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Celebration Magazine

A publication celebrating what Jesus is doing at Clear Creek



"She is sacrificing some of her convenience to demonstrate to her children the belief that if neighbors really matter, you want to share Jesus with them."

from It's a Beautiful Day in This Neighborhood



2020 Vision

Do you know the one thing that great batters in baseball have in common? Great vision.

In his best-selling book *The Sports Gene*, David Epstein found that the average eyesight for Major League players' is an incredible 20/13, while Minor League players' eyesight averaged a little worse, and college students were statistically lower than that. In other words, their vision changed their game.

This is true for life, as well.

King Solomon wrote, "*Where there is no vision, the people perish...*" (Proverbs 29:18) You want to have a great year? Improve your vision. Great vision enables you to avoid pitfalls and take advantage of new opportunities.

So, do you have a clear vision for this year? Here are 5 ways to have 20/20 vision for 2020.

Ask God. Ephesians 2:10 says that God has prepared good works "*in advance for us to do.*" If God prepared the plans, then ask Him to show you the plans. Ask Him, "What do you want me to see and who do you want me to serve?" He will show you.

Ask a Spiritual Mentor. Paul told the Corinthian Christians to follow his example as he followed the example of Christ, because every growing Christian needs a spiritual mentor (1 Corinthians 11:1). A spiritual mentor is a trustworthy Christ-follower who is further along the discipleship path. So, ask a spiritually mature Christian you trust how God has taught him/her to see clearly. God may use their answer to clarify your vision.

Find Friends with Great Vision. Vision is enhanced or limited by the company we keep (1 Corinthians 15:33). How can we expect vision-less friends to give us vision for our lives? Ask yourself, "Do my closest friends have a clear vision for pursuing Jesus this year?" If not, then it may be time for an upgrade.

Stay Focused. Clear vision is more than seeing; it's about focus. God has given you this year for the purpose of knowing Him and making Him known to others. He will give you greater clarity as you focus on your purpose.

Obey Quickly. When God shows you what to do – do it! He rewards immediate obedience with additional opportunities. Just ask the faithful servant in Jesus' parable of the talents. He was faithful with what he was given, so his master gave him more opportunity (Matthew 25:23).

It's a Beautiful Day in This Neighborhood

A few years ago we initiated the idea “Neighbors Matter” with the thought that we should live our lives believing that anyone in our social and geographic circles are our neighbors and they matter – to us and to God. That idea has taken root and grown so much that even our children are taking it to heart.

One such example of putting this idea into practice is in the Southland Point Neighborhood and in the homes of the Goodrich and the Downs families. A family with 3 girls moved into the neighborhood from across the country and 2 of the girls enrolled in Middle Valley Elementary. Ava Goodrich soon became good friends with the older girls and started bringing them to church with her. Ava, obviously, could not drive them herself so Laura had to agree to add 2 more children to their vehicle each Wednesday night, making a total of 5 children to 1 adult and get there no later than 6:30.

Was it always easy for Laura to get homework done, feed her children, round up 5 kiddos and get them all here to learn about Jesus every week? No, but she did it because “Neighbors Matter” to her kids, to her and to God. She is sacrificing some of her convenience to demonstrate to her children the belief that if neighbors really matter, you want to share Jesus with them.

A couple months later, Tyler (the girls’ dad) was in a terrible car accident. The Goodrich’s weren’t home but Katie Downs (another neighbor and CC member) was. What could the girls’ mom, Gina, do with 3 kids and a husband now being rushed to the hospital? She knocked on Katie’s door, explained what happened and asked her to watch her 3 children. Was it convenient for Katie? No. Was it easy? Probably not. But Katie didn’t hesitate and said, “Of course!” Because that is what good neighbors do and “Neighbors Matter” to God and to God’s people. And just think of the lesson being learned by Katie’s 2 boys.

Because Tyler’s condition was life-threatening and they had no family here in Tennessee, the Goodrich and Downs family became their family. Meals were provided, babysitting was done and this hurting family was blessed by these Christian neighbors. Slowly Tyler began to recover physically but could not work causing some financial strain on the family as well. The struggle was shared in small groups at Clear Creek and prayers were prayed, casseroles were made and gift cards were given. All this was done in Jesus’ name because “Neighbors Matter” to us and to God.

