

The Connection



Fall 2010

AFLC Youth Newsletter

DIRECTION
for
DECISIONS

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The Connection

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The Connection is published twice a year to encourage and engage youth and youth groups of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. The AFLC is a growing fellowship of 275 churches whose members believe that the Bible is true and that everyone needs Jesus. AFLC Youth Ministries exists for three goals: to win; to build, and to equip youth for Jesus Christ. We are here to assist in making disciples!

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Hey There Teen!

A survey of American churchd teenagers this year dug into their needs. It hit the big ones about family and friends and faith.

Three of the "pressing needs" jumped out at us in AFLC Youth Ministries. These three line the pages of this issue's articles:

- College
- Career
- Parents

God's Word offers great discernment to make sense of these earth-shaking decisions. He will never leave us out on His picture for us. Our Heavenly Father revealed to us His redemption work at the cross of Christ. He is consistently incredible! He will reveal for us the guidance that we need on big decisions.

On page 4, our friend Pastor Kirk Thorson explains God's will for your life. Really! It's amazing. You need to check it out.

On the connecting page, Sam Nash has a solid point. He gives you the answer for your career. Skydiver or swim instructor? No, that answer is not on page 5. But the name of your career's Boss is.

The article on page 6 is written by me. I hate self-promotion, so I guess that's all I will say about that one. (Other than this, your parents called me and mentioned that you get double allowance if you read it AND follow it...I'm just saying!) But the next page hits some good media to chew on, so grab your taste for books, movies, and music.

Whether you are entering junior high or your senior year, the Lord Jesus is ready to direct your steps in a lifetime of faith. Enjoy!

Cheering for You to Keep Following His Direction,

Pastor Jason Holt
Director of Youth Ministries



Join "THE CONNECTION of
AFLC Youth Ministries" on Facebook

FLY 2011

IT IS WRITTEN

JOHN 20:30-31

Registration Costs and Deadlines

Early Bird Deadline January 20
Students: \$369
Adults: \$385
Children: \$115
Counselors: \$250
Staff: \$250

Late Deadline April 18
Students: \$399
Adults: \$415
Children: \$130
Counselors: \$250
Staff: \$250

Final Deadline June 20
Students: \$439
Adults: \$455
Children: \$150
Counselors: \$250
Staff: \$250

Go to youth.aflc.org/fly for more details!

* Counselor form also available on our website



Direction for Decisions



COLLEGE

By Pastor Kirk Thorson

According to the Department of Education, there are 4,146 colleges and universities in the United States. How do you find the right college when trying to balance costs, scholarships and distance from family? We are encouraged to look to God and rely on His direction for these and other key decisions in life.

Coming out of high school, I wanted to be a successful businessman. I reasoned with God that if I was an accountant, I would make lots of money and live for Him in that career. As a Christian, I would give generously to the church, and therefore God would be happy. Perhaps God knew that I was stubborn and would be unwilling to budge from my plan. He allowed me to live out my plan and to show me the error of my ways. Proverbs 16:9 reads "The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps." I soon found out that I can make all the plans I want, but it doesn't always mean success. As my time in college came to a close I had very little debt, an internship that I enjoyed, and a job waiting for me after graduation. There was only one problem; I was miserable. I had not looked for God's direction and assumed that He would bless me in whatever I did.

God graciously invites us to seek Him instead of relying on our own decisions. The first step in relying on God's direction is to call out to Him. "Call to me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3). We may have all sorts of plans and ambitions for our futures, but as followers of Christ we are exhorted to ask God for His leading in our lives. This simply means admitting to God that you are willing to let Him open and close doors according to His will.

The second step is to be willing to hear the voice of God and then listen to it. In the book of Micah, God says to Israel: "Hear, O peoples, all of you; listen, O earth and all it contains" (Micah 1:2). In this case, the people of Israel refused to listen to His message. I find it hard to believe that God's people declined to listen to Him because of how He had guided them favorably in the past. Unfortunately, we can fall into the same trap. As a freshman in high school, I was a pitcher on the baseball team. One game, as I threw the ball, the batter hit it in the air between me and the catcher. I was so focused on the ball in the air that I neglected to hear my catcher yelling that he had the ball. I was about 130 pounds and ran straight into my 210 pound catcher wearing all his gear. Only bad things can happen when we are unwilling to listen.

