

Youth Sunday  
Testimonies from Ridge Youth  
February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007

*The following sermon-ettes were preached by five different Ridge Youth. I had the opportunity to work with each of them in preparation for their preaching debut, but all that is good and insightful and moving in what follows is thanks to their hard work and their hearts. While each of these preachers selected their own scripture, there was one passage that guided our time together that morning, 1 Timothy 4:6-12...*

“If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching that you have followed. Have nothing to do with profane myths and old wives’ tales. Train yourself in godliness, for, while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and struggle, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, especially of those who believe.

“These are the things you must insist on and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”

*Enjoy the wisdom, the inspiration and the example in speech that is below...*

### Julie Hawkins

For those of you who don’t know me, I’m Julie Hawkins and I am a junior at Munster High School.

Last summer I went to summer camp like I have every summer for many years at Camp Lutherwald in Howe, IN. It’s a Lutheran church camp because I was raised in the Lutheran church but that’s beside the point right now. Since it’s a church camp and most people there are very nice and I’ve always made great friends there, I’d never think that some people there might not feel as excited to be there as I was. Well, I noticed this boy, his name was Ryan, who seemed like he was feeling really alone and isolated by the other boys in his cabin. I think he was really trying hard to make friends, but they thought he was pretty annoying.

One day, I saw him getting upset about something, but I didn’t really know what to do about it and I saw this girl, I don’t know what her name was, who just casually went up to him

and asked him if he was okay. He, all the sudden, started talking to her, and was rambling on about who knows what and the girl didn't look too interested in what he was saying. She just stood and was nodding and trying to make it look like she was paying attention. I thought that was really admirable that she was so patient and kind by actually paying attention to this kid instead of just ignoring him like everyone else.

This connects to the Bible passage 1 Corinthians 12:22-26. It's about how we all are part of one body, the body of Christ. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it: if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. This means that if one of us is suffering, we all need to reach out to that person and help them. Hasn't that always been our duty as Christians, to reach out and help someone in need? Here at Ridge Church, it has at least always seemed that way to me.

Whether you see someone in the grocery store who seems lost and they look like they need help or you see someone on the side of the road with a flat tire, try to reach out to someone.

So, my question to you is this. Are you going to ignore someone like people ignored Ryan, and, suffer in the body of Christ? Or are you going to help that person, whether it be simple or in a bigger way and, in part, rejoice together? The choice is yours. Thank you.

Ian Svoboda

Hi, for those of you who don't know me I'm Ian Svoboda. I'm a freshman at Munster High School.

This past summer I went on the youth mission trip down to Slidell. Going down I thought that it was going to be a pretty boring week, but I knew it was the right thing to do. When we got down there and showed up at our work site on Monday we had no idea what we were doing. Here we were 5 youth and 4 adults who were looking at putting up a wall and replacing a floor. The way Jeff had said it, it sounded pretty easy, but easier said than done. When we started we found out that almost every stud was either rotten, not spaced correctly or had a whole bunch of nails sticking out of it. None of us youth had any idea what we were doing on Monday, but come Wednesday we all knew what we were supposed to be doing and what our specialties were. By Friday we were really rushing to get everything done. We normally started around 9 am, but on Friday we started at 7:30, and when we normally finished at around 6, we worked till 9 that night.

Everyone was determined to get the job done. But it wasn't just about that. It wasn't about the fact that the end result was a finished back of a house, but it was about the smiles and laughs from the little kids as they ran through the house and the tears from the parents that mattered.

When we returned the following morning before we left to take one last look it was hard to believe that 5 days earlier we had no idea what we were doing and were able to do what we did.

Some people would have said that it wasn't a job that a group of youth should or could do. Not only that, but we did more than just say we should help out, we didn't just pray for the

people down there. We actually went down and did something; we put our faith into action and helped someone out. We didn't fix every house that was broken, we didn't even finish all of the Reeves's house that we were working on. But we provided hope, that one day they'll be able to move back into the house instead of living in a little trailer and staring at it every day.

There's a passage in James chapter 2 versus 14 to 17 that reiterates my point. "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."

What it's basically saying is that we need to do more than just talk about what we're going to do, and instead just do it.

So, I challenge you to go out there and do something for someone that not everyone does. It doesn't matter how young or how old you are, if you have bad knee's or ADD. Everyone can do something for someone; we are living proof of that. No one would have expected a group of youth to do what we did, but look how that turned out. By just saying hi to someone you normally don't could brighten their day and mean the world to them.

## Haley Conger

Hello, my name is Haley Conger. I am an eighth grader at Wilbur Wright Middle School. Over the past few years, I have undergone many transitions with friends. I learned the importance of friendships and about our greatest friend, GOD. I know it sounds corny, but it is true.

My friends and I slowly realized that we had little in common and drifted apart. They were interested in other things. I lived in a fantasy world consisting of science fiction, musicals, and theater. Their world was one of boys, clothing and other “popular” things. Or at least that’s what it seemed like to me.

Our two worlds didn’t mix and I was feeling more and more uncomfortable with them. It was hard trying to find new friends. I had known my previous group for many years, some since kindergarten. It was difficult. It was sixth grade and all the schools had just come together and we didn’t all know each other. We couldn’t confide in each other as well, and I had no idea about many of the activities they were involved in. The middle school was a new building with new teachers and students, making it a little scary. Looking back I realize that the middle school never was that big and scary but it just seemed so to a short sixth grader.

Then I realized I had lots of friends who I could turn to. I had many friends at youth group who shared many of the same interests as me. It was also nice because many of them didn’t go to the same school as me, so when I had a bad day, they were there with a fresh set of eyes. Another great thing was that popularity at school meant nothing here. We could be our normal crazy selves. I found that I could receive and give support easier this way. Sometimes it is just a simple “good luck” but other times it is someone to listen to you. We in turn were support by GOD, who gave us the strength to support each other.

