

Winter 2024



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The BLAZE Bulletin

Youth Ministry (Grades 6–12)

HAPPENINGS: Worship Workouts & Equipping

We entered January bursting with hope for the future, hungry for direction from the Spirit, and determined to settle for nothing less than Jesus. Our hopes were met with more than we asked for. As we pressed into prayer and practical teaching, God met us and will continue to fuel us forward into His dreams for the coming quarter!

Our series called **“Worship Workouts”** thrilled the students and grew our leadership as we dove into the topic of **spiritual disciplines**. What purpose do they serve followers of Christ and how do we practice them diligently and through the power of the Spirit? We reviewed one of the core scriptures of The Blaze Ministry:

This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

2 Tim. 1:6–7 NLT

This scripture revealed to us that while God has given us His power and presence, freely, we must intentionally cultivate the calling and manifestation of God planted within us through the power of the Holy Spirit. That’s where the spiritual disciplines come in! They are rich and shining ways of life that create the atmosphere for His Spirit to transform us and for us to know Him deeper. Simply put, while the spiritual disciplines are our matches and oil for our lamp, the fire only comes from God.

We learned about the practices of **prayer**, **fasting**, and **sabbath**, and how to center our lives around them so that we can live a lifestyle of knowing Jesus and making Him known. Our usual time of prayer and intercession was weighed down with the glory and presence of God as each student earnestly sought Him in prayer. Our teachings produced faith and expectancy from our kids as they realized that there’s so much more to the life of a believer than “Being a good person”—they realized that their true pur-

pose is “To know *THE* good God.” Our hearts look forward to the freedom and revival that will come as we remain in this heart posture.



In February we will dive into **“Purity Month!”** Purity reveals itself as something deeper than sexual morality. Purity begins in our heart and allows us to live in deep intimacy with God. Jesus promised this in His word.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

Matt. 5:8 ESV

In this series we demolish self-righteous lies, as well as deceptive dilution of God’s word surrounding purity and sexual wholeness, with the objective of equipping our students the ability to pursue purity of heart that leads to a deep knowledge of Jesus rather

STUDENT FOCUS

Emilio Sanchez and Caylie Everts stepped up to be president and vice president of the up-and-coming Jesus Club at Stony Point High School!! Let's pray that they receive a double portion of grace and protection as they choose to step out in faith to bring revival to their campus.



LEADER FOCUS

Aliah Tait has carried a heavy load and remains joyfull!! Aliah is our only female volunteer and reaches out through text to more than ten of our female students. Her heart to remain consistent in communication and encouragement to our growing women of God displays the heart of Jesus so beautifully.

than an appearance of godliness that denies His power. [See **2 Tim. 3:5**].



Next up we will kick off our series "Bible Thumpers." The world has claimed this buzzword for a while as a derogatory term for self-righteous Christians who tear down others and pervert the love of God to empty religious hearts void of love. We intend to reclaim the word by equipping ourselves with The Word.

We've heard it our whole lives **"READ YOUR BIBLE!!"** But often we don't even know how.

"Where do I start?"

"None of it makes sense to me?"

"How can I build a habit?"

"I JUST READ REVELATION WHAT THE HECK IS GOING ON??"

I'm sure we've all had questions similar to these in our walk with Jesus and this series will bring an ease and a delight to reading the scriptures that this generation desperately craves.



In April, the month of resurrection and new life, we enter our series "Life After Death." We get to hear the

testimonies of people who have crossed into the great beyond and come back to share their story. People who have been to heaven and back, spoken to Jesus on death's door, and even those who have seen Hell itself. Death has been defeated; believers in Christ only have new life to look forward to even after we put off our earthly vessels. Let's remember the hope that has conquered death.

Our hearts burn with gratitude and expectation for the coming season as we remain in step with Holy Spirit.

The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.
Prov. 16:9 NASB

YOUTH TESTIMONIES

✠ Something has shifted in January. Our students, who used to stand still and timid during our times of worship, have begun to raise their hands and kneel in His presence. This heart posture has also flowed into our prayer times, filling the room with a tangible atmosphere of grace, power, and presence. Thank you, Jesus!!



✠ A student who has remained very closed off to all kindness of the leaders let their guard down to allow one of the leaders to pray over them. After the prayer, we could see this student attempting to hide their tears. What a beautiful testimony of God's transforming love.

✠ 5 students—Emilio, Spencer, Chandler, Brooklyn, and Kinsey—chose to make time to build a regular prayer routine that they will pursue on their own in quiet time with Jesus. So proud of these kiddos for taking ownership of their walk with Jesus!!!



PARENT'S CORNER: Purity of Heart

In February we will dive into the topic of kingdom sexuality and purity of heart that leads to deep intimacy with Jesus. The Western Church has remained silent on this topic and allowed the world to teach our children a distorted image of the beautiful gift of God called "sex." We refuse to remain a part of that narrative. **Because while the world perverts sex, and false religion shames it, the Kingdom celebrates it.**

That being said, we will cover many topics such as God's original design for sex, the porn epidemic, masturbation, and how we can find hope in our journey of purity regardless of our past.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Rom. 8:1 ESV

Purity does not equal virginity, and virginity does not equal purity. Purity begins in the heart and flows into our actions, not the other way around.

