

YMI Newsletter December 2011

Thursday 29 December 2011

An Inside Look

So, it is December, as if you didn't know. Christmas preparations are decidedly under way. Even though you are reading this after Christmas, I am actually writing it two weeks prior to Christmas. I am in the process of buying gifts, sending out Christmas greetings, decorating the house and attending Christmas parties. It is festive, time consuming and, ultimately, totally worth it!

This year marks the first year since 2002 that my wife has drawn a full time salary for a whole year. In a year where we readied our house to sell, sold it, bought a new one and invested in the new house to make it look the way we wanted it to look (paint and furniture), we knew our financial situation would be unusual.

During the period where we lived on one income we decided to continue to tithe to the church. But, we cut out all of our other philanthropic giving which consisted of several \$100 gifts to organizations we liked. We also cut things like eating at restaurants and going to movies.

So, this year we had the opportunity to be generous again. For 2011 my wife and I decided to keep our gift to our church the same. We would add back in other organizations to our giving. But, I have a different perspective now.

I'm seeing philanthropy from the other side. After five years of asking others to support the Youth Ministry Institute, I have become incredibly appreciative of the gifts others make. I am amazed at the generosity of some. I am humbled. And, I think I have a better appreciation about what my gifts to others might communicate.

So, what follows is how I interpret the gift you make to YMI. It may or may not be accurate. Only you really know why you give to YMI. Regardless of your reasons, your gift most definitely influences the amount I give to other organizations since I have seen it from the other side.

The \$50 Atta Boy! – This is an important gift. I receive a great deal of encouragement from a number of people. When people give \$50 it makes me feel as if that person is cheering me on saying, "I'm proud of what you are doing." So, when I want to encourage someone else, this is the gift I make.

The \$100 Belief in the Leader – I receive more \$100 gifts than any other. And, it was the gift I made to many organizations previously. My interpretation is that most who give in this range either know me or were impressed by my presentation at our annual dessert fund raiser. Their gift communicates that they have confidence that I will do exactly what I say that I will do.

The \$500 Belief in the Mission – When people make a gift in this range, I feel like they have really grabbed hold of the mission of the Youth Ministry Institute. They are willing to significantly catapult our organization. \$500 can equate to some major programming costs. I feel as if people making this gift believe in more than just me. I get pretty excited when people move into this range because I want

people to believe in what we are doing together. Those that make \$1000 gifts (I get quite a few of these) really believe in the mission!

The \$2500 All In! – When we first began YMI, many of our founding board members made \$3000 annual gifts. Some still do. These people are fully invested. I received a number of \$2500 gifts in our first year of existence, one from a high school friend of mine. I felt the message to me was simple. “You are not alone. We are with you. We are all in, too.”

I am fully aware that many gifts correspond to a person’s ability to give. I didn’t give anything to anybody (other than my church) for 8 years. In 2008, the first year the recession effected giving, I received a \$15,000 gift from a woman in Georgia who I didn’t know. She heard about what we were doing. I talked with her on the phone once and she liked me. That was her Atta Boy! Gift. Last year I received \$10 Belief in the Mission Gift from a youth ministers involved in our program. I don’t believe he really had it to give.

In addition, and probably most importantly, your prayers are the best gift to YMI. I never see these. But, I know the value of that gift exceeds what you may stroke in a check.

So, know your gift carries with it a strong message.

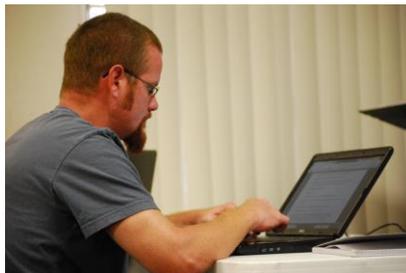
That is what I am reminding myself this Christmas season as I line up the gifts I want to make. I’m hoping what I give sends a clear message to the person running a ministry or philanthropic organization. Oh, and, by the way, for the first time I gave \$1000 to YMI this year. I really believe in the mission!!! I’ll go all in next year!

Most Recently

New Testament Intensive

I am writing this in the midst of our 4 day New Testament Intensive taught by Brian Russell, YMI board member and professor at Asbury Seminary in Orlando. We experimented last year with Brian and the Old Testament. It was well received by our youth ministers. This week is equally well received.

These four days were preceded by two four hour courses earlier in the semester. The 33 hours of classroom instruction will be the equivalent of a graduate level seminary class. The students who are enrolled report the value of the intensive by saying,



“This study was so well presented and filled with so much good information, both in content and explained application. You would think that after 3, 8 hr days in the classroom, the last thing you would want to do is study/read more. I spent every evening reading the NT books between the ones we studied in depth. I was able to explore and understand almost the entire NT this week. All in knowing that every time I look back into the scriptures, a new revelation would be awaiting me. I now have a tool belt full of textual criticism, critically insured minimum, and other mechanisms used in breaking down and

interpretation of these scriptures. I have been given a whole new way to explore, and understand the Gospel.” - Jonathan Nash, YMI student and youth minister at Cornerstone UMC in Naples, Florida.

Next semester we will dive in to Systematic Theology with Jonathan Grenz, a professor at Palm Beach Atlantic University. I am excited to experience the results. Our graduates have the benefit of having a well rounded education in theological study and practical application.

Partner Highlight

Potential in Texas

I have pursued partners and have also been pursued by those wanting to partner. I'm not sure what the formula is that makes a partnership work other than mutuality.

We have great partners. I have reported on all of them in the last year. So, it is exciting when it seems like one is developing.