Tyler, Gina and the girls have been amazed by the outpouring of love from their neighbors (Goodrich and Downs) as well as others from Clear Creek – so much so that they came as a family for worship one Sunday just to see what this church was like. I met Tyler and Gina that day and heard from his lips how he should not be alive but he is and is so thankful. We talked about how God must not be finished with him yet and was overwhelmed by how God was taking care of his family through their good neighbors and through this church body.

The children in these families are learning from their parents what it means to be good neighbors by living in community with others and sharing Jesus in word and in action. What a wonderful testimony of how God can work through one young child who is not afraid to reach out and befriend newcomers and want to make sure that they learn about Jesus! It truly is a “beautiful day in this neighborhood.”



A Passion for the Word

Surely, every youth minister longs for the day when saying, “You’ve got to get in the Word!” to a group of students is answered with comments like what we’ve been hearing lately from some of our Middle and High School students.

Evan Pirtle recently stated that he’s actively looking for ways to apply a scripture-a-day to his normal routine. Emma Chambers has revealed how reading a scripture and devotional thought each morning on the way to school gives her something spiritual to reflect on and helps her have a better day. Addison Johnston has shared how specific scriptures have helped her learn to not worry as much and live with greater peace.

At least some of this rise in engagement with scripture is attributable to the Youth Ministry’s new practice of providing daily “Anchored in the Word” posts on a special group chat for youth and volunteers. Intentionally simple, each weekday post features a scripture, reflection thought, and prayer prompt. The purpose is to provide

students with an easy-to-digest devotional moment each day. The Word of God has now become a notification directly on the screens of their smart phones!

We invited our Small Group Leaders to be “guest” posters each week, and the response from our volunteers has been wonderful. Their reflections and insights have been very

encouraging, and their thoughtful words are indicative of the investment they are making in discipling our teenagers. You can read Bobby Ray sharing his thoughts on how Jesus brings us from death to life. Or Abby Morehead and Abi Chambers reminding us to keep proper spiritual perspective when we experience difficulties.

Dustin Mance used his Nov. 29 post to offer some tongue-in-cheek commentary on the Black Friday phenomenon and consumerism.

Because of the efforts of these volunteers and other members of our CCYM team, we hope to see a passion for the Word of God ignite within the hearts of our students.



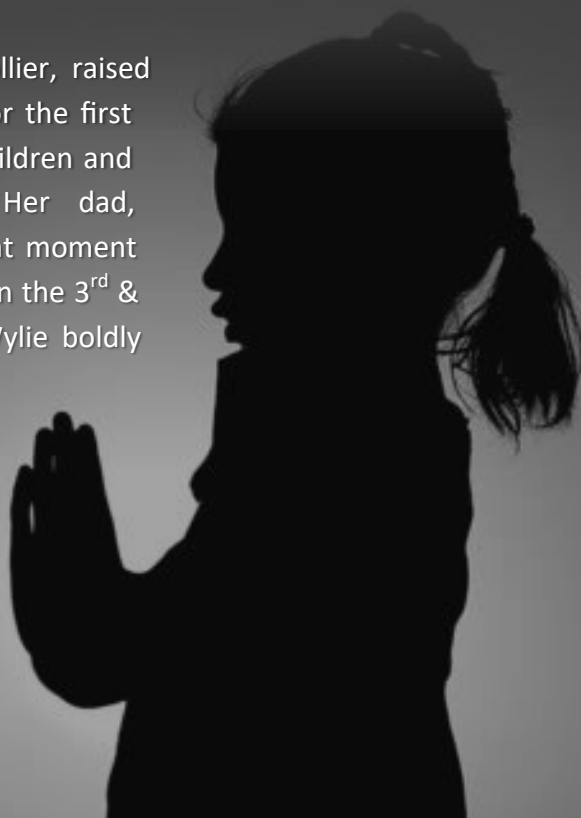
A Beautiful Rhythm

"From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise..." Psalm 8:2a

Starting Kindergarten is a big deal in the life of a child. There are new things to learn and do, new places to go, and new people to meet at every turn of learning and growing at this stage. Our Kinder Bible class is no different here at Clear Creek. Children learn the books of the Bible, the Greatest Commandment, and about giving on top of the weekly curriculum. It's also the first time they get to be in large group praise and worship time with the "big" kids.

After the initial adjustment and learning how this time each week works, slowly we get to see more confidence and excitement bubble out of these five and six-year-olds as they interact with the "big" kids and worship before class. Each week, John Clevenger leads all the elementary children in songs and asks for a child to volunteer to pray and close out that time together. Lots of hands go up! However, when we start seeing the little hands of kindergartners go up within a mere few months of being in the elementary wing, we are overjoyed! They have watched, they have learned, and now they are beginning to participate fully! It's a beautiful rhythm we get to see unfold regularly in children's ministry!