"The first step in relying on God's direction is to call out to Him"

How do we listen to God? God speaks to us primarily through His Word, the Bible. God also speaks to us through prayer and the advice of trusted Christian friends. Ask your friends, parents and pastor to pray that you would be willing to listen to God's leading.

The final step involves understanding God's will and purpose. As a freshman in college I was playing ultimate Frisbee with friends of mine. I was all alone and ready to catch a long throw when I heard my teammates yelling. It sounded like they were yelling "Me, Me!" That seemed odd to me because I was all alone as I ran under the Frisbee. I had heard that they were saying something, but I failed to understand what they were trying to communicate. My friends were actually yelling "Tree! Tree!" You can probably imagine what happened next. Failure to listen carefully and understand is just as disastrous as not listening at all.

Ask God for the gift of discernment, spoken of in James 1:5, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." My prayer has been (and still is) to ask God to make His perfect will absolutely clear to me so that I can mistake it for nothing else. I believe God hears and honors that prayer. "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6).

*Thorson is the Pastor at
Living Faith Free Lutheran Church in
Larimore, ND*

Direction for Decisions

By Sam Nash

Whether you expect to work a "normal" job someday, to stay at home and care for your kids, to start your own business, or to dream up some work not yet invented, those daily eight to five blocks from age twenty-two to sixty-seven add up to more than 36 million seconds of life. That's a lot of clock watching unless you are so excited about what you do that you do not care about the clock.

Maybe you still have specific dreams for your career, to be a baseball player, fireman, or nurse. Maybe you have no idea what you want to do with your life. You do want those 36 million moments to mean something. To be moments and years that you would enjoy.

Most career advice would start with the question: "What do you like?" But if you want to find God's direction for your work life, if you want to enjoy your career, there is an even more basic question: Whom do you want for your Boss? Is it God?

You may go onto flip burgers, compile spreadsheets, head a company, or run the country. Whatever you do, you can have the best Boss in the world. You can work for God himself. Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men."

Get it? If you delight in God, and decide that He is your ultimate employer, then *who you work for* is even more important than *what you do* in allowing God to direct your career based decisions. God can make any kind of work more than a job. He will turn it into a fulfilling career that will bless the lives of those you touch.

*Nash is the Director of
Student Support of AFLBS in
Plymouth, MN*

Direction for Decisions: Parents

By Pastor Jason Holt

Two guys I knew in high school had unique names for their parents. One as a fifteen year-old started to call his dad by his first name. Did he mean it with a lack of respect? I thought so. My classmates concluded that as well. I wonder what his dad was thinking when he heard his name from the lips that years earlier couldn't eat baby food without help.

The other guy had a different slant. He called them "Rents". It was short for "parents", but it carried a completely opposite meaning. For instance, if we were talking about plans for the weekend, he might say, "I'll go out on Saturday night, if I can get by the Rents." Not really a compliment. I don't know if he heard someone else using the title and picked it up, but it seem to stick for him.

Ephesians 6:1-2

How about you? What do you call your parents? *"Duh...mom and dad!"* Yes, but what is the attitude behind your words?

Ephesians 6:1-2 puts a charge on kids. **"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother'—which is the first commandment with a promise."** Notice a few realities from this truth about the parent-child relationship.

OBEY

The direction for decisions regarding your parents is to follow what they say. If we were discussing this topic in a youth ministry setting, then right about now someone's hand would shoot up, *"What if they want me to do something sinful?"* The answer is simple – don't do it. Acts 5:39 emphasizes when it comes to obedience that the Lord comes before any person's direction. Some of you may be dealing with that situation. Work hard to stand for what is true, but also work just as hard at following your parents as much as you can.

For the rest of you, that question raised is a smoke cloud for not wanting to follow what your parents say. Obedience is not a point of discussion here. The Lord calls us (yep, obeying parents is still true as an adult) to have this mindset of following our earthly parents. It is connected to how the Lord desires us as His children to follow our Heavenly Father.

HONOR

The next part of direction with your parents is in the word "honor". When have you seen someone honor another person? Another friend of mine from high school was always calling adults by "Sir" and "Ma'am". It was done with respect. I could tell that the adult understood what was being communicated with his words – "You get that I've been around longer than you, so I am glad for honor with this title." Quite a distance from the first two guys' titles, huh?



