**Every Last One**

I’ve always been an *every last one* kind of guy. I was even that way as a kid. I was a little collector and I loved collecting pennies. When it came to collecting pennies I wanted every last one! By the time I was eight years old I had collected $50 worth of pennies.

I was the same way with eating candy. I couldn’t stop at a few pieces of chocolate. I wanted every last one!

But sometimes going for every last one can get you in trouble. I’ll never forget coming home from school to our apartment and nobody was at home. My mom was at work and my brother was on his way home from school. That’s when I saw it…the very last piece of butterscotch candy. It was the very last one and it was going to be eaten by me…no matter what.

I unwrapped it and popped that yellow piece of candy into my mouth without thinking twice. The problem is that, it didn’t stop in my mouth. It kept going. And it didn’t go down my throat and into my stomach. Instead it went down my windpipe.

And in that moment I knew I was in trouble because I literally could not breathe. It felt like someone took pliers and completely cut off my windpipe. I couldn’t talk. I couldn’t wheeze. I wasn’t even making a choking sound because no air could get through. That last piece of candy was sitting right on top of my windpipe, keeping me from breathing.

I started freaking out.

I ran to the phone to call 911 but I thought again because I knew I couldn’t talk. So I ran to outside to the apartment next door and banged on the door but nobody was home. It was like 3:30 in the afternoon and they were still at work. Finally, I ran to the street to try to wave a car down and get some help. But there were literally no cars coming down the street.

Right then I started feeling whoozey. I was running around frantically trying to figure out what to do while I still had consciousness. And I remember suddenly stopping and thinking to myself, “I’m going to die…a really embarrassing death…death by butterscotch candy.”

And I prayed in my mind, “God show me what to do!”

In that moment I didn’t hear an audible voice but it’s like a thought was planted in my head. It was this, “Stand on your head.”

So I put my hands on the ground and my head in the grass and I lifted my feet straight to the sky. As soon as my legs went up that piece of candy came down. It dislodged from my windpipe and landed in my mouth.

I’ll never forget jumping up to my feet gasping and wheezing. And I spit that saliva and mucous covered piece of butterscotch candy into my hand. I knew that I was this close to dying. I knew that that little piece of candy almost choked me to death and, if it wasn’t for God planting that thought in my brain I would have probably have not lived.

As I caught my breath, still staring at that piece of butterscotch candy in my hand, I thought to myself, “That little piece of candy almost killed me.” I thought to myself “But that little piece of candy didn’t win…I did!” So I did what needed to be done in that moment.

I ate that sucker! Every last one…even the saliva and mucous covered ones.

I’m an every last one kind of person and I invite you to be one too! **We want to give every last teenager every last chance to put their faith in Jesus.**

That’s one of the things I love about the Apostle Paul. He was an every last one kind of guy! Look at how many times he uses the word “everyone” in Colossians 1:28-29,

“We proclaim Him, admonishing **everyone** and teaching **everyone**with all wisdom, so that we may present **everyone** complete in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.” Colossians 1:28-29

I believe that there are “every last ones” in this passage that can be applied to each of us today. The first is this….

1. **Every last teen must be Gospelized!**

“*We proclaim Him, admonishing* ***everyone*** *and teaching* ***everyone****with all wisdom….”* Colossians 1:28

To Gospelize is to proclaim Jesus!

To Gospelize is to warn and instruct!

To Gospelize is to evangelize!

There are one billion teenagers worldwide. There are 25 million in the United States. There are 46,786 teenagers in Denver, where I live.

How many teenagers are in your city? Do you know? Every last one of them must have every last chance to put their faith in Jesus!

Last Friday I was in San Francisco with my family and the folks at Area Youth Ministry got us hooked up to go into the tallest building in San Francisco. There we were in the Salesforce building with a 360 view of walled glass seeing the entire Bay area and you know what some of my first thoughts were? How many teenagers are all over the Bay area who have yet to know Jesus? **As I looked down on the city from that height my heart broke for that spiritually broken city.**

Matthew 9:36 reminds us that when Jesus saw the crowds he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Then Jesus said, “Open your eyes and look at the fields for they are white already to harvest.”

