



ILLINOIS Focus



Ron Aguilera, President

DISCIPLESHIP YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW



When I was growing up, my father loved to camp. I remember our camping trips and the search for a place to camp. My father taught me how to find the best camping spots, how to put up the tent and build a fire without burning myself. But camping wasn't all I learned. I learned more about my father. I learned how he walked, how he talked, how he prayed, and how he thought about God. More than camping, I learned about following God. To this day, the lessons I learned camping impact the way I live and follow God today. What happened in my time with my father was a form of discipleship. He led, and I followed.

What is Biblical discipleship? Of all the questions Christians need to wrestle with, this is one of the most important. Being disciples of Jesus gets to the very core of who we are and what we should be doing with our lives (Matthew 28:19, 20); see, disciples are called to follow Christ, and following Him means helping others follow Him.

Question? Are you a disciple that makes disciples? See, when we encounter Jesus, we meet a man who calls us to come to Him and to follow Him. It doesn't matter whether we're smart or not, rich or poor, young or old, Asian, Hispanic,

or African American. The only requirement is that we repent from turning away from Him and cling to Him through faith. If we do this, we're promised forgiveness of our sins and reconciliation to God.

Once you have made the choice to follow Jesus by faith, you become his disciple. At the heart of following Jesus is Jesus' call to imitate Him. As disciples, we are called to imitate Jesus' love, His mission, His

of making disciples is assisting other believers in growing in Christlikeness. Jesus has designed His church to be a body, a family, who actively build each other up into the fullness of Christ. As disciples, we are to intentionally pour into others so they can replicate that in their own relationships.

Discipleship does not just happen. We need to be intentional. So, how do we disciple? While we can have discipleship relationships anywhere,

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ISSUE FOCUS

DISCIPLESHIP AND PRAYER

service, and His obedience to the Father. We are to learn from Him and strive in the power of the Holy Spirit to become like Him. This is the beginning of becoming a disciple who makes disciples.

A disciple that makes disciples happens in two particular ways. First, we're called to evangelize. Evangelism is telling people who don't follow Jesus what it means to follow Him. We must never forget that God has placed us in the families, workplaces, and circles of friends so that we can proclaim the gospel of grace. We must help people learn how to begin to follow Jesus. The second part

the most natural place for them to develop is in the community of the local church. In the church, Christians are commanded to meet together regularly, spur each other on in Christlikeness, and protect each other against the evil one. To be most effective, discipleship relationships should be planned. Maybe two friends decide to read a chapter from the

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& MORE



Whenever we face a crisis in life, our first inclination or tendency is to run from it and not run into it. All leaders face crisis. The question is how you lead through a situation. We, as leaders of this church, were faced with a crisis that could have crippled us or built us up.

A few months ago, the death of George Floyd captured our attention, and since then, we watched other injustices unfold on social media and television. What we saw with George Floyd was a white police officer, Derek Chauvin, kneeling on his neck, resulting in the untimely death of an African American. As a cry for justice rang throughout the world, people took to the streets. They marched peacefully to seek justice and bring an end to the injustice that African Americans and other people of color face every day.

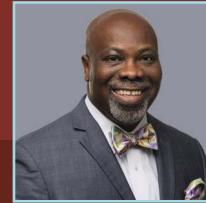
Amidst the peaceful protests were groups of people who were causing more harm than good. These took to the streets destroying their community's grocery stores, shopping malls, and grabbing everything that they could find. It was indeed a time of great crisis.

“ ... **JESUS** REPLIED, “YOU GIVE THEM
SOMETHING TO **EAT**” ... ”

As people cried out for justice, I, a black Caribbean pastor on the Southside of Chicago in the Goshen and Beverly Hills Seventh-day Adventist Churches, saw our community ravaged by this destruction. But the church was silent! Or so they thought.

I had young people ask me where their church was at a time like this? They said that the leaders are silent at a time when they should be leading the cry against social injustices. Which then begs the question, how do you lead in such difficult times when emotions are running high?

Matthew 14:13-20 tells a story of how Jesus reacted to a crisis. Jesus had gone to find some solitude, but He wasn't by Himself. A large crowd followed Him. The Bible says Jesus had compassion on them and ministered to their needs. They were in a remote area, it was late, and the people were hungry. The disciples presented the crisis to Jesus to inquire if they should send the people away so that they can take care of their own needs. That would have been a good suggestion, but they were far away from home and food. Jesus replied, “You give them something to eat.” The disciples had nothing for themselves to eat, but Jesus expected them to give the crowd something to eat. The disciples found a boy with his lunch of five loaves of bread and two fish. They brought the boy's lunch to Jesus. Jesus directed them to organize the people to sit down on the ground. Jesus blessed the loaves and the fish and gave them to disciples



FOCUSSING ON MISSION

Gordon Fraser
Pastor Goshen and Beverly
Hills Churches and Mt. Sinai
Company

to distribute to the hungry crowd.