One recent Sunday, Wylie Collier, raised her hand and bravely led a prayer for the first time in front of all the elementary children and volunteers, roughly 100 people. Her dad, Caleb, was there to see and hear that moment because he volunteered that Sunday in the 3rd & 4th grade class. Immediately, after Wylie boldly prayed to God thanking him for Jesus and the church, you could see the proud dad beaming! What a joy to serve and witness the courage and faith of a child take her next step in living for Jesus!



Defining a “Win” in Student Ministry

If you were to walk into The Creek, you may notice something peculiar on the stage. Sitting on a metal stool on the left side of the stage there is a water jug that has a few ping pong balls in it. At the beginning of November, Mitchell and Michael taught through a series on disciple making. As the series wore on, the jug was introduced. The idea was simple, anytime someone associated with the youth ministry steps out and has an intentional conversation with someone, they drop a ping pong ball into the jug. An intentional conversation was defined this way - any interaction you have with someone with the ultimate intention of bringing Jesus into the conversation. The goal with the jug was to put on display that, yes we love inviting people and seeing our numbers grow, but ultimately we want to be a group that brings Jesus to others, rather than just brings others in our doors.

The youth ministry has already taken to this goal and many wins in this category have already occurred. Harrison Van Eaton shared a story in which he invited a friend who did not know Jesus to come play basketball with some friends who did. In doing so, God opened the door for a conversation to occur in which Harrison got to introduce some of his own faith. Julie Clevenger shared a win she had when she was able to speak to her future college roommate about her faith and ask her roommate about hers. Mitchell and Michael when introducing the concept told of a pair of instances in which they were able to pray for strangers. The jug has been a very effective visual tool for our group to be encouraged by each other and also celebrate our wins.



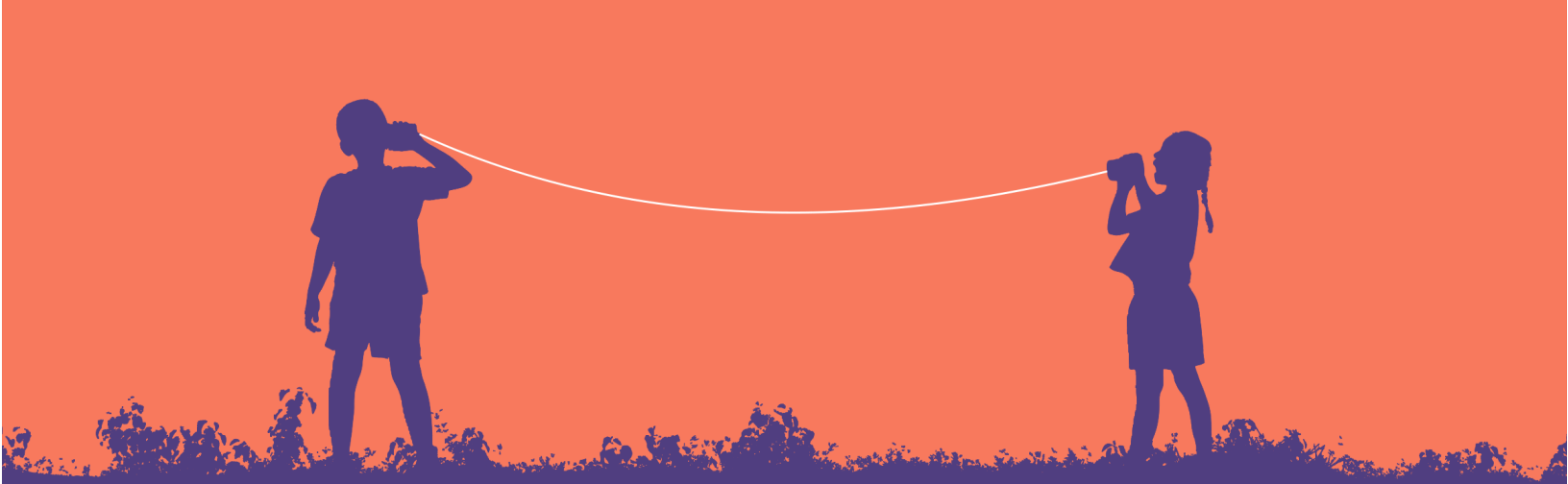
EATING TURKEY WITH CHOPSTICKS

The Clear Creek ESL Group had our 2nd annual “Friendsgiving” dinner this year. We recently decided to be more intentional about making that happen more often. This has allowed us to get to know each other better, learn more about each other’s cultures, and enjoy fellowship. We have found that holidays are a great opportunity to share our faith and open our homes to those that we are ministering to, along with their families.