Matthew
23:26–28

With your help we can create a safe and nonjudgmental space to discuss this incredibly relevant topic with our youth. **In fact, as of 2023, children are first being exposed to pornography at the age of 11 or under.**

While we put an extra focus on this topic in February, we intend to pursue this as an ongoing discussion in our ministry even outside of February and want to remain in communication with you. The support of the parents will prove itself vital to this mission.

We wanted to give you notice ahead of time, not so that you will plan to skip youth service during the weeks we press into this topic, but rather to equip and encourage you to prepare for it. Many of us avoid this conversation as a result of our own moral failure in the past or present. But freedom from shame extends to parents, too. We do our children no favors by living in silent shame. In fact, as we choose to share the testimony of our struggles in the area of sexual purity with our children, as well as our healing journey, we make room for the healing power of God to usher in forgiveness and a pursuit of purity that heals your family line. If you haven't yet had a conversation with your child regarding sex-

uality, we encourage you to do so sooner rather than later.

Here are 4 ways to help you to prepare for these discussions.

1. Pray and Reflect. Take time to reflect on your own experiences related to these topics and allow The Holy Spirit to bring healing and boldness to your heart. God is our best source and first course of action.

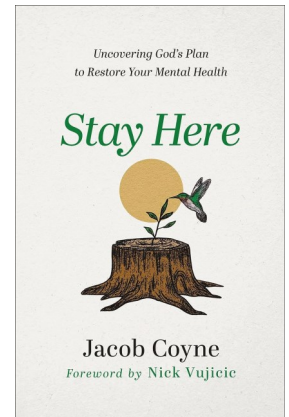
2. Educate Yourself. If you feel the need to learn more about these subjects, seek reputable resources that align with God's Word. It will give you confidence and clarity when talking to your teen. A wonderful Christ-centered resource is **MORAL REVOLUTION.**

3. Foster Open Communication. Create an environment where your child feels comfortable discussing their thoughts and questions. Let them know you're there to listen and support them, no matter what.

4. Seek Guidance If Needed. If you need additional support, our church is here to help. Our pastoral team and youth counselors can provide resources and guidance tailored to your situation.



Have You Read



Jacob's words carry the life only found in the Spirit of God.

His personal testimony and powerful acknowledgement of the struggles within Gen Z regarding mental health and suicide provide an invitation to step into the mess with Jesus so we can begin to look away from our trauma and toward Him for our purpose and healing.

Coyne provides practical teaching and real-life stories to validate and challenge your healing journey as well as your spiritual formation, all while remaining rooted in Scripture and the power of the Holy Spirit.

This book and ministry will lead to a suicide-free generation for generations to come.



Have You Heard

"Good Shepherd"
UPPERROOM

"Monday Morning Faith"
SEU Worship

"Underdressed"
Gable Price and
Friends

BIBLE TRIVIA

The Bible was written on three continents, most was written in what is modern-day Israel (Asia). But some passages of Jeremiah were written in Egypt (Africa) and several New Testament epistles were written from cities in Europe.

The Bible was written in three languages. Those languages were Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Most of our Old Testament was written in Hebrew, which was the language the original readers spoke. A few bits of the Old Testament were written in Aramaic (looking at you, Ezra and Daniel). The New Testament was written in Greek, the commonly spoken language of the time.

The New Testament is humanity's most reliable document. Out of all the ancient Greek texts, the New Testament is the one with the largest quantity of manuscripts with little-to-no variance (the only variances being spelling errors or errors of sight). Caesar's *The Gallic Wars* has 9–10 copies that date 900 years after being written, Plato's republic has 250, and Homer's *Iliad* has 1,800. **The New Testament alone has over 5,000 manuscripts and counting dated within 100 years of the original**, and its historical content (evaluated by atheist scholar Bart Ehrman) proves that it was originally written only 3–5 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. WOW!!

PRAYER FOCUS BY PEDRO CASTAÑEDA

We believe in the power of **intercessory prayer**. What is intercessory prayer?

"Intercession is prayer that captures the heartbeat of Heaven and declares that into our world; It's true agreement with Heaven."

—The Happy Intercessor by Beni Johnson

"Intercession is prayer that . . . involves taking hold of God's will and refusing to let go until His will comes to pass."

—"What is Intercessory Prayer?" by CBN

So let's join together in intercessory prayer for the following prayer focuses:

🙏 Grace and wisdom for discussing sexual purity for our students!

🙏 Our Blaze Saints to pursue intimacy with God in His Word, prayer, and community, developing a lifestyle of hearing and obeying His Voice! (We've been seeing great breakthrough here, let's continue to cover these victories in prayer.)

