

August 2020

# Celebration Magazine

*A publication celebrating what Jesus is doing at Clear Creek*



**“Dozens of students left the gathering that night knowing that, first of all, they are not alone in the struggles they are going through right now, and secondly, there is hope in Jesus and in relationship with others who know him.”**

*from The Power of Testimony*

One of the most quoted facts about happiness goes as follows:

- 50% of happiness is determined by your genes.
- 10% of happiness is determined by your circumstances.
- 40% of happiness is determined by your attitude and actions.

# Focus on the 40%

The bad news is 60% of your happiness is out of your control. You can't change your genes or whether or not it rains. The good news? God has given you control over your attitude and action, which impacts your happiness. So, are you anxious about the school year, worried about work, stressed about the election? Focus on the 40%.

## Here's how:

**1. Prioritize praise.** Make praise your first priority every day. Praise is expressing approval or admiration specifically to God. It's focusing on who He is, what He has done and is doing. It recalibrates your mind to remember God is good and God is in control. Before you open your eyes in the morning try beginning the day with the words "Thank you, Lord." Before anxiety attacked, prioritized praise.



**2. Run your race.** Hebrews 12:1 says, *"let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us..."* God made you with a unique mix of experiences, interests, and gifts that no one else has to run a race that no one else has. There is no better you than you. So, what is your race? How will you run it today?

**3. Enhance your health.** God created us as 3-dimensional beings made of body, soul and mind, which is why Paul says, *"Don't you know that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit..."* (1 Corinthians 6:19). In other words, whatever happens to one impacts the others. This is why poor diet, exercise and sleep habits negatively impact our emotional health and our happiness. Feeling down? Enhance your health. Go for a walk, substitute a soda for water, and go to bed earlier. Your physical health will improve your happiness.

**4. Serve someone.** Jesus said, *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."* (Acts 20:35) One definition of blessed is to be "blissfully happy or contented." Jesus understands the significance of service in a happy life. As Creator of all, he wove service and happiness together. Blessed people, happy people, serve others. Feeling low? Pick someone else up. Suffering from sadness? Serve someone.

You can head towards happiness when you ignore what you can't control and focus on 40%.

# Growing Disciples During Corona



Many of us found ourselves shutting down in all aspects when we were given orders to shut everything down and stay home several months ago. I think that for most of us we shut down mentally, emotionally, physically and even spiritually. Maybe we were asking God, “why is this happening to our economy, to our health, to our social structure, to our schedules, etc....?” Perhaps God answered your questions but maybe He still hasn’t.

But our current circumstances should not be hindering our growth as Christians who are trying our best to live like Jesus wants us to and continue to grow more like Him every day, one step at a time. We have been blessed to see two precious, young souls make the decision to be baptized into God’s Family recently, even during this pandemic. Colt Isenberg and Chapman Mathis both continued to pray and study and listen to the Lord’s teaching even though they could not come to Bible classes or corporate worship for several weeks.



These young people have parents who continued to teach and model what being a disciple means and helped them in their decision to be baptized into the Family. What Satan meant for evil in shutting down churches actually caused faith to grow in Chapman and Colt.

And speaking of intentional parenting during this crazy time, Wylie Collier is learning a different scripture each week and several families (Mitchell, Aldridge, Ossman) even had their children memorize scripture and do a Facebook challenge with others resulting in children committing scripture to memory which they might not have done if lives had stayed “normal.”



Satan tried to use this unusual season to take away our faith and trust in God, but these children under the guidance of their parents were wise enough to use the time to grow closer to God and take steps of faith toward Him. Thank God for pliable hearts set on Him!

# Change can be tough, but it also brings opportunity.

When schools, offices and shops shut down in March things felt pretty grim. As Christians were praying and thinking about what to do next, God was working on the harvest. One study claimed that during the months of Covid quarantine 21% of *non-Christian* college students read the Bible, listened to a Christian podcast, or watched an online worship. Students were looking for spiritual help and desperately seeking community.

Many of Clear Creek's small groups began meeting at the start of summer and soon found new, healthy rhythms of faith. One small group ended up being a God-send for Clara, a student at UTC. Clara has been on a year long journey of faith (see *Celebration October 2019*), but is still very much a non-Christian. She doesn't have much interest in going to a church building, but being in someone's house in a casual environment was fine. The fact that this small group had lots of children made it even better for Clara.



