



Leadership Community: Going Deeper

By Kyle Winters

One of the major things we focus on as a church is leadership development. And it isn't just because many of our leaders graduate every year, although that does create a perpetual need for more leaders! We believe that the college campus is one of the most strategic places to develop leaders and influencers in God's Kingdom; men & women who desire to take the Gospel to the ends of the Earth no matter what profession they pursue. So we have Leadership Community, a weekly space for ministry equipping, doctrinal education, and going deeper into what it means to be a follower of Jesus. This semester, we introduced a series of topical workshops designed to help h2o student leaders get a deeper understanding of topics in which they are interested.

Studying and understanding the Bible is one of the greatest needs we see in students' lives, so we had a workshop titled, "How to Study God's Word" that helped equip students with tools for reading, studying, and interacting with the Bible. Along a similar vein, we thought it would be great to study the Old Testament. Whether a student has never read it before (as is the case for many) or has read it extensively, there is so much richness to unlock, that we wanted to dedicate a workshop to understanding the Old Testament, how it applies to our lives, and what it teaches us about God.

One of our heartbeats as a church is the Gospel and figuring out ways to engage the 60,000 students on campus with it. "How to Share Your Faith" was our workshop attempt to equip our student leaders with some tools for engaging their friends in spiritual conversations and sharing the Gospel in a clear and articulate way. We hope that this generates a spirit of excitement and confidence that carries over into our small group community and ultimately provides fodder for many students to share their faith.

In addition to these three workshops for our student leaders, we invited the whole church to participate in two workshops: a Q & A workshop following up our "Great Sex" sermon series, as we hoped to provide space for them to ask tough questions about a very culturally controversial and relevant topic; and a workshop called, "All Nations: The Heart of God", geared to help students see God's heart for all people groups and how they can get involved in reaching unreached people groups overseas.

We are excited to have had almost 100 students signed up to go deeper into these issues and grow in their faith, and we hope to see lasting fruit from these workshops! ■

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Columbus Leadership Training

BY KEVIN CODY

Warmer temperatures mean summer is rapidly approaching, and that means Columbus Leadership Training 2015 ("LT") is just around the corner! In our last newsletter, we told you about LT, but a lot has happened since then, and we're excited to tell you about some of what God has been shaping in our midst.

First, we are encouraged that other campus focused churches and ministries have expressed interest in sending people to participate in LT. One of the beautiful works God has done at previous LT's is to help people form friendships with peers from other churches. This can help students see that Jesus is the one who changes lives, and He's at work all over, not just at our h2o in Columbus. Also, having diverse backgrounds within the group of students can make for a richer LT experience for all.

Speaking of people from different churches, we've invited a number of pastors from other churches we know and trust to speak at LT. All of these are men who love Jesus and teach the Bible, but who will also provide fresh energy and perspective to h2o students. Our prayer is that these guys will challenge LT participants to new depths of trust in Jesus, new levels of obedience to Him, and fresh faith to reach out to those around them with the incredible Good News that Jesus died to save sinners!

As they encounter Jesus powerfully, our prayer is that LT participants will do so in rich, Christian community. God has also provided in an exciting way that we might see this happen. We've secured a house with space for over 30 students (and a house manager), dining space that will host meals for all LT participants, and plenty of shared common space where we can host prayer times, community gatherings, etc. We believe living together will provide an even richer experience for LT participants, and being able to have meals together and hang out in the house will be a catalyst for community for the entire program!

We covet your prayers for LT. Pray for students who are planning to participate, that the Holy Spirit would open their hearts to everything God has for them this summer. Pray for those who are considering participating, that God would guide them to a wise and spiritually enriching investment of their summer (that doesn't have to be LT, but we think it could be for lots of people!). And pray for those of us planning LT, that God would give us wisdom, humility, and faith to lead in a way that transforms students' lives for the sake of Jesus!