The bible tells us in Psalm 71: 1-3

“In you, O Lord, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame. In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me. Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.”

To me that bible passage means that God is someone who will be there to support us; a presence to surround us and be there when we are lonely. On a bad day, God is there, on a good day God is there; an invisible presence there to help us.

Sometimes we just can't support each other on our own because, we need that support for ourselves; the strength to carry on in our day-to-day lives. We get impatient and annoyed with those who need our support. But when God steps in and lends a helping hand we find that we are able to support others. Whether it is at school, home, work or anything else . . . we are just human. I am not perfect and never will be, but with God's help I can support my friends and myself and be a happier person, knowing there is somebody always there for me, helping me and guiding me in all that I do.

## Sean Crary

My name is Sean Crary and I am an eighth grader at Wilbur Wright Middle School. I would like to talk to you about how we can become what we believe. We don't always get what we deserve in life. We usually get more than we expect. Unfortunately, this principle works as strongly in the negative as it does in the positive. I would like to share with you a story from the book Empires of the Mind by Denis Waitley.

This story is about a man named Nick who was a big, strong, tough man who worked for the railroad for many years. He was one of his company's best and most reliable employees, but he had one big problem. His attitude was chronically negative. One summer day the crews were released early. Nick had accidentally locked himself into a refrigerator boxcar that had been brought to the yard for maintenance. The boxcar was empty and not connected to any of the trains. When Nick realized that he was locked inside, he panicked. He beat the doors so hard that his arms and fists became bloody. He screamed for help, but everyone was gone. Nick of course feared the worst due to the fact that he was in a REFRIGERATED boxcar and guessed the temperature was well below freezing...maybe as low as five or ten degrees Fahrenheit. Nick obviously found a piece of old cardboard in the boxcar and wrote down how he knew he was going to freeze to death. In this message to his family, he wrote, "Getting so cold...body numb. If I don't get out soon, these will probably be my last words." AND THEY WERE.

The next morning when the crews returned to work, they opened the boxcar and found Nick's body crumpled over in the corner. When the autopsy was complete, it revealed that Nick had indeed frozen to death. The investigators discovered, however, that the refrigeration unit in the car in which Nick had been trapped was NOT EVEN ON! The temperature in the car that night, the night that Nick froze to death was sixty-one degrees-just slightly less than room

temperature. This happened because he believed he was in a freezing boxcar. He expected to die. He expected the worst. He lost the battle in his own mind.

Many people today are similar to Nick. They are always expecting the worst and usually get what they expect. They become what they believe. But you can believe good things. The Bible compares the tongue to the rudder of a huge ship, and, in a similar manner, your tongue will control the direction of your life. Negative words will keep you from being the person God wants you to be. But, positive words make it possible to believe for more and to see yourself performing at increasingly high levels in every area of your life.

There are many stories written where people have miraculous recoveries, diseases cured, poor situations turned around which have no earthly explanation except for a belief that good and positive will prevail. In Proverbs 2: 6-9, it explains that the Lord protects the way of his faithful ones. In other verses, God tells us to speak constantly of his goodness, to speak of his promises all day long.

My own broken wrist was a trying situation for me, a basketball player who could truly use both wrists. I was told this was a very bad bone to break and that it would take very long to heal- if it ever did. I decided to be positive and told myself daily that my wrist was healing. I thanked God every day for helping my wrist to heal. After only three weeks, my doctor said it had healed far better than he had ever expected and much, much faster. I'm hoping that this positive path and trust in faith has this cast off this week like the doctor NOW predicts, and that positive thinking and prayer will be with all of us.

Michael Brandner

As I sat and watched the Super Bowl a few weeks ago, and pondered what I was going to talk about today, it came to me during the second half of the game. It was during this time that I got a little tired of the football “accidentally” slipping out of Rex Grossman’s hands. I knew then that my topic for today should be *FORGIVENESS*.

On a more serious note, I would like to start with a modern day story of forgiveness. Does anyone remember who Charles Roberts was? He was a milk man from Lancaster County, PA., who busted into an Amish schoolhouse with three guns and 600 rounds of ammunition. He tied down 11 innocent schoolgirls, shot them execution-style, and then turned the gun on himself. Five girls lost their lives that tragic day.

The Amish community was horrified and full of anguish, but after gathering their thoughts, reflecting on their tradition and faith, the Amish knew exactly what to do – *TO FORGIVE*. The Amish went so far as to pour out forgiveness upon the murderer and his family members. They do not believe in revenge or vengeance.

Wikipedia defines FORGIVENESS as the mental, emotional, and/or spiritual process of ceasing to feel resentment or anger against another person for a perceived offence, difference or mistake, or ceasing to demand punishment or restitution.

The Bible tells us in

Matthew 6: 14-15 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

And in

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.

So, according to Christian teachings the forgiveness of others is our duty as believers. Jesus suffered and gave his life so that we, as Christians, can seek God's forgiveness. We are then expected to learn how to forgive others.

Now I don't know about you, but I know that I make mistakes on a daily basis, and sometimes they may even hurt other people. When I realize what I have done I ask God to forgive me. Often times I forget the other part of the Scripture-*TO FORGIVE OTHERS*, no matter how hard that may seem. So my challenge for you, as well as myself, is that whenever you ask God's forgiveness –stop and ask yourself have you forgiven the people that have wronged you.

May we end in prayer...

Lord, thank you for your gift of forgiveness. Help us to see our faults and change our ways. Give us the strength, Lord, to forgive others and not hold grudges or seek revenge. Be with us during this next week as we make mistakes and others make mistakes against us. In Jesus' name we pray, AMEN.