*"... during the months of Covid quarantine 21% of non-Christian college students read the Bible, listened to a Christian podcast, or watched an online worship."*

Her first week in the small group, Clara spoke up and shared some *unique* opinions. She also played with the kids and became friends with one teenager who is particularly quiet. Clara came back the next week and reported that she was now best friends with the quiet teenager. They were exchanging "Good morning" text messages each day and talking all about life. That same meeting, the small group split into smaller groups and asked each person to pray. Clara said she had never prayed out loud before, but she was willing to pray a one sentence prayer she'd heard as a kid.

The next week, Clara wound up playing with all of the kids. And praying again. This time she used her own words in a short prayer. One week later, Clara had become the informal children's minister. She surrounded herself on the couch with 4 girls and led them through some discussion. When it was time to pray, one girl said Clara should pray first because she was the oldest. Clara objected that she didn't really know how to, but the young girl assured Clara it was easy and she'd be fine. Clara then launched into a great prayer that was a blessing for her and all the girls.



It's been wonderful seeing God use a different environment to help Clara take her next steps. Clara already had Christian, college friends through UCM. Now she has a loving community of families to keep encouraging her. And she has to keep coming back because she's the children's minister!

# *The Power of Testimony*

The summer of 2020 for the Clear Creek Youth Ministry, like much of the rest of 2020, was unusual. However, unusual does not always have to mean bad. With a packed-to-the-brim summer effectively scrapped due to COVID, the youth ministry had to get creative and think outside the box on how to use the time effectively and move further into discipleship.

The Lord proved faithful in these pursuits. The summer was spent with the focus on testimony. All four interns took a turn on a Wednesday night sharing their stories and there were multiple discussion times and lessons dedicated to getting the students thinking about their own stories. The summer concluded with one of the graduated seniors, Luke Tucker, rising to the occasion and opting to share his story with the youth group on August 5th.

Luke - being a student who was widely respected and influential in the group - shared his story involving struggles of feeling isolated and left out as a kid, times of tension with friends and family, and ultimately the power of having Christ-like friends and a relationship with Jesus. As a respected senior, many students did not know the struggles Luke faced. In turn, many were inspired knowing that someone who is as grounded and influential as he is shared in the struggles many of them are facing today.

Luke was able to demonstrate the power of sharing our testimony. Dozens of students left the gathering that night knowing that, first of all, they are not alone in the struggles they are going through right now, and secondly, there is hope in Jesus and in relationship with others who know him.



# Abundantly Blessed

*“The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed; those who help others are helped.” Proverbs 11:25*

I have a family member who used to attend Clear Creek. For whatever reason or life circumstances, she stopped attending several years ago. She is de-churched as we sometimes call it. I see her at family gatherings and wonder where her heart is with Jesus. I have seen her posts on Facebook seem angry and dismissive of the gospel. When tough times arise, I've tried to reach out and be supportive, but you can tell she keeps a distance not wanting anyone to remind her that 'God's got this'.

When our church provided a gift card to our small group to bless whoever we felt God laying on our heart, she was heavy on mine. In this current season of life, she has been in a tough living situation and a custody battle, amidst other personal struggles. She opened up to me about how much the custody battle was costing her, but she knew it was worth it. She knew it had to be fought for the betterment of her son's life.

When I approached our group about giving her the gift card, many came forward saying that they had special memories with her, knew her, and of course wanted to bless her. I sent it with a card in the mail (who doesn't love surprise fun mail?!) and a few days later received a text message and a card soon after that read, "Thank you so much.

You have no idea how touched I am by such an amazing gesture, and to have people (some of whom I don't even know) reach out to help and encourage me at this time in my life. This year has been a really tough year, financially, emotionally and really in every regard -- and this act of kindness is truly humbling and so special. I can't thank each of you enough. You've been a blessing from afar in the most difficult time. "

Our whole group rejoiced knowing that it touched her heart and shared the love of Jesus with her.



# Silver Lining

*(noun) something that the most optimistic people look for during a stressful time.*

Most people tend to focus their attention on the issues that are causing the stress. That's me, I'm most people. This year has definitely brought on more than its share of challenges. But I love how God takes what we consider challenges and creates opportunities for Christians to remind us of his love and his promise.



As the world was shutting down due to the global pandemic of COVID-19, my life was changing with a recent medical diagnosis. Adjusting to managing a new lifestyle, adapting to working and teaching from home, all while not having the physical connection with friends was enough to put my anxiety levels on high alert.