We must open our eyes. And we must pray that God sends out harvesters until every last teen is gospelized.

Show picture of Area Youth Ministry and what they are doing to reach every teen everywhere in the Bay area.

That’s what they are doing. What are you doing? We must open our eyes! We must get a 360 view of our city! We must do something to reach them all!

By the way, that’s why you should take a look at hosting a Dare 2 Share Live site in your community. It’s a rally point for revival. It’s a way to start getting that 360 view of your city. It’s a way of sending our harvesters into the harvest field!

That may mean that sometimes we have to burn the ships. In 1519, Captain Hernán Cortés landed in Veracruz to begin his great conquest. Upon arriving, he gave the order to his men to burn the ships. He didn’t want them to have any options other than to conquer the land.

We did the same thing two years ago at Dare 2 Share…(tell story of Dare 2 Share Live) if we really wanted every teen everywhere to hear the Gospel from a friend we knew we couldn’t get there doing our traditional two day conferences…

Picture of these ships burning

What ships do you have to burn to get to that outcome of every last teen in your community having every last chance to trust in Jesus?

Maybe it’s the ship called “We’ve always done it this way.”

-Some of you always do that same D-Now, always do that same conference or retreat or use that same curriculum because you’ve always done it that way. But if you’re not getting better results and your teens are not on fire for Christ it may be time to burn the ships.

Maybe it’s time to burn the ship called “a traditional youth ministry philosophy.”

21st Century Youth Ministry…5 views…everyone senses something is wrong…but God’s Word holds the answers!

1. **Every last youth group must be mobilized!**

“…*so that we may present* ***everyone*** *complete in Christ.*.” Colossians 1:28

What does fully mature in Christ Jesus look like? Kris reminded us last night of what Jesus tells us in Matthew 4:19-20, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of people.”

A fully mature follower of Jesus is a full on, highly skilled fisherman.

For whatever reason we tend to separate evangelism from discipleship but as my good friend, Doug Holliday, often says, “Any discipleship strategy that doesn’t begin with and end with evangelism is not Biblical discipleship.”

Why is this?

Because evangelism requires dependence on God…

Because evangelism requires risking social equity…

I am the product of a youth group like this. Yankee burned the ships on traditional youth ministry and chose to mobilize us…

Now, you may be thinking, “*Well, that’s an anomaly. My teens are just too apathetic to share their faith. They just don’t care*. These teenagers don’t have the Biblical literacy to carry on a Gospel conversation. They are too into themselves and their phones. Besides all this they are way too busy to evangelize.

After all Barna calls Generation Z the first post-Christian generation in the history of the United States. Many say that this generation is too distracted to focus on the Gospel. It’s easy to blame the teenagers!

**The Dog and the Booger**

My wife and I have a miniature dachshund named "Patches.” When he was a puppy he slept in his crate every night until we got him potty trained. The idea was that if he wanted to go outside to go pee he would whine and we would let him out.

In the middle of the night I could hear him whine and I’d have to get up to go let him out. Usually, once in the middle of the night was enough, but there were times he had to go more. Now, I love my sleep and I’m a pretty deep sleeper. But for some reason his little whine would wake me up.

One night it seemed more than normal. Right as started to fall asleep I could hear him start to whine (make sound) so I shook myself awake and went downstairs. But she wasn’t standing by the door, she was in her bed. I picked her up and put her outside. She did her business and then came in. I put her back in her bed and then went back upstairs.

Once again, right before I fell asleep, I could hear her start to whine again (make sound.) Now I’m frustrated, so I go downstairs and throw her outside, I mean gently set her outside, and she is just looking at me. I’m like “go” and he’s just standing there looking at me like I’m a crazy man. And I’m like “Go pee you bad little dog! Go pee! Go pee!”

But she’s not. So now I’m really frustrated because this dog is just taunting me.

