



Cassia Philippon, *Connecting With All Youth*

It's interesting working at an alternative school for part of my job and also working at a church youth group. The contrasting personalities of the youth are expansive. On the one hand I work with some greatly troubled youth who are dealing with unimaginable circumstances, and then on the other, I hang out with youth who are well-adjusted and just being kids. It sometimes throws my mind for a loop, especially this past month, when all in one day I experienced the whole scale of personalities from one end to the other.

In the morning at school I was called some extreme cursing names multiple times. There was no reason for it, just a youth having a really bad day and taking it out on me. Then in the evening I was at youth group and told by some youth that I was the only youth leader they felt comfortable with and trusted talking to. Hearing the second one was like a breath of fresh air after spending the whole day feeling a bit off from the morning's excitement. I have generally built tough skin around being called names, trying not to take it personally, but sometimes it gets to you and it's hard to just brush it off. I've always tried hard to never let how the youth treat me change how I treat them. I try hard to continue to love them in a way Jesus would, even if they are calling me crazy names and yelling in my face. This is because I am not here to give up on the youth because I am uncomfortable with the way they speak to me. Hearing words like "You're the only youth leader we trust" reminds me not to give up, and reminds me what could happen if I continue to push past the awkward and uncomfortable moments. These youth didn't trust me at the beginning of the year, but they are coming to give me their trust.

So, with the grace of God, I continue to push through my feelings and let the words roll off my back, because the names don't mean much in the grand scheme of building relationships. Whether it is a youth who is well-adjusted and in a good place, or one who is navigating some extremely deep waters, I will not love them differently. And, hopefully, this youth will one day feel the love of Jesus and know that I didn't let the words they said change the way I show love to them. Thank you for being a part of this ministry with me!



Grant Nelson,
Connections in Cumberland

We all know how important connections with other people are.

Whether the connections are through a sports team, hobby or a common interest, there are many ways we connect with people from all walks of life. Floor hockey on Thursday nights in Cumberland provides such an opportunity.

Youth come for the hockey and to be with their friends; however, the time spent battling for the hockey ball, sharing snacks and listening to the half-time talk creates a deeper bond. This bond is important because it allows us as the volunteers to speak into their lives in a unique way. It's not always through speaking that we make the biggest impact. Sometimes it's by listening. Other times it's simply our consistency.

Recently, I ran into a few youth who are nearing graduation and spent many years playing hockey with us. I was able to chat with them briefly and it's encouraging to know they still remembered me and the fun times we had playing hockey together. My prayer is that long after they have finished hanging out with us on Thursday nights, they come to see that on a regular basis they rubbed shoulders with Jesus, who is at work through us.



Keagan Preston, *"Can I come to you?"*

"Can I come to you if I can't handle the things going on around me?" Zayne asked me as we walked back to the drop-in centre.

Leading up to this point, things had been running smoothly and as they usually would on a Friday night at The Linc Youth Center. I was going around, connecting with all the students as I usually do, when a boy came in, distraught because he had left his wallet on the bus. Another youth worker comforted him and tried to help him. Some time passed, he returned and everyone was eager to see what had happened.

Zayne was one of the boys who had run out in the excitement of everything, but when he returned he wasn't acting like himself. He was being rude to the other staff, shouting and swearing. Then he stormed out the building. I managed to catch up with him, but at first he refused to talk because he was so angry and told me to leave. I said, "I'm not here to tell you off for what you did; I want to know how you're feeling. Come with me and we'll go get Slurpies on the way back."

We walked to the local store and as we went along, Zayne explained to me how he was feeling and why he acted the way he did. Soon the anger left him and he was back to his usual self. As we were nearing The Linc building I told him that he couldn't talk to the staff the way he did. He replied "I know, I need to apologize to them." Then he asked me that question: "Can I come to you if I can't handle the things going on around me?" I replied instantly with "Yes, of course."

For him to know that he has someone who is there for him and will listen to him - that's one of the reasons I love this job. I am able to be that person who youth feel safe coming to, and am able to talk them through their emotions, struggles and pain, through the strength God gives me.