As an adult, we sort of just roll with the punches and complain about the obstacles, as we are overcoming them. But as a parent, it made me realize this was a change for my son as well. I was so focused on myself and my own struggles, I didn't realize that my son was struggling alone. It took him having a complete breakdown with fear over all of the recent and sudden changes for me to see that this was my opportunity to remind him of God's love for him. I reminded him that we have nothing to be afraid of, because of the promise in Jeremiah 29:11.

This was an opportunity to gravitate towards Christ and not toward our fears or our obstacles. Reading scripture together gave us hope and peace knowing that we serve a God greater than our fears. Peace consumed us both with the reassurance that God will bring us through this difficult time. We then became like the optimistic people, recognizing the things we can be grateful for. Would you believe it? Me reminding my son of God's promise, helped ease my fears because it made me set an example, as a disciple maker of Christ.

# The 5th Grade Trip

This would have been the 15th annual trip and rite of passage to be together one final time just us before we venture into the youth group. It's usually not an event missed by many. However, 2020 had different plans and our trip turned into a day outside in the heat with a much smaller number than usual.

The day started with wonder of which of our church friends would be coming. The anticipation was exciting as most of us had yet to see each other in-person in over four months. What could have been another time cancelled, God used instead to draw us back together and remind us of his love..

## ***We gathered because...***

We wanted to see our friends, give our time, and serve others.

## ***We connected with others by....***

Talking with friends, writing cards to people, having fun swimming, and praying together.

## ***We witnessed God in ...***

How our children's ministers shared God's truth and encouraged us, seeing our friend Maddie well after an accident, hearing the good update about Mr. Dan, and seeing the smiles when we visited people.

Our day eventually came to a close as did our time in children's ministry. We were each given a devotional book and encouraged to deepen our personal faith in God as we move to the youth group. We walked away grateful for our years in children's ministry. All the teachers and volunteers have loved us, mentored us, and taught us a lot about God and the Bible. They have also made it a lot of fun to praise God and serve others.

Thank you to our church family for helping us spiritually grow as we have physically grown from babies to preteens!

*Contributors: Wyatt Beasley, Hannah Johnston, Scout Jolley, and Rory Oleksik*



# *The Metamorphosis*



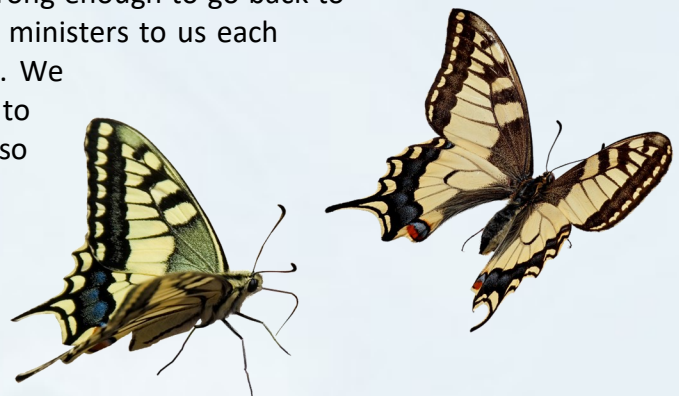
Cry for the Broken has ministered to many women on the streets of Chattanooga. They all touch our hearts in different ways. There is one woman in particular, we will call her Sarah, who we always knew could transition off the streets more easily than many other women because of her character, her conversation, and her brilliant mind. Sarah had a rough childhood. She experienced abuse from a young age and was introduced to the streets early on.

Sarah called us many times over the years but never for herself. She always called letting us know that another lady needed our help and she would tell us firmly, "I'm not going anywhere with y'all but I will wait with her til you get here." We always respected Sarah's boundaries and was grateful that she was there to help.

Then one day we received a call from Sarah letting us know that she had just gotten out of jail and wanted to stay sober. She came to church with us one Sunday and shared her testimony with Gary Carson. She then began coming to Bible study each Tuesday.

Sarah loves sharing her story with others, telling them how much Jesus has done for her. Tonight at Bible study she said, "God had His heart and His hand on me the whole time. I thank God every day for being in my life. There is just a peace inside of me now. I didn't have that before."

Sarah is looking forward to the day she feels strong enough to go back to the streets to minister to others. For now, she ministers to us each day through phone calls, messages, and study. We saw Sarah's call back when she discipled to women by referring them to us. Now she does so with Jesus in her heart!



# THE PERFECT TEAM

With summer only weeks away and pandemic-related uncertainty riding high, four college students waited for the phone call telling them whether or not to pack their things and head to Chattanooga for two months of hands-on disciple-making. When the green light came, High School interns Andy White, and Anica Gilbert, and Middle School interns Carissa (CJ) Conley and Evan Lancaster quickly began preparing for what we all knew would be a unique and unforgettable summer experience.