Oh, and if you're curious about LT details, or know a student who might be interested, check out oh2o.org/lt ■

Mission Trips

BY MIKE MALONE

At h2o we desire to follow in Christ's footsteps by nurturing an attitude of servant leadership and glorifying God to the world. We believe that one way to do this is through mission trips! Every member of this community is first and foremost a servant of Christ, realizing that each has unique gifting and a role to play in our call to serve one another and in the world around us. So, this year we are taking students on more foreign mission trips than we ever have before.

This year we have (and will go) to Guatemala, Haiti, Germany and Russia. We have seen 53 students participate in God's work of redemption. We have seen Him heal and restore individuals, families and communities we have visited. We have also seen Jesus move in the lives of the students who have gone on these trips. It is amazing how God can use a student's step of faith when they go to an unfamiliar place to help fulfill the Great Commission. God uses these trips to open students' eyes to the needs of the poor and needy, what God is doing around the world, and the part He has for them to play in what He is doing. That is why we have a prayer goal that every member of h2o would go on an overseas mission trip while they are in college. We know that these trips motivate students to run hard for Jesus the rest of their lives. Please join us in praying that God would make this prayer and hope a reality. ■



h2o team in Guatemala

Women's Weekend

BY MAGGIE KING

After the first snow of the season, over 400 women involved in h2o churches around the state of Ohio (and Ball State) gathered for a weekend of worship, connecting with each other and growing with God. Margaret Ashmore, who is a seasoned Christian counselor from Texas, spoke hard-hitting truths into our lives about what it means to have an abundant life in Christ.

Margaret reminded us that walking the straight and narrow path with God isn't something we just stumble into. The Bible, numerous times, exhorts us to seek wise counsel, but we often fail to realize the counselors of this world that we're tempted to follow. Satisfaction and value can't be found in our relationships, grades, what we do or what we look like. As Margaret put it, "everything we are looking for is found on the other side of the cross." During the weekend we had the opportunity to sit at God's feet and ask these questions: Am I living for God's Kingdom or mine? Am I being Gospel-centered or self-centered?

During the retreat we broke into small groups to share what God was bringing up in our hearts in response to what we were learning. This was a helpful time to remind each other that we are not alone in the journey. God has provided people, His Church, to pursue the abundant life in Christ together.

We ended the retreat with an extended time of worship, giving thanks and praise to God for all He's done and who He is. We can choose hope and joy even in the darkest of situations because of what Christ has done for us. This is the real abundant life that is available for us. ■



ManMakers

BY BRANDON COLE

ManMakers, our annual men's retreat, was intense, fun, and unfortunately ended prematurely due to inclement weather! Male students from seven universities around Ohio (and Pittsburgh) descended upon a church just outside of Wooster, OH for the overnight retreat.

The title of this year's ManMakers was "Dare You to Move", as we looked deeper into what it means to be men of character and influence. During the first session, our very own Jon Shah shared about how God calls men to specific roles and responsibilities in life and in the church. These mostly contradict our culture's stereotype of what it means to be a man. Men today are generally "trained" to escape and disengage from life. Video games, social media, and pornography are just a few of the countless ways men today escape the real world for a digital substitute. Jon encouraged the men that because Jesus Christ died for us, we have the ability to engage with God and his mission for us. John Freeman, a pastor at h2o Pittsburgh, spoke Saturday morning on 2 Corinthians 4. John encouraged the men not to focus on themselves and the legacy that they leave, but rather to make sure that people in their life remember Jesus Christ.

The retreat also offered topical breakout sessions, which allowed the guys at the retreat to learn more about specific areas of their lives on which they wanted to focus. Sexual purity, marriage, finances, anger, depression, and relationships were just some of the breakouts offered. Pastor Rob Warren from h2o church at BGSU finished up our retreat with a sermon centering on being men with a map. He encouraged the guys to be men who know where they are spiritually/in life and to not settle for what is easy. It was a great sermon and concluded with an energetic time of worship.

