



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

SUZI'S UPDATE:

Life has seemingly stalled in many ways over the past 2 years, and youth ministry has been no different. Asking God each day what He has in store for me has become a good habit during this time. Asking that question each morning means rather than me laboring and toiling, I give the day over to God and wait and see. Sometimes the answers come fast and sometimes not so much.

A couple of weeks ago I asked my usual question. I began to work. At one point, I was thinking about a few students I had not heard from for a while and decided to send some texts to see how they were doing. One of the teens responded immediately. We texted briefly and arranged to meet for lunch the next day. After plans were made, she sent me the following message: "I don't know how you did it, but today was absolutely a day I needed you. So thank you for reaching out."

John 10:27 says, "My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me."

When we place our lives in His hands and surrender our own plans for His, we do hear His voice and follow. I told this young lady God knew you needed Him, I was just the tool. I somehow could hear her rolling her eyes as I said that, knowing she has heard me say it time and again. And I smiled with deep satisfaction knowing God was continuing to make Himself real to her.

KATE'S UPDATE:

I recently mentioned to a friend that Judges is my favourite book of the Bible, and we both laughed when they responded that they've never heard that one before! Really though, I think it's very relevant today, for a couple of reasons.

This book takes a hard look at what terrible things people are capable of without God. Frankly, it tells us what even God's people are capable of when he isn't the one ruling in their hearts. In a time of so much division and harshness, I think we all need to remember to invite God (and to let him!) rule in our hearts.

Judges also shows us that God can use literally anyone to work out his good plans. Think you've sinned too much in the past for him to use you? We all need character change to become more like Jesus, but God can still use you no matter where you are in your faith and discipleship. Hopefully, the impact of this for youth is fairly obvious – as Paul wrote to Timothy, "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." (1 Tim. 4:12)

Think you're too young for God to use you? Think you've made too many mistakes as you search for who you were created to be? Think again. God can use anyone – even youth who are often overlooked – to further his kingdom. That isn't just good news – it's great news.



SHANE'S UPDATE:

Even in minus 20 degrees, it's a beautiful thing to see high school students pour into the parking lot of North Park Church to grab some hot chocolate on their lunch break. They take shelter from the blowing snow in a big brown tent we've set up on the lawn (the structure has been nicknamed "the mushroom"). In mid-December, dozens of young people came out to help us assemble the shelter. If you've ever put up one of these garage-style huts, you know how inexplicably complicated they can be. Sure, there was a lot of yelling about freezing hands as we interlocked hundreds of metal pieces, but there was also a lot of laughter: like oxygen for the soul.

My heart is full of gratitude as I reflect on the experience. What makes it even better is the opportunity to connect with students there throughout the week! You see, you can plan all you want - and planning is a very good thing - but life can only be lived out in moments. Paul says, "Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus". As I write this letter to you, I am thankful the opportunity to share the love of Jesus with so many young people this winter. I'm also thankful for the fleece-lined pants my mom bought me for Christmas.

GRANT'S UPDATE:

If you know me well, you'll know that there are plenty of things I really enjoy, for example, spending time with family and friends, watching and coaching basketball, the Toronto Raptors and Blue Jays, and so on. However, you may also know there are certain things that I'm not a huge fan of, for example, my strong dislike of roller coasters. I know, plenty of people love them, and have a lot of fun on them, but for whatever reason, I'm really not a fan! Some might say it's my fear of heights that's the issue, but I like to respond to that by letting people know it's not so much fear of heights, as much as it's love of being on solid ground!

These last two years have, in many ways, been like a roller coaster for me! There have been lows, where it's easy to feel fear, panic, and anxiety creep in. But there have also been some real highs, where we're doing great, and are feeling fantastic! However, I am SO thankful that regardless of where we're at - whether we're feeling great, riding the highs of life, or are struggling and working through our low moments, that one thing that never changes, is God's continued presence in our lives!

Matthew 28:20 - Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."



Tour For Teens

Want to spend some time cycling through the countryside of Perth County, while also raising funds for valuable programs for teens? Mark your calendar for the annual Youth Unlimited YFC Tour For Teens, happening Saturday June 11th. Riders can choose from either a 25 KM, 50 KM, or 100 KM route, and are asked to raise a minimum of \$300 to participate. To register or for more information, call 519-272-1614, email us at info@yfcstratford.com.



Ministry Celebration Banquet Alternative

Unfortunately, we won't be able to gather together indoors in spring of 2022 for our annual Ministry Celebration Banquet, but fear not, we're working on an alternative that will still allow us to achieve the three goals of this event - to glorify God for all he's done over the last year, to engage our community, and to raise some funds. Stay tuned for more information!



Wanted: Silent Auction Donations

Every spring, we have a silent auction to specifically raise funds to assist with the programming, retreats, and camps we do as part of our work to serve and support the youth of our community. This spring, our silent auction will once again be happening! If you, your family, your church, or your business has a great item or service that you'd like to donate for us to auction off, please reach out to us.