So I scoop her back up, give her a good verbal lashing and put her back in her bed and say, “That’s it! No more whining!”

Once again I go back to bed, once again I almost fall asleep and once again that dog starts whining and begins to wake me up. What’s weird is that as I laid there I was getting madder and madder and breathing faster and faster and as I did the dog whined louder and louder (make sound faster and faster and louder and louder!)

And then I suddenly realized, it wasn’t my dog after all. It was a booger in my nose, a whistling booger that would make a whining noise when I was breathing heavy.

It was never my dog. It was me.

I didn’t need to kick the dog. I needed to blow my nose!

In the same way we may be upset with our teens because they never share their faith. But we must take the beam out of our eyes and blow the boogers out of our nose because if our teenagers are not sharing their faith, it may be because we have not inspired them to share their faith, we may not have equipped them to share their faith and we may not have modeled for them how to share their faith!

Every last teen must be Gospelized. Every last youth group must be mobilized.

1. **Every last youth leader must be energized.**

“*To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.”* Colossians 1:29

* 1. **Energized by prayer.**

Colossians 1:29 tells us, “*To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.”*

Paul’s hard work, his never ending labor, his physical, psychological and ministerial agony…was all propelled by the energy of Jesus himself which was powerfully at work in him and through him.

Now, think about that for a moment. Paul was able to make it through every trial, every problem and every beating because every ounce of his being was energized by Jesus himself.

The very energy of God is available to us through prayer but we must have faith to access it! The entire Trinity is ready, willing and able to us to help us to mobilize every teen in our youth group to reach every last teen in our community! But we must unleash this divine energy through prayer!

*Prayer is that holy, often unseen work done while we are sitting at our desks or driving down the road or walking down our prayer path. It is the most unnoticed, un-applauded work that we do, but it is the work that gets the most done…because it unleashes the unstoppable power of the Trinity into our earthly efforts. The same power that created the universe in 6 days, the same power that has been holding both the seen and the unseen universe together for thousands of years, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and set him above every other name…this same power is available to each of us when we pray. It sharpens the axe and chops down the trees. It revives the church and regenerates the lost. It is the most underutilized, underestimated weapon in our arsenal. Prayer has the most potential to trigger true and lasting change in the depths of our own souls as well as in the hallways of our churches.*

What if we spent as much time praying as we did preparing? What if we invested as much time in God’s throne room as we did in our books? What if we had longer meetings with God than we did with anyone else?

* 1. **Energized by the mission.**

Look at those first five words of verse 29, “*to this end I strenuously contend*” Are laboring toward the end of every teen in your community being given every last chance to put their faith in Jesus?

What is the end you are laboring for? Is it just to survive? Is it just to have your teenagers turn out okay?

It’s “to this end” that is your mission. It is “to this end” that is what should get you out of bed in the morning.

And it is my prayer that your “end game” is every teen everywhere in your community having every last chance to put their faith in Jesus!

To this end we labor! To what end? To rescue this generation!

To rescue them from attack…

Teenagers are under attack. The apostle Paul was under intense attack as well. Listen to the words of The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:23-26

*“I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.****24****Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.****25****Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea,****26****I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers.”*

Paul faced these dangers and our teens are facing them too. But they’re facing a different kind of danger than Paul did. Sure, in some countries, Christian young people face intense persecution, but in most Westernized countries it’s a different kind of danger. As a matter of fact, don’t tell the Apostle Paul, but I rewrote 2 Corinthians 11:23-26 based on what the dangers a typical American teenager faces.

*“I have worked much harder…because my Dad is pushing me to get a scholarship, been in detention more frequently, been mocked by classmates more severely, and been exposed to death by the suicide of my peers again and again.**Five times I received threats online.**Three times I was pushed around by bullies, once I was sexually assaulted, three times my belief in God has been shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day totally wasted on drugs,**I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from the internet, in danger from self harm, in danger from my fellow classmates, in danger from my parent’s pill supply; in danger in my room, in danger at my friends houses, in danger at school; and in danger from false religions. I have been juggling school and sports and friends and have often gone without sleep; I have known the hunger of longing for significance and the thirst of knowing I’m fully loved and have often gone without hope; I am spiritually and emotionally cold and naked.**Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all parent’s expectations. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is addicted to porn, and I do not inwardly burn?*”

We must be energized by the vision of rescuing every last one of these teenagers!