Andrew Slater, one of the attendees of ManMakers took away the idea that, "Part of engaging as a man in the Church is pressing into a community of Godly men so they can guide us in our struggles and remind us of the truth of who we are in Christ." Student, Tobias Reichert, was encouraged "to be a man of God by striving for boldness, growing as a leader, pursuing purity, and building relationships defined by transparent accountability." ■

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ABOUT ME



Matt in Guatemala

Name: Matt Arthur

Age: 22

H2O Team: OC King
Monday

Home State: Ohio

Major: Finance and
Operations
Management

Favorite Color: Silver

Favorite Book: *The Pursuit of God* by A.W. Tozer (and of course the Bible!)

Slice of Life

At a young age I was exposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ, but never truly understood my need for a savior. Throughout my childhood I lived two very different lives. In my school life I maintained near perfect grades, was involved in everything imaginable, and played several sports. I had a great reputation among the faculty, administration, and my fellow classmates. But those who knew my personal life had a very different perception of me. I indulged in alcohol, and drugs beginning in the 8th grade. In high school and college I was even selling drugs. I frequently manipulated women to fill the sexual desires I had. Being “cool” in the eyes of others was my main priority. Honestly, I felt like I had the best of both worlds, and I was receiving plenty of praise and popularity. It was a simple formula: Do what people like, and hide what people don’t like.

My happy-go-lucky attitude persisted until the end of my junior year of high school, when a series of events began to change my outlook on life. It all started when my good friend and teammate drowned in a quarry. Then, exactly one week later, my girlfriend’s 14-year-old brother committed suicide. I had a hard time coping with why these things happened, but an even tougher time providing emotional support for my girlfriend. Although I managed to put a smile on my face, I was battling depression and suicidal thoughts everyday. Then things got worse. One month before I left for college, my parents told me that they were separating and selling the only house I’d ever lived in. Not long after, my 3-year old dog got cancer and was euthanized. Needless to say, I had hit rock bottom. I couldn’t find a worthwhile purpose to my life here on earth. There was no grade, recognition, drug, drink, or girl that could fill the void in my heart. With nowhere else to turn to, it was then that I finally realized my need for a savior.

I’ll never forget the first time I prayed in my dorm room on the 5th floor of Smith hall. Tears rolled down my face as I candidly asked God to rescue me from the darkness I was living in. God gave me the desire to begin reading the Bible, and the truths He revealed to me were so convicting. Jesus was the first person that truly challenged me. He knew about all my flaws, past mistakes, and hidden secrets. Despite overwhelming feelings of shame, my heart felt refreshed for the first time in several years. It wasn’t easy to change my actions though. My friends and girlfriend were used to the old me and had no idea about the transformation that God was undertaking within my heart. With no one to hold me accountable, I wasn’t becoming the person that God intended me to be.

Then, in August of 2012 my friend (now roommate) invited me to h2o. The second service I attended, a mission trip to Guatemala was announced and I felt God pushing me to take a leap of faith. God answered my step of faith in a big way. That week in Guatemala changed my life forever. Jesus met me with endless grace and forgiveness. I saw the cross and His sacrifice like never before. Moreover, I witnessed what a true community was supposed to look like. The initial joy that filled my soul was something that words will never be able to explain. When we returned, I immediately joined a small group and began to give God more and more control of my life. After going on h2o’s ManMaker’s retreat and Florida spring break trip, I was reassured of the faithfulness of God. At that point, I was ready to dedicate my life as a servant of God and to carry out the mission that he had prepared for me. On April 21st, 2013, I publicly declared my faith and was baptized.

Since then God has done miraculous things in my life. It isn’t easy, but living for Him is so worth it. He instills peace and courage within me during all my trials. He has given my life a purpose and meaning that goes far beyond myself. Everyday I am learning that his plans for me far surpass my own dreams. He has the best intentions for my life, and his timing is perfect. To Him who died in my place, I owe everything. And now I live to glorify the one who is making all things new. And that is a slice of my life. ■