

THE CONTACT

AFLC YOUTH WORKER'S NEWSLETTER

FALL 2013



Lessons for leaders like you

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Not-So-Pointless Construction Cones

By Sarah Langness

Ever since I started making the trek from Fargo to Sioux Falls on I-29 back in 2008, there has been construction on at least one section of that barren interstate. It never fails. But, I comforted myself this past weekend, at least I can tell that work is being done. That something is being accomplished. Sometimes, on I-94 from Beulah to Fargo, there are construction cones pushing the two-lane interstate down into one lane. For no reason. There are no work trucks or crews. No big holes in the road. No work being done. And to be honest, those mere mile-long stretches bother me more than the twenty-mile stretches where it's obvious work is being done.

A lot of times, I wonder the same thing spiritually as well. Because I can't always see what God is doing, why He allows certain things to happen, what work He is doing in my heart.

I've been thinking a lot about this lately. Why, for example, would Jordan and I feel so strongly led to international adoption, only to have us find out we were expecting our own child? And then, when opportunity came around for us to apply for adoption, why were there so many red flags and we felt led away from international adoption? Or why would I sense the Lord so strongly telling me to be involved in a certain ministry, and then mere months later feel lead out of it?

Sometimes, it just doesn't make sense, does it?

Coffee



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I've been pondering these things for months. Almost a year, actually. And then, this last weekend, as I lay in my old bed at my parents house in Sioux Falls, I thought of Abraham. How he not only *felt* strongly about wanting a child, but he was *promised* a child by the Lord. And when that child came, what did the Lord require of him? To sacrifice his son.

"Now it came about after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him . . . 'Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.' So Abraham arose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. Then they came to the place . . . and Abraham build the altar

there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven . . . 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; **for now I know that you fear God**, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.'" - Genesis 22:1-3; 9-12, NASB (emphasis mine)

Just as the Lord was testing Abraham and his trust in His God, perhaps the Lord is testing me. Trying to see where my heart lies with Him. To see if I truly trust Him to provide. To see if I am willing to serve. To see if I am faithful to Him even when I feel like what He wants doesn't make sense.

I honestly don't know what will happen with adoption in our lives. Or how my involvement in ministry will look next year at this time. But I guess I'd better be faithful now. Willing. Trusting. Serving.

Because I don't know what He has in store. Maybe His construction cones make sense in the grand scheme of things after all.



2014_YOUTH_WORKERS_RETREAT

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ASSOCIATION_RETREAT_CENTER-OSCEOLA.WISCONSIN

W W W . A F L C . O R G / Y O U T H

WEEKEND_RATES_START_AT_\$95

THURSDAY_EARLY_PERSONAL_RETREAT_OPTION

COST_DETAILS

friday-sunday Best Rate \$95

thursday-sunday Best Rate \$125

additional pricing available on website



- NEW Thursday at 1:15-2:30pm::
"What CAN We Do: Pastors/Youth Leaders Together"
- Thursday-Friday:: Personal Retreat
- Friday PM:: Opening Session "Mutual Encouragement"
- Saturday AM:: Tiger McLuen, Youth Leadership President
- Saturday PM:: FLY Federation Council
- Saturday PM:: Wives of Youth Workers Together
- Saturday PM:: Priorities in Relationships
- Sunday AM:: Endurance for Long-Distance



Chefs & Friends



By Pastor Eric Christenson

"Not only have we become friends, but our families have become friends; so we vacation together in Sicily."

These words were spoken by Iron Chef's Bobby Flay and Michael Symon on a recent episode of Iron Chef America where the crafty chairman pitted teams of Iron Chefs together to face off in "Battle Thanksgiving: Past and Present." This is not the first time Chefs Flay and Symon had teamed together, but twice before they have shared a cooktop and have come out victorious. In a pre-competition interview they shared how these and other experiences made them more than simply coworkers; but also friends. They shared more than cooking duties

that day, they shared their lives.

This 30 second sound bite may have been overlooked by many who watched this battle, but it caught my attention. When these two successful chefs reflected on what made them so victorious in the past, it wasn't their superior training, extensive experience, or ability to work together; it was their friendship. They had found someone who understood their unique lot in life and grew close because of it. They were confident that it would be their friendship which would launch them to victory once again.

One could sense a warmth as these two famous chefs spoke in jest about teaming together. They were more than mere teammates for the next 60 minutes, or coworkers on national cable network, but they also enjoyed being together, they trusted each other, and even supported each other. They were friends. As I reflect on Bobby Flay and Michael Symon's comments and candor, I was reminded how vital authentic friendships are to me as a ministry worker.

From the age of twenty, I have been engaged in ministry as a paid position or as a volunteer. Apart from the Word and Spirit of God, nothing has prepared, equipped, and supported me in ministry more than other ministry workers, my friends. I would be willing to sacrifice many of my other ministry tools (nice office, expense account, computers, and phones which make writing sermons, preparing Bible studies and connecting with people much easier), long before I would give up my friends; my colleagues in ministry.

These colleagues are the men who invested in a young man who felt a call into ministry. Who listened, counseled, and corrected me as I strived to serve the Lord. Gave me chances to serve. Celebrated my achievements and mourned my failures. These are the men who grew with me, bought me lunch when I was broke, invited me to serve when I was selfish, and trusted me with responsibilities when I might not have trusted myself. They supported me in prayer, shouldered my burdens, and shared my tears. They walked shoulder to shoulder with me through the highs and lows of life and ministry. It is because of these men that I have lasted and am able to continue.