For the Youth Ministry, this summer was... different. No dorm hijinks, no long van rides, no plane flights to Haiti, and no running around the church building at 3:00am with Nerf guns. We didn't blob at summer camp, team-up with other churches to paint a house, or run a VBS for kids in the inner city.



But for all the things we knew we couldn't do, there was one thing – the most important thing – that was non-negotiable: discipling students. A lot of the magic of the summer occurs outside of the officially scheduled meetings. Andy and Anica wasted no time arranging get-togethers with High School students, and CJ and Evan did the same for the younger students. There was laughter, there were tears. Struggles were brought to light, and kids were prayed for and

encouraged in their faith. Andy and Anica pressed hard to encourage leadership and initiative from the older students, and CJ and Evan paid special attention to helping our younger friends feel that youth group is a place where they can connect and grow.

Each intern shared their inspiring personal testimony with our group, which led to many valuable follow-up conversations with students. While all four brought something very unique to our group, together they were the perfect team for an imperfect summer, and we were very blessed to have them.

# Meet Gavin & Deidra

Our win at Clear Creek is to help someone take their next step to become more like Jesus. Though everyone's next step is completely dependent on where they are (and will therefore look different) this is the metric we use to evaluate everything we do in our church family. But what is even better than helping someone take their next step? Creating an environment where helping someone take their next step means showing them how they can help other people take their next step. Then they can show others...who can show others...and on it goes. So with that in mind, I would like for you to meet...

Gavin and Deidre.

Gavin and Deidra loved their small group. It was challenging. It was safe. It provided care. It's the only group they have ever been a part of in all their time at Clear Creek, and the relationships that were created made it feel less like friends and more like family.

Gavin and Deidre decided to leave their small group. It challenged them to find and take their next step to be more like Jesus. It provided a safety and care that they realized others didn't have but that they could help provide. They realized that there are many people who, in all their time at Clear Creek, need relationships that make others feel less like friends and more like family.

Gavin and Deidre are starting a new small group. They want it to challenge others to find their next step to be more like Jesus. They will make sure it provides safety and care for those who are in the group. They will use it as a place to launch out future leaders to go and find people who, in all their time at Clear Creek, haven't been able to form relationships that make others feel less like friends and more like family.

Be like Gavin and Deidre.



# God Used Those Cookies

Each year on the day before school starts, Clear Creek hosts a “Teacher Luncheon” for 5 of our Hixson Community Schools. We do our best to present a cheerful atmosphere by decorating the tables in the gym and provide a delicious meal to show our appreciation for these teachers. We have our Clear Creek kids that attend these schools come to help serve drinks and desserts to these teachers.

When time rolled around to begin the planning of this event we knew that our usual way of showing love to these teachers would look a little different. We had to think outside the box. We knew that many teachers would not feel comfortable coming into our building, much less eating out during this time. So, we began to brain storm a way that we could reach every teacher in these 5 community schools.

It was finally decided that we would give each teacher a back to school cookie. We ordered cookies from 2 local bakeries. A few of our students that attend these schools met at the building (with masks on) to help place a label on each cookie wrapper. The labels had a little note letting the teachers know that Clear Creek Church is praying for them.

Once we had finished placing labels and counting out the number of cookies, we all gathered together to pray over these cookies. Each person that prayed had their own unique prayer for these schools, teachers and students. After we prayed I thought to myself, “How cool is it that our God hears every one of these prayers. He knows all of our worries and He loves us enough to listen to each of our prayers.”

It was not 2 hours before I started receiving text messages from teachers saying how much they needed that encouragement and would love the continued prayers from us. The level of anxiety and stress these teachers were experiencing was difficult to hear. I know that God used those cookies to try to calm these teachers. He used those cookies to let them know they are appreciated and loved. He used them to reassure these teachers that He is with them and offers them comfort and rest.

If even for 5 minutes while these teachers ate their cookie, each one of them knew that someone thought of them and was praying for them as they start this school year.

This year looked very different for our annual “Teacher Luncheon”, but instead of providing a meal for just some of the teachers in our community, Clear Creek was able to give every teacher in the Hixson Community a treat to show them God’s love (close to 400 teachers). It is a great to know that God has blessed Clear Creek with resources so we can show our community teachers they are appreciated and loved. We serve a mighty God!