From this story, I want to suggest a few points on how to lead, based on how Jesus led during one of the crises He faced.

Leaders should be calm and solution-focused. Focus on your mission and vision, then collaborate, organize, strategize, and mobilize.

A few months ago, I was faced with the worst crisis in my ministry. Not only were we dealing with the coronavirus crisis, but we also now faced the situation of social unrest in Chicago. Our community was already suffering since they were unemployed as a result of the virus and the stay-in-place orders. Then, they had to deal with no available grocery stores due to the looting that spiraled from the social unrest. As a church, we could have chosen to do nothing or to meet the immediate needs of the people. We chose Christ's method.

Mobilizing a team of people to help, we collaborated with other organizations and pastors in the Illinois Conference to meet the challenges.

Leading through a crisis requires us to have a compassionate heart for people and what they are going through. As Christian leaders in a situation, we must be part of the

Gilberto Bahena,
 Pastor of Elgin Agape, Lighthouse, Palatine and
 Rockford Hispanic Churches

La oración y el **DISCÍPULO**



Una de las disciplinas para nuestro crecimiento espiritual es la oración, parece que como creyentes y discípulos del Señor Jesús oramos muy poco, y le damos muy poca importancia a la oración. La oración es poderosa porque Dios es poderoso, y la oración es el medio por el cual ese divino poder es liberado y canalizado hacia nuestras vidas.

Vamos a analizar cómo podemos mejorar nuestra vida de oración:

1 NUESTRO EJEMPLO DE ORACIÓN ES NUESTRO SEÑOR JESUCRISTO.

(Mr.1:35) "Levantándose muy de mañana, siendo aún muy oscuro, salió y se fue a un lugar desierto, y allí oraba" Si él siendo Dios tenía la necesidad de orar, nosotros seres mortales tenemos mayor necesidad de buscar el rostro de Dios a través de la oración.

2 EN TODO MOMENTO PODEMOS ORAR.

(ITes.5:17,18) "Orad sin cesar. Dad gracias en todo, porque esta es la voluntad de Dios para con vosotros en Cristo Jesús" Orar sin cesar quiere decir tener el hábito de hablar con Dios sobre sus experiencias cotidianas. Recordemos que la oración es la llave en la mano de la fe para abrir el almacén del cielo, por eso en todo momento y lugar debemos de orar no solamente en el templo, el profeta Jonás oró en su desesperación desde

el vientre del gran pez y Dios le escuchó. "¿Está afligido alguno entre ustedes? Que ore. ¿Está alguno de buen ánimo? Que cante alabanzas "(Stgo.5:13)

3 PRACTICAR LA ORACIÓN INTERCESORA.

(Stgo.5:16) "Confesaos vuestras ofensas unos a otros, y orad unos por otros, para que seáis sanados. La oración eficaz del justo puede mucho" Necesitamos orar por nosotros mismos para que podamos recibir todo lo que Dios quiere darnos. Pero también necesitamos orar por otros como un acto de amor generoso. Cuando usted ora por otra persona no hay nada que fluya de usted a ella, ninguna vibración, ninguna fuerza o energía. Dios es el que actúa en favor de la persona por la cual oramos, y hemos visto los resultados cuando oramos en favor de otros.

“ ...LA ORACIÓN ES PODEROSA PORQUE DIOS ES PODEROSO... ”

4 DIOS SIEMPRE ESCUCHA NUESTRAS ORACIONES.

(Mt.7:7) "Pedid, y se os dará; buscad, y hallaréis; llamad, y se os abrirá" Dios a prometido que escuchará nuestras oraciones, pero no siempre nos dará lo que nosotros le pedimos, porque en nuestra naturaleza caída pedimos cosas que no nos beneficiarán ni nos ayudarán en nuestro crecimiento espiritual. Recordemos Dios siempre responde a veces dice si, a veces dice no, y a veces dice espera.

5 ORAR PIDIENDO LA VOLUNTAD DE DIOS.

(1Jn.5:14) "Y esta es la confianza que tenemos en él, que, si pedimos alguna cosa conforme a su voluntad, él nos oye" Pocas veces al orar pedimos que se haga la voluntad de Dios, la mayoría de las veces queremos que Dios responda de acuerdo con nuestros anhelos o deseos. Pero recordemos que Dios conoce lo que nos conviene y dará lo que sea de beneficio para cada uno de nosotros.