Yet this is not a one way blessing. As we shared life and ministry experiences together we and our families grew close. I have been able share in their joys and struggles in life. To laugh with. To cry alongside. To intercede for. To listen. To support. To encourage. To invest in. Just as these men have been used by God to spur me on in life and ministry, He has used me in return. Bringing the same blessings into their life as they have for me.

I believe this is what the Apostle Paul was talking

about when he wrote these words in Romans 1:11-12. **"I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong - that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith."** I need my friends. My ministry needs my friends. My friends' ministry: it needs me. It is through these authentic friendships forged by the Spirit of God around the Word of God where I am supported, sharpened, spurred, and stimulated to continue serving the Lord. It is through these friendships where others are strengthened to carry on as well.

Paid or volunteer, what do you and your ministry need? People. People who you can grow close to, and enjoy spending time with. People you trust and whom trust you. People who understand what and why you do what you do. People, friends who will listen, counsel, correct, celebrate, mourn, and trust you. Those who support you in prayer, shoulder your burdens, and share your tears, these people (and their ministry)... they need you too.

May the Lord bless you and your ministry with good friends.

"Help carry each other's burdens. In this way you will follow Christ's teachings". Galatians 6:2

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- Who has invested in your life? What do you appreciate about them?
 - What could you do to grow as a friend to your friends?
 - How does genuine friendship enhance ministry?

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Interlinc Online's Interview with Lacrae

<http://bit.ly/1bfiJtS>

The Jesus Memo by The Skit Guys

<http://bit.ly/17cS4Nh>

**My Hope America with
Billy Graham:**

<http://bit.ly/1gwm8Mn>

All Pro Dad with Tony Dungy

<http://bit.ly/HFgigL>

**Bitly—"Why Shrink URLs to
Bitmarks?"**

<http://bitly.com>

**Sticky Faith Free Download—
"How Do I See Myself After High School?"**

<http://bit.ly/1esYzDk>

My Life, My Ministry, My Soul

By Rev. Jason Holt



Urgent Care

I have had a 25-year conversation with brothers and sisters in Christ, and I'm interested in what the Lord has taught you in this topic. "What is the question?" you ask.

Here it is – *"Should I see life and ministry as two areas or as one connected realm?"*

This topic first came up as a volunteer at a Bible Camp as a teenager. Adult leaders would point to the need to keep one's life in the proverbial "balance" while serving in this ministry. It seemed logical at the time.

During the colliding college years, schedules of classes, work, studying, friends, activities, local congregation, studying (again), friends (again), and campus ministries pressed together in the cornucopia of my attention. Life was dynamic with opportunities always close at hand. Distinction seemed unnecessary.

In seminary, the thought re-emerged of a compartmentalized approach to life and ministry. While the Lord gave Jennifer and me our first two children, I found the thought of navigating these areas increasingly more difficult. One veteran pastor told me, "You simply cannot have a close friend in the congregation you serve." Another explained, "I need the close friendships in Christ within the local Body." Two areas or one realm? The question remained.

Early in serving my first congregation, I found myself starting from the perspective of two areas. Handle things well at home. Handle things well at church. By the time the Lord led us to move on, the eight years involved with lives and lives involved with us looked more and more like one realm.

Now 6+ years into the role as national youth director, my garden friends and I are coming to wrestle with this question, because it impacts how we approach ministry. If ministry is its own area, then the sharing of

one's own self is a limited (or even an eliminated) part of the equation. If ministry is within the very fabric of one's own soul, then the sharing of struggles and victories in Jesus, become an important ingredient to healthy, Biblical ministry.

This last week I was working with the advanced youth ministry class at AFLBS that meets on Tuesday nights. We were walking through Matthew 16:21-28. We noted how Peter's struggle about what he thought God's Kingdom was all about (v. 21-23) was key context for Jesus' call for being a disciple. Then come the familiar verses:

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?" ~ Matthew 16:24-26

The pursuits of this life as a redeemed child of God through faith in Jesus is ministry. The terms for "life" and "soul" in verses 25 and 26 are the same and they are tangibly linked to a life of serving Jesus. Verses 27-28 close the chapter with a Kingdom worker perspective.

The link of my life (or my soul) is woven to ministry. It is not because salvation depends on it, but because the salvation Jesus extended to us at the cross is life-transforming and soul-defining. One realm – life, ministry, soul. How is your life/ministry/soul?

Jason serves as the
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THE CONTACT

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Upcoming Events

Jan 23-26	Youth Workers Retreat, ARC in Osceola, WI
Jan 31-Feb 2	SIDE x SIDE Winter Retreat, ARC in Osceola, WI
Feb 16-17	North Central MN District Event, Bemidji, MN
March 14-16	Spring Campus Days, AFLBS in Plymouth, MN
March 28-29	Western ND/Eastern MT Youth Workers Training, Minot, ND
March 28-29	South Dakota District Youth Retreat, Sioux Falls, SD
July 12-Aug 1	Student Missions Brazil—Training July 12-15
July 21-25	FLY Beyond—ARC, Osceola, WI

The Contact is published twice a year to encourage and engage youth workers 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 exist 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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