

Easter: Taking the Gospel to Hard Places

The following story was written by a member of the Youth For Christ USA Cities Pursuit Community. These are real stories and pieces showing how God is using YFC USA as a vehicle in raising up life-long followers of Jesus all across the nation.

Many Christian kids never take the gospel to "hard places" or the nations because their parents don't want them to! - Will Toburen

As a first generation immigrant, I grew up in a very protective home. Our lives were carefully centered on education, faith in Christ, and activities with others who looked like us. As an adolescent, Easter was a memorable experience. It was the day that I wore new clothes to church, took countless pictures with all my friends, and got home just in time for a huge meal with my entire family.

This year, my Easter will be different from the ones of my childhood. I will not care about what clothes I wear since the individuals around me don't have a choice. I will head to a local juvenile detention center, where I will lead three services. Taking pictures won't be one of the day's activities, and a delicious dinner won't be my highest priority. My parents did not ever plan for me to lead a youth ministry in prison, but I am thankful they support the work of Youth For Christ and pray for me daily.

Many Americans strive for safe and secure lives. It is what most parents dream of for their kids. Even in the church, **safety is one of the most powerful American Christian idols**. Just look at where many of the larger churches are located - they reside where it's safer. But when I read my Bible, none of the individuals God used - especially Jesus and the Apostle Paul - were ever concerned for their own safety when God had other plans for them.

The world we live in is obsessed with safety, and many of us are held hostage by our fears. Over six years ago, my family chose not to have a television because we don't want to be driven to fear our inner-city community by the media. I would rather discover the beauty of my neighborhood and its unique gifts than be set up to fear it.

Jesus comes to liberate us from fear. **If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it (Matthew 10:39, NLT)**. According to Jesus, there is a cost to the resurrection. The fear of death has no stronghold on us anymore as believers. No matter what happens in politics or in the news, **God is still good and God has not left us**. And that will never change.

I pray that the story of Jesus infects all of our lives in such a way that every Easter we fall more deeply into helpless dependency on God, not making an idol out of safety, but trusting Him instead. The true gospel of Jesus comforts the disturbed and disturbs the comfortable. What does that mean for you today?

Alex Mathew is the City Director and JJM Chaplain of Youth For Christ Kansas City. He has served and lived in the inner city of Kansas City for over 10 years.