into hard drugs and that became a major issue for him. He was lost and into some really dark things. He was always very open in sharing about who he was and what he was going through. Over time he came to grow in his belief of God and understanding of Him. By the time he graduated high school, we saw him break away from the hard drugs and become more motivated. It was amazing to see the transformation in him but he still had a dependence on lighter substances, and while he had come to believe in Christ, he was still searching.

We were just texting about his life, his job, his new passion for jujitsu (which was incredible to see pictures of him and his physical transformation and dedication to something that takes a lot of discipline) when suddenly there was a long pause in the messages. What came next was a message I'm so grateful to get to hear. He told me what God has been doing in his life, and that he no longer smokes or drinks or uses drugs of any kind. He told me that he is growing daily and surrounding himself with good people. He then shared with me that he is so thankful for his time learning at The Garage and that his life was changed by it. He feels that he wouldn't be alive if it weren't for the people that taught and invested in him. He mentioned many other names of YFC mentors, beyond Laurie and me who helped him and made impact including Tom Shurance. Tom's impact is still felt here as he rejoices in the presence of God in Heaven. He then told me he felt like the ministry was a large part of how he was able to break free from hard drugs. Then he finished by saying he felt like God put people like us here to help people like him.

I was blown away and felt so blessed and encouraged to hear this from him. I pray that God continues to work in his life and draws him near and in a deep saving faith.

Positive Drama | Laurie Beal

Our teen parents' weekly group lesson is often timely to what's going on in the lives of the young people. The subject matter varies from healthy and positive discipline to caring for yourself while being a parent, leaning into God for strength in hard times AND in every day life, etc.

I usually plan the lessons, sometimes other leaders do and very occasionally a teen parent will say they'd like to do the lesson. We always love when the young people take ownership of the group like that!

Before one of May's meetings, one of the gals from group messaged that she had an idea for the next meeting. She explained it briefly and I was understanding it to be something we had done several years ago before this gal was part of the group. I told her that would be great!

Monday evening came along and as she was explaining the task to the group I realized it was a bit different. She opened up with recognizing out loud that the last several meetings had been kind of heavy due to all the drama that had been going on within group, noted that feelings have been hurt, and expressed that she thought we needed to focus on something positive for that night. We all agreed that sounded refreshing!

She passed out papers to everyone, including leaders, and instructed each of us to write a letter of encouragement. This letter was not supposed to be to anyone in particular...just a note of encouragement.

This was actually kind of harder than it sounds. We each contemplated what types of things to say and then folded it up and put it in a bowl to complete our assignment. This young lady then walked around the room with the bowl and had everyone take a random note. We then read it to ourselves and then we went around the room and each read the one we selected out loud. Wow! It was crazy how each of our letters hit home for each and everyone of us. We all heard something that we needed to hear that night.

We talked about how valuable a word of encouragement is to each of us. We also talked about the fact that every single one of us struggles with something and that we needed to remember this as we make efforts to encourage all those around us.

That sentiment gave our young leader another idea. She said that to finish up with the lesson we should highlight each person there that night by going around the room and having everyone say something they admire about that person....then going to the next to shower them with love...until we embraced everyone.

The tears flowed and the smiles could not be contained. It was so touching to hear everyone bring up very specific and creative examples of why they admired the others...and I, myself, loved the opportunity to cheer on and encourage every person in that room! What a beautiful example of Romans 4:32.

"Be kind to one another , tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you."

This meeting was a great start in a new direction, and I think the guys and gals embraced it even more fully because a peer took the initiative to highlight kindness!

Thanks to all who support our ministry and make moments like these possible! All glory to God!

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