

Hi friends and family:

I'm happy to share with you that have been offered a full time ministry opportunity to high school students with Youth Unlimited, Youth for Christ, in the Quinte area. This letter is about partnering with me, but first, I'd like you to understand who I am as a man, what the message is, and the means we will share it.

The MAN

I did not do high-school well. I struggled to reconcile the realities of life with the concept of who I thought God ought to be, how quickly He ought to do things, and who I'd been told he was. I dove into addiction and partying; running from the God of my childhood. This led me to several suspensions, threats of expulsion and finding myself without residence at 17.

But then something awesome happened; God saved me. He broke through all of my objections and hurts. He melted my heart of stone and gave me a heart of flesh. This happened in the summer after my grade 12 year. I still required several credits in order to graduate and was welcomed back to finish school. I boarded with a couple from church, started a bible study in the school chapel and became very vocal about the saving power of Jesus Christ.

With the help of a 4 credit co-op at my church I graduated. When asked for memorable moment for the yearbook, I shared: "One night I'll never forget is the night I hit rock bottom and finally decided to submit my will to the Lord." When asked of my future plans I simply wrote: "Sharing the joy I've found with the world and showing them how they can achieve it."

The last 15 years has been various realizations of this goal, all the while being shaped and formed by the Lord's mighty hand. At 18 I didn't know that praying, "*Use me Lord*" would at times leave me "*feeling used*" by others, and I was definitely unaware that in reality I was praying "*Lord, break me and mould me; make me useable*".

God's hand guided me through life, business, family, ministry, my relapse/crash and recovery year at the Teen Challenge program. That year did more to reveal the heart of God than any other; transforming me from a position of constant striving to the quiet confidence of a son. Towards the end of my tenure there I was encouraged by the word of a visiting pastor claiming that I'd grown from a wild bulldog into a well-trained watchdog; only moving at the instruction of his Master. (I'm glad he didn't say poodle)

It is at God's instruction that I applied to serve with Youth Unlimited. I was surprised and delighted to be offered a position in our home of Prince Edward County. My family has attended a local church here for nine years, serving where needed and being loved on by our church family. My lovely wife (a lifelong County girl) has taught elementary students at Sunrise Christian Academy in Picton for 11 years. We've spent summers at Sandbanks, gotten angry at tourism traffic, munched on farm-stand veggies, fresh eggs and local pickerel. Our roots are here, and I can think of no better place to pour out our lives to advance the gospel.

"And we know that all things work together for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to his purpose"

The MESSAGE

When asked "What is the gospel?" and "Why go to church?", most teens say that it makes bad people good. Many have concluded that if moral excellence is the goal, you can get there without religion. To some extent they're right.

The message I hope to bring is to reframe and affirm the gospel in its proper context. The gospel is about God. It is how He makes much of His Name; not by making bad people good or good people better, rather about making *dead people come alive*. It is a complete restructuring of ones worldview with the Glory of God displayed in Christ at the center. Thus, moral excellence is not *the point*, but rather *a bi-product* of pursuing Christ.

We live in an age of tolerance. The Christian message is repentance. The balancing act for me moving forward will be to truthfully preach that, while there is a way that seems right to a man, it does lead to death. That your heart is not something to be followed; Jesus is! Finally, that your “true self” can only be realised when defined and informed within the confines established by your Creator.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God.—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do”

The MEANS

Youth for Christ is defined as a para-church organisation. This means alongside the Church; not “without” the Church. The reality however is that there are many teens who will never have the opportunity to experience the beauty of what the Church can offer.

Teens get lost in the fringes, and not everyone comes from an environment that will encourage growth. This is why we go to them. The job is simple; share the gospel. This does not mean editing the word of God, or trying to create a new gospel that is more relevant. Rather, it is showing the relevance of the gospel for every age and culture, trusting the Holy Spirit to draw teens into relationship with Christ.

Practically this means continuing our on-campus ministry, joining forces with local youth leaders for youth events. It means exciting and enticing adventure trips, extreme sports, concerts or sporting events. It means coaching sport teams, or helping strength and conditioning classes. It means encouraging young musical talent and seeking out venues for young bands to play. But let me be frank; any opportunity to serve youth is for one purpose: to share the gospel.

This means we will do anything to engage and equip youth to know and follow Jesus. Pastor Craig Groeschel of Lifechurch.ca says “We will do anything short of sin to reach people who don’t know Christ.”

When students come to faith, I’ll work hard to disciple them but also will strongly encourage (re) integration into the local church fellowship. We are saved into the family of God: I think it best if every 16-year-old should have a friend in their 60’s.

In conclusion, I am excited to have the opportunity to serve with Youth Unlimited (YFC). I pray you will consider partnering with me to reach youth today with the Good news of Jesus Christ

Sincerely,
Eli V and family

