



Seeing the **hope and potential**
in every young person

DEAR FRIENDS AND FAMILY,

This past year of ministry with Youth Unlimited YFC has certainly been unlike any I have ever experienced before. Whether it's the online events we are doing in place of in person events, the outdoor socially distanced events, or the seemingly never ending Zoom meetings, it's definitely been quite a year. And to be honest, it's been really difficult. However, there have been some great experiences and lessons I've learned along the way, that I'm really thankful to God for.

Recently, as I was working at my "work from home desk" (aka the dining room table), with Sage working next to me on her online schooling, we were joined by a rather beautiful visitor, that God used to speak to my heart. No, it wasn't Krista, but he certainly does use her to teach me things, and boy oh boy, is she ever beautiful! It was a beautiful, bright red cardinal, who was perched outside the window enjoying some seed.

Far too often throughout this year, people (myself included) have felt hopeless, defeated, and alone. But this little cardinal was a great reminder to me of a truth and promise of Jesus:

Matthew 28: 26-28, 34

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

What a timely reminder. God's got our backs. He's our provider, and that's a promise we can rely on. I'm so thankful for this truth and God using this beautiful little bird, to remind me about his amazing love, provision, and hope that he gives us!

THANK YOU for all of your support, prayers, and encouragement! It really does mean a lot to me, and, as difficult as this season of Covid is, it has certainly affirmed to me just how much of a gift people are in my life. You are part of that, and you are a gift, so from the bottom of my heart, thank you.

If you'd like to partner with me financially as I continue to serve and support the youth, families, and community of Stratford, you can do so by sending in the enclosed donation slip, or by visiting www.yfcstratford.com

Peace.
Grant Dodson
Director, Youth Unlimited YFC Stratford



Those 'Awe' inspiring moments in life

Let's talk about puppies for a second. I have a friend who just got a new puppy. He joined their family a few weeks ago and he is honestly the most adorable thing. He makes me go 'awe' when I see him in pictures or onscreen in a Zoom call, simply by doing what puppies do and being so darn cute. I believe those 'awe' moments and the things that make you go 'awe' are very much a part of the human experience. They are part of this little thing called humanity.

The condition of being human is something that unites all people in all the world. It is one of the things that unites us with Jesus. He was fully human, experiencing things just as we experience them, having those 'awe' inspiring moments himself while at the same time remaining fully God.

Now more than ever we need those 'awe' inspiring moments to remind us we are part of something so much bigger than ourselves and the state of the world at this moment in time.

People find their 'awe' moments in different things and experiences. Some find 'awe' in food. Some find it in an unexpected visit from a friend (the many times my friend Lesley pops in is always one of those moments as they are always unexpected!) Some find them in having the opportunity to help a friend in need, in being in the presence of grandparents, in the kindness of a stranger or a warm embrace by a loved one. And let's not forget to mention a very obvious 'awe' moment, the first time you meet a newborn baby! Come on, I dare you, try NOT to say 'awwwwe'.

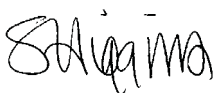
The Bible says in Psalm 66:5, "Come and see the wonders of God; His acts for humanity are awe-inspiring." (HCSB)

I have been challenging myself in the past few weeks to really look for those awe-inspiring moments in life. These days it is very easy to get stuck in a rut and only see negative or bad situations. But God has not stopped providing those awe-inspiring moments. Admittedly, I just stopped looking for them and found the need to repent of that. Circumstances may be difficult but God has not stopped working and He is bigger than all circumstances.

Most recently that awe-inspiring moment came in the form of a young girl I know sharing some artwork with me. Innocent, beautiful, awe-inspiring. The thought of this young lady who has had so many challenges in her young life, using a God-given talent to bring happiness and joy to those around her sure does make me go 'awwwwe'!

In the coming weeks I challenge all of you to be on the lookout for those awe-inspiring moments of life. We are all still human, sharing the human experience and those God-given, awe-inspiring moments are out there waiting to be found. And please know I would be happy to hear about those awe moments when you do find them, so drop me a line and let's chat!

Love and prayers to you all,



Suzi



May 2021



Beautiful Children of God;

Have you ever heard someone indifferently say “I guess all we can do is pray”? I must confess, I have heard myself say this in moments of uncertainty. Why do Christians often act as though entering the throne room of our Almighty God is some kind of last-ditch effort when we’ve run out of logical options? I think it speaks to a higher question that burns within us: does prayer really work?

In Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians, he tells them: “**Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus**”. If prayer is what we quickly mutter before a meal, or something only done while folding our hands and closing our eyes before bed, then Paul’s directive is impossible to implement. Prayer is more. I like how Dan Allender puts it in his book *To Be Told*. He defines prayer as a “*posture of dialogue that expects God to speak in the mix of our conversation... God wants us to negotiate with him regarding our future story. But to even consider doing this is absurd. God is God: Almighty, Creator, Sovereign. We are marred humans: flawed, sinful, sometimes too stupid for words. How can we negotiate with the Divine? The negotiations begin when we start taking him at his word.*”

This week, while reading through Mark’s account of Jesus calming the storm, the disciples’ words held new meaning for me. They may not have seen it as such, but they were praying when they shook Jesus awake and in desperation yelled, “Don’t you care if we drown?”

I feel like that right now concerning our youth. I am grabbing hold of Jesus and yelling, “Don’t you care if [they] drown?” As feelings of isolation, anxiety, depression, and fear for the future overwhelm our youth, will you stand with me to fast and pray? Will you be like the persistent neighbour that Jesus teaches us about in Luke 11– asking, seeking and knocking until the situation changes? What remarkable audacity, and yet it’s Jesus’ very teaching! We must take Him at His word if we desire our prayer lives to take on passion and substance.

For the next five Mondays I will be fasting from food and hosting a Zoom call at 7pm Eastern Time. This Zoom call will have one purpose—pray for the youth of Stratford and beyond. **Will you join me?** We will not be alone in this; all across Canada, YFC is fasting and praying on Mondays as we communally seek the wisdom of God in this highly divisive time. The Zoom link to our weekly calls can be found on our Facebook page, or at www.yfcstratford.com/pray.

Watching and praying with you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shane Wiebe".

Shane Wiebe



HOPE.

May 2021

"I never thought I'd be here." How many of you have thought that in the last year, or at any point in your lives? I know I have. It's so easy to feel overwhelmed and tired, especially when our lives aren't going the way we hoped they would!

"...but in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you..."

1 Peter 3:15

We are called to live in such a way that people are compelled to ask us why we have hope. Now, I'll be the first to admit that I'm probably not exuding quite that much hope these days. Why is it that I'm having a hard time exemplifying hope to those around me by my words and actions? It probably has something to do with how the last year has played out, but it also has to do with my heart, and God is certainly working on this area of my life right now.

We have hope because God has made it clear throughout all of time that he has plans for good, no matter what is happening around us. Even if people aren't constantly asking me why I have hope, I have an answer ready: God has shown me that he is good, even when I'm not sure how he will work things out in the end.

This hope is the message that we share with our students by inviting them into a life of hope in Jesus, and we walk with them as they discover what it looks like to live out that hope. Right now, things look different than what we usually do, but it is a privilege to be part of teenagers' lives!

As we are able (depending on lockdown restrictions), we have been hosting movie night events, where we teach students how to identify themes in the media they consume. We were also able to host a virtual "Florida Trip" over spring break, and both of these programs have led to some wonderful conversations about faith with our youth!

I've also discovered that a lot of teens who I know work at the grocery store closest to our new home. It is so wonderful to see them in an "unofficial" capacity and ask how they are doing - even in brief conversation, you can learn a lot about these awesome kids and offer encouragement!

I have the continued privilege of serving in our head office, and I will be spending one day a week assisting Southwestern Ontario staff with social media initiatives long-term. Plus, I'm nearly done the credentialing process, which has been an amazing way to draw closer to God while learning more about him and his word!

If you would like to join my team, would you become a monthly partner by filling out the enclosed form? Your involvement adds confidence and security to our ministry for the coming months and years, and gives me greater freedom to follow God's leading in this work. If you are already a financial partner, thank you so much!

To give online, please go to: www.yfcstratford.com/donate.

I am deeply grateful for each of you and the role that you play in our ministry! Praying that each of you are richly blessed!

With much love,

Kate Heyen
Campus Ministry Staff & SWO Social Media Manager

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HOPE.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith - more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire - may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

1 Peter 1:3-9 ESV