🙏 Women in the Church, of all ages and backgrounds, who are on fire for Jesus to join the Blaze Team!

🙏 For divine appointments and connections to be built between our youth group and surrounding schools in our community.

AMEN!

GIVING & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Providing food for our kiddos each service is one of our favorite practices at The Blaze. Providing food allows us to build trust and relationships with our kiddos. In **Acts 2:42**, we see the breaking of bread given the same significance as prayer and discipleship. The supernatural generosity of the Church as a whole gave them the means to provide.

Keeping this truth at the forefront of our hearts, we have

an opportunity for all of us to partner with Spirit-filled generosity. If only four parents committed to donating food once a month, we could provide food for our kiddos every Wednesday without measure.

We've gathered some examples of snacks we like to provide our kiddos that are affordable and easy to prepare! Please reach out to me via email if you feel led to volunteer!

SNACKS

- * Mac and Cheese
- * Pizza Rolls
- * Cereal (with Milk)
- * Mini Corn Dogs

BEVERAGES

- * Apple Juice
- * Soda
- * Sweet Tea
- * Capri Sun
- * Water

CLOSING PRAYER BY PEDRO CASTAÑEDA

Father, we thank you for the surrender that's begun to spread through our group of young saints. We pray that this move proves itself contagious and spreads through their schools and friends. We ask for wisdom and grace to steward your children and

equip them to know you and make you known. Continue to bless our leaders with unity and health (emotional, spiritual, and physical), and bless our parents to continue the work of discipleship in their homes. We ask this in your precious name. Amen.



Blaze Saints





BIBLE GUIDE

HOW TO READ THE WORD EVERY DAY

- ♦ Ask the Holy Spirit for help!
- ♦ Make time for it. Prioritize it.
- ♦ Read with friends!
- ♦ Consistency: Start with committing to one verse each day!

3 WAYS TO READ THE BIBLE

DAILY BREAD

- ♦ Breakfast for your spirit! Ask Jesus what He wants you to read each morning, afternoon, and before bed. Even one verse is enough!

DEEP STUDY

- ♦ Study the language, authors, and purpose of each book of the Bible. This will strengthen your ability to understand the Bible!

TEACHING

- ♦ Sunday sermons are the best way to start your journey in the Bible. Especially with friends! Go over Sunday's Bible passages with some friends.
- ♦ Also, listen to Bible podcasts/YouTube channels!



Podcasts



HELPFUL RESOURCES

- ♦ The Exchange Church
- ♦ The Belonging Co Podcast
- ♦ The Handlebar Podcast (UPPERROOM)
- ♦ The Porch Podcast
- ♦ WHOA That's a Good Podcast
- ♦ Southside Rabbi
- ♦ Thirty Minutes with The Perrys
- ♦ Let's Talk About It (Moral Revolution)

SHORT DEVOTIONAL RESOURCES

- ♦ YouVersion Bible App
- ♦ Glorify App

COMING SOON!



A collection of resources to help equip our young saints to live a lifestyle of knowing Jesus and making Him known!

The Blaze Merchandise



<https://www.bonfire.com/store/awakengreater/>

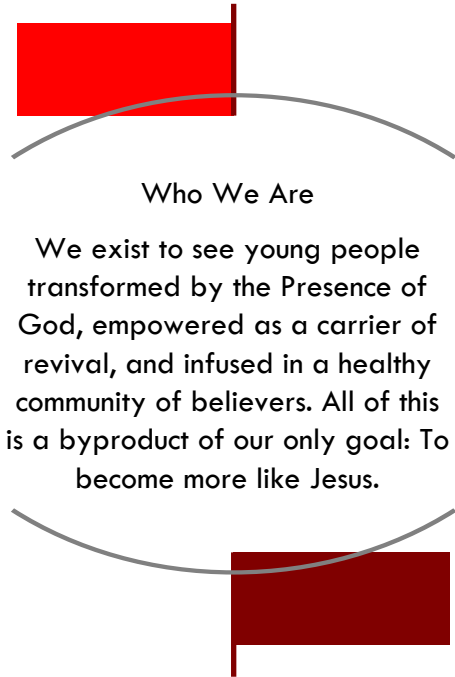


The Exchange Church

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Who We Are

We exist to see young people transformed by the Presence of God, empowered as a carrier of revival, and infused in a healthy community of believers. All of this is a byproduct of our only goal: To become more like Jesus.

Weekly Services

We meet every Wednesday from 7:30pm to 9:00pm at The Exchange Church in the back the building!

Drop-off/Pick-up

Pull up to the stairs so we can ensure the safety of kids as they come & go.



YOUTH LEADERS

Core Team

Pedro Castañeda
Aliah Tait
Caleb BreauX

Blaze Leaders

Mariely Salinas / Mercedes Estrada /
Jordan Rose / Ryan Castañeda /
David Dinan / Matthew BreauX /
Zachariah Martinez/ Jaden Estrada /
Tristan Rose

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