

MERRY CHRISTMAS

May the Lord bless you and your family this Christmas Season!!
From, The Young Life Staff and Leaders



A.C. Flora High School



Crayton Middle School



Dreher High School



Lexington High School



Hammond School



Irmo High School



Ridgeview High School



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— Mark Your Calendars —

From the Area Director...

I've been thinking a lot about gifts lately - Christmas gifts in particular. Unlike Calvin of the comic strip *Calvin and Hobbes*, my thinking on Christmas gifts is not motivated by a desire for what he would call more "Christmas Loot." I'm actually trying to get a grasp on what makes for a great gift. In thinking about this, I've tried to reflect on the gifts I've valued most over the years. I've also tried to consider the few, if any, gifts I've given that I would deem "great." Through that process, I came up with four criteria for what I think makes a gift great. I'm calling this next section *Jason Blackwell's Guide to Illustrious Gift Giving* (just kidding). Anyway, here they are:

Leader Weekend

• January 6th-8th

Clubs Begin

• The week of January 16th

Windy Gap Weekend

• February 3rd-5th

Work Crew Training

• February 8th, 15th, 22nd

WyldLife Windy Gap Weekend

• March 3rd-5th

High School Work Crew

Weekend

• March 3rd-5th

Skeet Shoot

• March 30th

1. **Gifts are the greatest when they most meet a need** – In order to meet an actual need in our life the giver must know us well enough to be aware of our needs. When a gift meets a need that we can't satisfy on our own its even better.
2. **Gifts are greatest when they are most undeserved** – It's not generosity when you give someone what they're due or what you owe them. A gift is truly great when the recipient is undeserving of the lavishness of the gift.
3. **Gifts are the greatest when they're given for the best reasons** – When a gift is given out of obligation it's really no gift at all. A gift given out of love is by far the best. Christmas can actually be a hindrance to this criteria – it supplants love as the reason we give gifts. Again a truly great gift is given out of love alone.
4. **Gifts are the greatest when they're given sacrificially** – A gift by nature necessitate some expense on the giver's part. The degree to which the giver sacrifices on behalf of the recipient determines the worth of the gift. Consequently, great gifts represent great sacrifices on the part of the giver.

Ok, so that's my list. I doubt it's comprehensive. I don't, however, doubt the fact that it resonated with you. There's something universal about those criteria. It's not because I'm the leading expert on gift giving. It's actually because I'm not an expert. Those criteria are simply something I just knew. I really sense that everyone knows these things innately. Why? Well, I think it's because God placed His values in us. It's these values that help us recognize a great gift when we see one. It's ultimately these values that allow us to recognize the magnificence of "The Gift." By "The Gift," I mean Jesus Christ incarnate sent for our salvation. He meets our greatest need - a need for salvation which we can't satisfy on our own (Eph 2:8-9). He came, suffered and died for us even when we as sinners defied him with our every breath - talk about undeserving (Lk 6:31-36, Ro 5:8). His motivation in coming and God's motivation in sending him was solely love, and there is no greater love (Jn 15:13). Finally, there's his sacrifice. Giving up heaven for a life of suffering, death on a cross and the burden of our sin pretty much epitomizes sacrifice in my mind (Isa 53:5-6).

Wow, what a Gift! God is truly a gift giver extraordinaire, and to be honest I'm often a little unsure how to respond. Sometimes I flounder about and try to earn his gift or pay him back. Ultimately, I end up cheapening his Gift in the process. On my good days, though, I try to live my life with humble gratitude. Isn't that what we want from those to whom we give gifts? We don't want them to pay us back. We want them to simply recognize our gift for what it is and appreciate it. I pray that your response to God this Christmas season will be one of gratitude. I also pray fervently that the students we minister to in Young Life will see the effect of God's gift in the lives of our staff and leaders. Christ is too great and too big a Gift to keep to ourselves. What better way to honor God than to share the gift of Christ with others? Please pray for us as we do just that over the next few weeks and months. Thanks for letting me share my thoughts. Merry Christmas and God Bless...