Do you see how honor is different than obedience? If your mom asks you to clean your room, you can move the pile of clothes while muttering under your breath. You obeyed, but you did not honor. Honor is connected to our attitude. When we allow Jesus to mold our attitude in each situation, having an attitude like His (Philippians 2), then obedience comes much, much easier. As a parent with a teenager, I see how attitude makes a world of difference for my kids and for me.

RECEIVE

These verses reveal one more reality in working with your parents. Obedience plus honor leads to blessing. It is not about an increase of allowance or a later curfew. **Ephesians 6:3 continues, "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."** God's blessings come through lives of harmony with the closest relationship at home – your parents. You may leave the home at 18, but you never leave your parents. They will be mom and dad for all your years on earth, so a long life leads to receiving many blessings through healthy connections with your parents.

What does the Lord want you to focus on in your relationship with your parents?

Disclaimer:

Media Minute seeks to introduce quality media selections from a distinctively Christian worldview. The goal is for content to be solid and for style to be left to a matter of personal preference. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." ~ Colossians 3:16-17

MEDIA MINUTE



BOOK: Crazy Love by Francis Chan

MOVIE: Letters to God

MUSIC: "Dare You to Move"



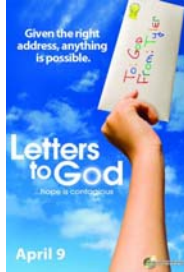
Crazy Love is Crazy Good! I have to admit, I sometimes struggle with believing God's love for me. The deceiver tells me that God loves me just because He has to; that, as part of the "world" He merely loves me by default. So I was equally intrigued by both the title and the subtitle of Francis Chan's Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God.

The book in its entirety did not disappoint! Chan's style is very transparent with his own misconceptions, ones that led to a relationship with God that was based on obligation instead of love. He then suggests falling in love with God – loving God with a crazy love that is motivated by understanding His crazy love for us.

The second half of this short, weighty, yet digestible book focuses on how that crazy love plays out in our relationship with God, and then with others. We are challenged to live with the kind of reckless abandon that is characterized by true love. Reminiscent of the classic novel In His Steps, we are reminded of the kind of radical life Jesus lived and pointed us toward.

A convicting read, it should come with a warning – CAUTION: This book may change your life!

~ Jen Holt



"Letters to God" is based on a true story of a boy's unshakable faith. Even though struggling with cancer, Tyler prays to God by writing Him letters. These letters fall into the hands of the mailman, Brady.

When the letters are opened, the faith and love of Tyler pours out into the lives of the community. As Tyler continues to struggle with cancer, he is given more chances to impact different lives: lives of his own family, friends and Brady.

What is the meaning of life? Why are we here? Tyler answers these questions through his life and witness.

This movie shows that just one person's faith may, in fact, change the world. Tyler shows through his letters to God that God is waiting for us to call out to Him and that He is always there.

I was greatly impacted and encouraged in this movie to take a stand for Christ, no matter what life may throw at me.

~ Brent Raan, Youth Leader

It's been 10 years, but some songs keep catching people's attention. In 2000, the Christian band Switchfoot included "I Dare You to Move" on the album *Learning to Breathe*. It was a memorable track to fans of the guys with a call to forget the past and move forward into the future depending on God's direction. But then in 2003, Switchfoot took another run at the song as a track on the widely circulated *The Beautiful Letdown*. Ditching the "I", the second take captured a grittier sound and determined resolution.

The results were lasting. In a 2004 interview, lead singer Jon Foreman cited stories of people quitting their jobs after hearing the song. The two complimentary videos portrayed powerful life-changing moments.

High school freshman Mitch Cusick recently reflected, "Dare You to Move by Switchfoot is a song that helps me in my walk with God. The reason it helps me is it tells me to just move towards Him and to bring people to Him in faith. It is a song that inspires people to get up and walk with Him when you need help in a hardship. That is a song that motivates me to walk with God and it may motivate you, too."

A decade later it is still impacting.

~ Jason Holt

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UPCOMING EVENTS

September 22	<i>See You At The Pole Global Day of Student Prayer www.syatp.com</i>
October 29-31	<i>Southwest Central District Retreat Faith Haven Contact: Pastor Seth Forness</i>
October 29-30	<i>Central Tri-State District Lock-In Forest City, Iowa YMCA Contact: Pastor Lyle Aadahl</i>
November 19-21	<i>South Dakota District Youth Rally Sioux Falls, SD Contact: Nick Olson</i>