

Christmas 2022

Dear Friends and Family,

Here we are - now officially into the Christmas season, and, to be honest, I love it! If you know me well, you will know that I am a huge fan of Christmas - the music, decorations, traditions, etc. I always enjoy this season with my family and all the opportunities for us to celebrate together the birth of Jesus!

I also recognize that this year has been a real rollercoaster ride, with some pretty high highs, and some pretty low lows. I am very thankful for 2022 and all that God did in it. At the same time, I am very ready for 2023 and a new year to see how God works in and through me, my family, and this ministry of Youth Unlimited YFC!

Experiencing these feelings - this joy about Christmas and this anticipation for the future, is really what Christmas is all about. When Jesus arrived on that very first Christmas, it was certainly an event that was worthy of celebration. He changed the course of humankind, both in the short term and our time on this planet, and the long term - our eternity when our time on earth is done.

*"... and they
will call him
Immanuel,
which means
'God with us.'"*

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel", which means "God with us". Matthew 1:22-23

God with us. These three powerful words changed the course of history and our eternal destiny some 2,000 years ago, and they are just as powerful today as they were then. These three words bring hope to our young people, and to all of us, that God has not left us alone. He has not abandoned us to fend for ourselves. He has sent His son Jesus to be with us, because He loves us more than we can imagine, and desires nothing more than to be in relationship and connection with us.

My prayer for you this Christmas is that you would not only know this truth, but also feel His presence in your life and family as we celebrate this season and move into 2023. He loves you and has great things in store for you!

If you'd like to partner with me and make a financial investment in my ministry with Youth Unlimited YFC, you can do so by filling out the enclosed form, or scanning the QR code below.

Merry Christmas!



Grant Dodson



FAITHFULNESS.

December 2022

Well, **this year has been a whirlwind!** To be honest, 2022 has felt even more challenging than the two years before it. Throughout the year, I returned to passages from Isaiah for reminders of God's faithfulness.

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour."

Isaiah 43:1b-3a

There have been some difficult challenges this year, both in ministry and our personal lives. It's certainly no coincidence that the struggles have come fast and furious in times when we are preparing to start new ministry initiatives, or share the gospel with youth. These verses have served as a reminder that brings me to my knees every time I read it - no matter what we are going through, **God is right there with us**, and he will not allow us to be overwhelmed when we are centered on him.

I wish I could share with you all of **the moments of joy in ministry this year**: seeing our drop-in programs thrive, watching individual teens grow as we mentor them, the grin on a youth's face when I greet them around town, and witnessing the unity developing among youth groups in our community (to name a few).

I am honoured to serve our God, who is so faithful through everything that we face; I am grateful for the people who have set an example of faithfulness for me to grow into - **many of you have been this influence** in my own life - and I hope that this is the example I pass on to the youth we serve.

As this year comes to a close, I humbly ask that you remember our ministry with your year-end giving. **Would you support my ministry with a gift by filling out the enclosed form?** Your involvement gives me greater freedom to follow God's leading in this work. If you are already a financial partner, **thank you!**

If you would like to donate online, please scan the QR code below, or go to: www.yfcstratford.com/donate

If you would like to find out more about our ministry, please reach out using my contact information below - it is my privilege to be able to journey through life and ministry in partnership with you!

With much love,

Kate Heyen
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Youth Unlimited™

YFC STRATFORD

Christmas 2022

Warm greetings to all my incredible ministry partners. I have returned from a leave and I am back to work now. Thank you for allowing me to take leave and attend to some important family things. Thank you for your continued and generous support of resources, your prayers, and your care and concern for me.

The second day after returning to work, we had the amazing opportunity to be back in the school! It had been a very long time since I was able to be on the school campus. Before last week, it was March of 2020 since I walked the halls of the high school. This was very exciting for me and for all of us. The school had organized a grade 9 event for the afternoon. There were many senior students who volunteered their time to make this happen, as well as many teachers and support staff. We were asked to come start off the afternoon and set the stage for what the kids could expect. Also, of course, we were there to provide some energy to kick things off. I was ready!

We had a few minutes on the mic between the three of us to explain some things and get the kids pumped up. We did our job then stood back to listen and watch as we had little to no information of how the day was to proceed. I watched, listened, and when I saw an opportunity, I went for it. The afternoon turned out to be great, both for the kids and maybe even more so for me. It was an incredibly life giving and energizing time. It felt good. It felt natural. It felt normal. I was back in my sweet spot!

Sometimes we may struggle to feel that sense of natural and normal. As the Christmas season approaches, I often wonder how Mary felt throughout her journey to giving birth to her divine son. The surprise news delivered by an angel, the long journey on a donkey, and the less than ideal conditions to give birth. Did she feel that she was in her sweet spot? Did anything about that entire process feel natural or normal?

I like to think it was exactly as she thought it would be. She knew she had a special calling on her life. She knew God the Father had given her this gift and she knew this was exactly as it was supposed to be. Perhaps she wished she was someplace else, but I think she also knew she was exactly where she needed to be.

"...and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger..."

Luke 2:7

May we all feel the joy of being in that 'sweet spot' this Christmas season. May we feel the peace and comfort of knowing the divine gift God delivered to us so many years ago. And may we all know the love of a Heavenly Father who guides and directs us to the right places at the right time.

Merry Christmas my friends!

Suzi

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