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Taeryn Novak, *Never-Ending Love*

I was at a youth retreat last month and there was a girl in my room, Haley, who had been to the camp during the summer and decided to come to this retreat on her own. At first she seemed shy, but she quickly opened up. Late on the first night another camper and I were chatting about how they felt they need to do certain things to fit in at school. Haley was sitting with us, nodding in agreement sometimes, and as the conversation started to focus more on faith, I could tell she was listening intently to what we were saying. The next morning Haley and I went canoeing together, and as we paddled around in the calm water, I asked her if she went to church or was involved with a youth group in her town. She said no, and told me she wasn't a Christian but she admired the ones she had met at camp. I asked her if there was ever a time she felt a connection to God. "Actually," she said, "there was this one time at camp this summer when we were standing by the ocean, with the stars shining really bright above us. We sang that song about the overwhelming,

never-ending love of God... I felt really connected to him in that moment."

As the weekend went on I prayed that Haley would realize how much God loves her and wants to be in relationship with her. During the last session the speaker shared about God's love for us and as people filed out of the room I asked Haley what she thought of the session. "It was good," she said. "I'm tired, though, so I found it hard to concentrate."

In that moment I heard God whisper "Trust me." Trust that he will never give up on Haley, or any of the youth that went on this retreat. Youth today are searching for belonging. The world tells them they need to look within to 'find themselves', while also telling them that if they don't look a certain way or do certain things, they'll never fit in. But God is at work in their stories. He meets them where they are and calls them into something so much better. Thank you for your partnership in all that God is doing in the lives of young people in the Valley!

Thoughts of a Youth Pastor

Randy Dyck, *Some Things Never Change*

I have had the privilege of being involved in the lives of teens for over thirty years. During this time, many things have changed. There have been changes in hairstyles, the way teens dress, and the styles of music they listen to. Even some words or phrases that were common once now have an altogether different meaning.

During this time, there have also been major changes in technology. I used to call a teen at home to connect with them. Now many teens' homes don't even have a home phone; instead, most family members have their own phone and carry it around with them.

Despite all the changes that I have seen in our culture and in the lives of teens over the years, there are a couple of things that have not changed. These two aspects in the lives of teens have been and will continue to be a constant: the need that teens have to be loved, and the desire they have to belong. The changes we have seen in teen culture and in technology do not change these constants.

I challenge you to find ways in which you can demonstrate the love of God to teens and provide for them a place of belonging, recognizing that in the eyes of God, every teen has worth.



Robbie Taylor, *Seasons*

The glorious, sunny weather we have had recently has announced to us that it is Spring! And just like that the cold dark days of winter quickly fade into mere distant memories. As spring hits, it's amazing what the sunny days do- with brighter nights and warmer days you almost feel a boost of energy and the motivation to finally start that project you were planning or begin a fitness goal you were delaying. With the changing of the seasons you get the sense of a new chapter beginning. I guess that's why we have spring cleaning- dusting off the cobwebs of the winter and getting ready in expectation of summer.

I've found it so interesting how the seasons of our climate can mirror or remind us of the seasons of our lives. There are ups and downs, joys and sorrows in life. King Solomon reminds us in Ecclesiastes that there is a time and season for everything in life. Often the challenge in the Christian journey is that we forget to reflect and see what season of life we might be in.

Sometimes we try to see fruit in our lives when we are outside of the growing season and then wonder where God is or what we are doing wrong.

Working with teens and people in general, it can be difficult to remember that we are all going through different stages and seasons. Knowing where people are at is important if we want to help serve others well. Sometimes during a week I get to chat with students that aren't sure where they are at in life or with Jesus. Helping them find what season they're in helps them see forward but also serves as a reminder that seasons change and things aren't always going to be this way. Life's seasons will change, some quickly and some with overlap, but the journey isn't static. Jesus wants to lead us through it all.

I can often find myself overwhelmed by whatever the current season may be, but then I remember the promises of our good God, and I am so thankful. The truth is that our hearts can celebrate and find joy in all circumstances when we remember that God is always with us, he never leaves us, and he gives us what we need to get through every day. Joy or sorrow, energy or exhaustion, business or stillness- Jesus provides and sustains us. As we eagerly anticipate Spring, so we at Youth for Christ anticipate God's work in the lives of the teens we have the privilege to serve.

Lunch Program

Please be praying for us as we launch a lunch program at Vanier School and connect with and serve local youth.

PLEASE JOIN US AT THIS YEAR'S BANQUET!

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