For Thanksgiving, each family brought dishes from their culture, while we provided the turkey and some traditional American dishes. It was fun to see turkey and mashed potatoes being eaten with chopsticks! We reflected on thankfulness and we were reminded of the blessing of differences; how God created us all different, yet gives us so many things that we can all relate to! We are so glad that we chose to be more intentional about our meals together, so that we can continue to get to know each other and share God’s love to those who need to hear it!

We have also been blessed with a new family in our ESL group this year! Since joining, they have been coming almost every Sunday and Wednesday, with their children participating in classes as well. One comment we have heard multiple times is how kind the people at Clear Creek are. They have felt so welcome here! It is so foreign to them that people are so kind and willing to help others. This has given us a chance to explain the love God has for us, and that “we love because HE first loved us.” We are called to be different, to be set apart from this world. When we do this, others take notice, so that we can give God all the glory, and bring them to HIM!



"L" is for Listen

Our family at Clear Creek has delivered Thanksgiving baskets to families in need for several years now. One thing that we try to do year in and year out is for the families that we deliver to be ones that we already have a preexisting relationship with. While there is nothing wrong with simply sharing the love of Christ with a family we don't know by giving them some much needed food around the holidays, already having a relationship with someone you help gives us the opportunity to continue to go deeper with them.

George and Phyllis Taylor's small group was able to deliver a Thanksgiving basket to a family that fit the bill perfectly. A family that the Taylors were acquainted with had recently fallen onto some very difficult times due to serious illness in the family. Five children, a sick mother, and a father working multiple jobs made for a really difficult situation. Eventually, the situation become so dire that wife's father moved back to the area just to help keep the family afloat. The group was able to spend some time with and deliver food to the family. The grandfather has since visited the small group and the relationship has continued to grow.

While we can all agree that this should be classified as a huge "win", we sometimes forget about the things that had to happen first for any of this to be possible. In our BLESS acronym, the "L" stands for "LISTEN." Listen to others as they share their struggles and their pains. Though it is possible, having someone "share their struggles and their pains" isn't something that typically comes up in normal conversation! It takes us putting forth effort to show them that we care enough to hear about their struggles and their pains. It may even take us modeling vulnerability to let them know that, in this relationship, it's ok to share those kinds of things.

When presented with the opportunity to help someone we know, the vast majority of us would jump at the chance to do so. But have we given ourselves a chance to even know about these opportunities? Have we been intentional in our relationships with others in a way that would help them feel comfortable conveying any need they have to us? It may not always be easy, but God's kingdom is blessed by people like the Taylors who are willing to put in the time and effort it takes to find out the needs of those around them.

6 Months Sober

We stopped by her mama's house to get her ID before we went to the bus station. We knocked on the door and rang the doorbell. Miz Lillian is getting old and it's getting harder every day for her to get around. Shonda sighed. She hasn't seen her mama for about two years. We heard a weak cry come from the bedroom window. "Who's they-ah?"

"It's me mama. It's Shonda. It's your daughter."

"Guhl. I dreamed about you last night."

"Mama. I'm going far away. I've got to get better. I need my ID."

"Whaaat?????" I can't hear ya guhl."

"MAMA. I NEED MY ID. I SENT IT IN THE MAIL."

Miz Lillian didn't know where it was. She was too sore to get up.



I wrote this on July 22 of this year. This would be Cry for the Broken's second attempt to transition Shonda into Christ centered 12 step recovery. Most of the time, it takes multiple attempts for a woman to build up enough trust to commit to a program. Shonda rode a bus to West Virginia where a program was willing to accept her. Within a few weeks we got a phone call that she was being kicked out for stealing and bullying. We were saddened and expected to see her back out on the street within days. But we did not. Instead, we received a text from Shonda that she

found another program. She did not want to give up on sobriety and God's promise.

Shonda has been through several programs since then. She is learning slowly in each one what she is capable of accomplishing. Her tenacity is admirable. On Christmas we received a text that said, "January 19 is my 6 months (sobriety). I'm so very proud of myself!"

Shonda, we are proud of you too!

**names have been changed*