Sincerely,
Jason Blackwell



Windy Gap

February 3rd - 5th

Cost - \$140



YOUNG LIFE
**WINDY
GAP**

Wyld Life's Windy Gap Weekend

March 3rd - 5th

Cost - \$140

WyldLife will be heading to Windy Gap for an energetic weekend of fun that you will not want to miss. You can swing through the air on a giant swing, eat lots of good food, hang out with all of your friends and that is just the beginning of the fun!! Sign up now!

The Columbia Area will be heading to the mountains of North Carolina for a weekend of unlimited fun. We will depart after school on Friday and spend the whole weekend having the time of our lives on the ropes course, riding horses, zipping through the air on the zip line and much more. Spots are filling up!! Call the Young Life Office for more information. 254-2480

SKEET SHOOT

Thursday, March 30th

Indigo Club

More information will be coming to your mailbox in January!!



Southwind

June 16 - 21st

WyldLife will be heading to the Sunshine State. Southwind is a camp especially designed for middle schoolers. We will spend the week snorkeling, kayaking, playing in the pool, swinging through the trees on the ropes course and much more. More details to come on this trip. If you are interested in this trip please call Jessica at the Young Life office.



Crooked Creek

July 20th - 31st

Come join us on a cross country journey where you will cross the mighty Mississippi, see the arch in St. Louis, pass through the corn fields of Kansas to the gigantic Rocky Mountains. Crooked Creek is located in Fraser, Colorado. The week at Crooked Creek will be action packed, with many activities that you will not want to miss. We promise that it will be "The Best Week of your Life."

525,600 minutes to reflect on

By Jessica Condit

"525,600 minutes, 525,000 moments so dear. 525,600 minutes- how do you measure, measure a year? In day-lights, in sunsets, in midnights, in cups of coffee. In inches, in miles, in laughter, in strife. In 525,600 minutes- how do you measure a year in the life? How about love? How about love? How about love? Measure of love. Seasons of love."

- Seasons of Love from RENT

As soon as the trailers for the movie RENT started playing on TV, I could not get the song "Seasons of Love" out of my head. I love to sing out aloud, so many times a day I would find myself singing the words above. Ok, I didn't really know the words, but certainly could repeat the series of numbers. I decided it would be beneficial for me to look up the words. When I started looking at them it hit me that this song is all about reflecting and remembering what the past year has brought. As I started to think about this past year, I was able to celebrate what the 525,600 minutes has brought the ministry of Columbia Area Young Life. I want to share some of the highlights with you.

- This past year 427 middle and high school kids attended WyldLife and Young Life camps.
- Eighteen new college leaders joined the ministry last February bringing our numbers of volunteer leaders to 47. Plus, the high school leaders that are a part of the WyldLife ministry has grown to 18!
- This past summer nineteen high school kids volunteered at a Young Life property for a month serving on the Work Crew.
- A number of our clubs have grown by leaps and bounds this semester. Irmo High School took 19 guys on a Mountain Weekend this past October! WyldLife hosted over 100 kids at one club this semester and has consistently seen between 60 and 70 every other week. Dreher hosted a Parent's Club where all of the parents participated in all of the activities with their kids.
- Our Banquet was a huge success!! We had around 400 people there and we raised a significant amount of money for our budget this year.
- Jason Blackwell, along with his wife Crystal and their daughter Ellie, moved to Columbia to assume the Area Director role.

These highlights are just icing on the cake. The Lord has blessed the Young Life ministry in so many ways. The key to the song above is that we measure the 525,600 minutes in love. That is the only way that this ministry thrives, through relationships and the truth of the Gospel. I am so thankful that I am able to be a part of all the things that are going on here. I want to thank you too, for being a vital part of this ministry. Young Life would not be thriving as a ministry without your love and support. I pray that as a new 525,600 minutes is about to begin, we are able to trust the Lord and know that he has big things for us in the New Year.