



Tom Gerberich – October 2020



Youth Ministry

When I started in youth ministry at H2O a couple of months ago, our middle school and high school students were meeting together as one group. It seemed to make a lot of sense as there really weren't many high school students, and those that were coming were freshman and sophomores. However, as I started to talk to some students and parents, I realized that we had a lot more high school students than I first thought. After some conversations, I learned that there were a handful of high school students who didn't come to youth group because the group was so young (we have a lot of 6th graders). I wanted to reach these older students, so I started to think and talk through ways to reach these students and what it might look like to split the middle school and high school youth groups. As I talked with more people, I learned that in the past we had tried splitting them into two groups, but it didn't go well because only about 5-7 high school students attended, it never gained traction, and slowly fizzled out.

It was a tough situation. There was definitely a need for a separate high school ministry, but

there was also a fear (from me, students, and other leaders) that it wouldn't go well if we split. Our leadership team met and really felt that the need of these high school students outweighed the risk, and although we were scared it would flop, we decided to push past those fears and split the middle school and high school youth groups. And praise God that we did! It has been going SO well! We've had 15-18 students at our high school group (which includes at least 4 that wouldn't attend when it was a joint group) and have been able to dig deeper into God's Word with them as we can better gear messages to them & their current spiritual depth. We've also been able to launch small groups within the high school group, which have gone really well. These small groups have been a great way to get youth to process the message and form their own thoughts about it, while providing leaders the opportunity to get to form deeper relationships and to speak into these students lives.



Pictured above are some of our awesome leaders meeting with students in small groups during our last high school youth group (sorry some are blurry... there's a reason I'm not a photographer).

The Church.

I have a huge heart for the Church. Obviously I have a heart for H2O church, but even moreso, my heart has always been for the Church. Church with a capital 'c' is the body of believers all around the world, while church with a lowercase 'c' is the local church. I think both are extremely important, but many people are so focused on their individual church that they forget about the greater Church. God has given me a heart for both, but especially the Church. Because of that, this

past month, I've been trying to connect with others doing youth ministry in Bowling Green. I've seen firsthand the benefits that can come from churches being united in the Gospel as I actually came to faith at a multi-church youth group gathering when I was a teenager.

During this past month, I have been able to meet with YoungLife staff, part-time youth pastors, full-time youth pastors, and FCA staff in Bowling Green to talk about youth ministry. At first it was a little challenging because it seemed like there weren't many people doing youth ministry in BG. However, as I continued to pray about it, God opened doors for me to connect with more like-minded people. One instance of this was really cool! Without knowing I was doing this, another youth pastor actually reached out to my colleague Tyler and I to see if we wanted to grab coffee. I was super excited, but also unsure of what he had in mind. He shared with us how he had such a heart for working together as churches to reach teenagers with the Gospel and how God had put it on his heart to reach out to us. As he said that, I was blown away, as that's exactly how I feel. It's awesome how God works and how he can put the same thing on two people's hearts who don't even know each other. At the end of that meeting, we decided to try to get all of the area youth workers together in November and are super excited for all of the potential opportunities that could come from that group!

PRAY

Your prayers are so important. I truly believe that prayer is powerful and would greatly appreciate you spending some time in prayer for one or all of the things on this list! Also, if there are ways I can be praying for you, please let me know!

- Bowling Green Local Schools just decided to stay 100% online at least until February. Many parents & students are struggling with this and it has caused some rifts in the community. Pray for unity for the community. Pray for motivation & community for students. Pray for me to find creative ways to meet students when I still can't be in the schools.
- Pray that as we try to bring together all of the local youth workers that we can find ways to partner together & further the Gospel amongst teenagers in Bowling Green.
- We are having a fallmost retreat (not quite our normal fall retreat) geared towards our college students this Saturday! Pray that a lot come and that our community grows stronger in relationships with each other and the Lord. Pray for freshman who are struggling to find community to find it.

Until next time,
- Tom