I come from a military family. My biological father was a sergeant major in the Korean war and was the very last prisoner of war released from it. He came back a highly decorated soldier. **One of my uncles was in the Navy. The other one was in the Marines. And my Uncle Dave was in the army. (we should have a picture of him in the President’s Gathering Power Point…we used it during my Founders vision talk)**

In one tour of duty in Vietnam he received 40 medals and commendations including **The Distinguished Flying cross** for heroism, **several Purple Hearts** and The Soldier’s medal. He was shot 5x’s and hit with mortar shrapnel 4x’s.

He carries a vial around with him of the shrapnel that has been taken out of his body. Whenever someone who is anti-war or anti-American starts spouting off around him he just takes it out and starts shaking it, like a mini maraca. When they ask what it is, he tells them “that’s the sound of the price of your freedom.” Then he tells them what it’s the shrapnel that was taken out of his body that represents the shrapnel filled bodies of Veterans both dead and alive who shed their blood to pay the price of their freedom.

My Uncle Dave was the **Crew Chief of a rescue helicopter**. He and his crew would **fly into hot zones**, where the battle was raging the worst, to rescue soldiers who were injured. He once ran into a burning helicopter that had crashed, to rescue a friend. The fire was setting off the ammo and bullets were flying all around him in the midst of the blaze.

The first time he charged in it was so hot that he ran back out. He prayed to God for help and charged back into rescue his friend. He did but he got both of his arms burned in the process.

For this act of valor he received The Soldier’s Medal for heroism.

Again and again he flew into enemy territory taking enemy fire to rescue young soldiers in the war.

A couple of years ago me, my wife, kids and Uncle Dave were out to eat at our favorite Italian restaurant when **Uncle Dave began to show us his war wounds**. He showed us his 5 bullet wounds. And then, right in the restaurant he pulled up his shirt and showed us a 4 inch scar on his stomach. I asked him how he got it and he said it was from a bayonet. Of course we all wanted to hear the story so he told us.

That day Uncle Dave was supposed to fly into a hot zone where soldiers were under fire and see if anyone was alive. When he landed he saw that the Vietcong had killed some American soldiers and, from the distance, he could see the VC they were taking one of them. As he strained his eyes he could see that **this guy was one of his friends**.

As he chased after them they set up an ambush…Three of the VC rying to rescue his friend…(“**I prayed to God and kicked him in the groin**!”) He ended up killing 2 more with a grenade and rescued his friend…All during this time he had a huge cut in his stomach. What did he do? When he got back on the helicopter he literally used Duct Tape to keep himself from bleeding out. Before heading back in he flew for another six hours, held together by Duct Tape. **He finally flew back in to refuel, quickly got stitches from the army surgeon and jumped back on the chopper to fly another 6 hours**….

**My Uncle Dave is Rambo!**

Last week, as I was talking to my Uncle Dave about these stories I said, “Uncle Dave, let me ask you a question….**Why? Why did you risk your life so many times?** And, I’ll never forget his answer… “*To rescue as many as possible. I didn’t want one injured solider to die. I didn’t want to leave one fallen comrade behind. I looked at them all as my kids, kids who needed rescued. I’d fly non-stop, getting hardly any sleep. I risked my life again and again, all because I wanted to rescue my kids*.”

We too are on a rescue mission to rescue our kids. And not just our kids, but all kids. What if we looked at every teen as our own? What if we had a sense of responsibility to do as much as we could to rescue as many as we could from the danger, the darkness and the devil?

Stand, and let’s make this our creed, along with the Apostle Paul.

“We proclaim Him, admonishing **everyone** and teaching **everyone**with all wisdom, so that we may present **everyone** complete in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.” Colossians 1:28-29