In September I met with a group of youth ministers interested in beginning a Youth Ministry Institute in Texas. It was a great two days. I learned a great deal about what elements of YMI would translate to a different geographic area. I also learned that there was nothing I was going to do to force the partnership to happen.

Currently they are attempting to broaden support and enthusiasm for beginning YMI there. Even though we have perfected many of our systems and approaches, it is still difficult to communicate the value in an area where there is no track record.

We'll continue to entertain the possibility of partnering with other like minded people across the country. Would it be presumptuous to say, "and the world"?

Coming Soon

Fill the Room!

The Annual Dessert is just around the corner. This year, if you have given to YMI in the past, you will receive a letter from me with a pledge card and return envelope. We are continuing to reorient the purpose of our dessert to include people who have never heard of or who have limited knowledge of the Youth Ministry Institute.

So, we would like to you to invite others to attend! The invitation (below) gives all the details. But, if you would like an electronic version you can email to others or a hard copy you can send via the postal service, then please let me know and I will send what you need. Our goal is to fill the room with people.

Of course, if you invite others, we would want you to be there to be their host. So, feel free to respond by clicking on the web site www.yminstitute.com/events or by emailing me at steve@yminstitute.com .

Thanks for helping us fill the room!

THE YOUTH MINISTRY INSTITUTE

Cordially invites you to attend

ANNUAL DESSERT FUNDRAISER

February 6 2012
6:45 to 8:30pm

First United Methodist Church • 142 East Jackson Street, Orlando, 32801

*Please visit our website www.yminstitute.com/events to learn more about YMI.
Please RSVP at the website or to steve@yminstitute.com by January 24, 2012*

Final Word

From the YMI Guy's Blog

I am flying back from California with my family right now on a red eye flight to Orlando. I'll do anything to save a couple of hundred dollars, I guess. Well, if that's the case, I would have never flown out here in the first place.

After writing a number of blogs over the last year, I'm realizing that my life really encompasses some particular themes. I am very connected to my past and I place a great deal of value on my roots as I define them. Now I have no particular interest in family genealogy. I'm leaving that to some family members who have great interest in the subject. But, I am interested in what makes me the person that I am.

Read the blogs. I had a number of emotional trips to Kansas City for reunions and a funeral. This caused me to reflect on the impact individuals and circumstances have made upon my life. In a trip this summer that I didn't blog about (I insinuated I would since I called my blog about my first summer trip "Reunion Part I") I ended up taking my family on a twelve day driving trip to Kansas City and back primarily for my high school reunion (#30 if you must know). We spent time on the way up and back staying with and reconnecting with close friends and family. We stayed with one of my best friends in Kansas City and also with a cousin who really I think of more like a sister. Literally, within a two week span I had an opportunity to visit with most of my close friends and family.

I also wanted my kids to see the places that influenced me. So, we drove by the houses I lived in, visited all of the schools I attended. Well, that is a lie. I attended two elementary schools in southeast Kansas and the school I attended in 2nd through 4th grade is now an empty field. We discovered this when I announced to my family, "Coming up on your left is Mohawk Elementary School! Tada!" The field wasn't

very impressive. But, Hillcrest (now Westridge Middle School), Shawnee Mission West High School (we toured the whole thing as part of the reunion), Baker University and the University of Kansas (I stayed too long in the new Hall of Fame at Allen Fieldhouse) were very impressive and in much better shape than when I attended them.

So, believe it or not, my kids liked the trip. It was a great reconnection for me and I felt like these pieces of me that are so significant now have form in their collective memories.

Therefore, without hesitation, we scheduled a trip to Grandma and Papa's house in California. My children have never been to their house. We spent Christmas at my brother's house in Los Angeles (my sister lives in LA also) five years ago. Only my daughter remembers what wasn't recorded in pictures. Again, a long visit with family and a chance to draw my children closer to the people who molded me into the person I am today.

I really wanted my kids to connect with my brother and sister. They are both quite a bit older than me. My relationship with them resembles that of an uncle and aunt rather than siblings. I didn't want to force the interaction. But, let me tell you a few of my observations.

One night my kids ate dinner at a table with just my brother and my niece, my brother's daughter – the kids table (for kids of all ages on this night). They did what I had hoped. They laughed at his quirky sense of humor. It is the same humor that he and I share and has made me laugh all of my life. It was awesome to hear them laugh and giggle.

They have interacted with my sister on a number of occasions previous to this. It is still fun to watch her talk to them the way she used to talk with me when I was their age. She really cares about what they say and how they feel. Her deep interest values them as she valued me when I was young.

The interaction went beyond my siblings, of course.

We took a number of day trips. I drove the van while my step-dad sat in the passenger seat. My wife sat behind me and my daughter next to her. In the way back sat my two boys and my mom in between them. I simply listened to their banter. She would ask questions. They would respond with silly answers. She would laugh at their answers. My wife commented that her joy for life and easy laugh is one reason that she has lived such a healthy life. I countered that it is also her most endearing quality to others. Mom always laughs at my jokes and now laughs at the jokes of my children. We all love it and love her because of it.

All of my children's first cousins are quite a bit older. But, my kids easily connected with all of them, playing games and going on walks. It is their second cousins that are their age. Playing was easiest with them, of course.

All of my trips in 2011 have been unusually rewarding. I can't think of another year in which I have reconnected with people so thoroughly. I don't live in the past. But, I certainly value it as it has shaped the person that I am today.

Even more importantly, I recognize that the present quickly becomes our past experiences. All of that is definitely worth more than the price of multiple plane tickets. Now, I just wish I could sleep!