Nuestra vida espiritual será más fructífera si dedicamos tiempo todos los días a orar en forma intencional, cómo creyentes pidamos a Dios que nos aumente el deseo de orar.



It is now September, and this year has gone from bad to worse. Covid-19 is still out of control. There is injustice in our streets; many have lost love ones and have not been able to grieve in a traditional sense. I have been asked several times something along the lines of "If God is love, why is there all this suffering?" I don't think we have been taught to pray the prayer of pain as we should have.

Jesus allowed His disciples to participate in His lamentation in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before He was crucified. He confided in them that His soul was heavy, sorrowful to the point of death (Matt 26:38). Jesus desired that His disciples would join Him in prayer. He prayed to God and asked for "this cup" to be taken from Him if it was God's will (Luke 22:42). This prayer of anguish was so intense that the Bible says He sweat drops of blood (Luke 22:44). Jesus understood the importance of the prayer of pain, and He went back to His disciples multiple times, waking them up and commanding them to pray. The Bible says that the disciples were exhausted from sorrow at this point, but Jesus tells them the reason for this prayer

THE PRAYER of Pain



Joshua Voigt
Pastor,
North Aurora Church

is to keep them from falling into temptation (Luke 22:45,46).

The prayer of lamentation was not something new. David prayed out of the anguish of his heart many times to God for mercy and help. In fact, there is a whole book of the Bible called Lamentations written after the fall of Jerusalem. The book is a series of five poems helping Israel mourn for loss and, at the same time, pointing them to God. The book gets its Hebrew title from the first word, "How." Three of the poems start with How, "How did this happen, God?"

We find the prayer of lamentation throughout the Bible when there is great sorrow among God's people. In every instance, the prayer is directed to God and calls on Him

in distress. Many times, these people do not feel their prayers are answered, but they continue to cry out to the Lord for mercy, help, and intervention.

Maybe it is time for our churches to learn the prayer of lament. Instead of trying to explain why we think God is allowing this pain and suffering, cry out to God for help. Ask Him for strength to make it through hard times. Plead that He will keep us from falling into temptation. Then, when we are in a situation where someone comes to us with deep pain in their heart, we can sorrow with them instead of trying to fix the problem. I don't know what this world will look like when 2021 begins. I don't even know what to expect when October starts. The truth is we still live very privileged lives compared to most of the world, or humanity throughout history. The Bible does not promise peace and an easy life. When we become disciples of Christ, we become the enemy of Satan, and he is seeking to devour us (1 Peter 5:8). The Bible says that times are coming that will be worse than we have ever seen in this earth's history (Daniel 12:1).

DISCIPLESHIP YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW **continued from page 1**

Gospel of John and then discuss it over lunch or a workout at the gym. Maybe both read a chapter each week from a Christian book and then talk about it on a walk through the neighborhood with their kids. Maybe two couples do a date night together once a month and talk about what the Bible says about marriage. Maybe a godly older lady has a younger single woman over to her home on Tuesday afternoon to pray and study.

Regardless of the format, some of our discipleship should involve scheduled times of reading, praying, encouraging, and challenging each other to become more like Christ. Deuteronomy 6 shows us that discipleship happens "when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (v. 7). Every moment presents an opportunity to discuss who God is and what He's doing.

One last thing, as we follow Christ and help others follow Him, we're constantly made aware that we need grace. We fail. We sin. We struggle. But thankfully, God's grace abounds to His children. This is good news as we seek to follow Jesus together and daily be transformed into His glorious image. May we faithfully follow Christ and help others to do the same until we see His face. Maranatha!

- Ron Aguilera



INTENTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Jason Salyers, Senior Pastor, Hinsdale Church

Nobody ever casually drifted into success.

Airplanes don't accidentally take off, fly to their destination, and then land safely.

Ships don't accidentally leave the harbor, sail the ocean, and then dock at their intended port.

Sports teams don't accidentally win championships.

And Jesus-followers don't accidentally disciple themselves or others.

Here's the thing: whether we like it or not, we are all disciples. We are disciplined by how we spend our time. We are disciplined by what we choose to invest our energy and efforts. We are disciplined by the things we think about. And we are disciplined by those with whom we spend time.

We can allow ourselves to be formed by whatever happens to come our way, the choices of others, and other random directionless currents; or we can purposefully choose the paths we travel.

My point is that *purpose and intention* have everything to do with success – whether it is a safe trip on an airplane, the 2016 World Series, the relationships you and I foster, or our own discipleship journeys.

Discipleship – pursuing the heart and character of God

– is impossible outside of a relationship. Relationships are possible without discipleship, but discipleship is impossible without relationship. So for Jesus-followers, we are called to be purposeful and persistent in our pursuit of the heart of God. This discipleship is exhibited in three key relationships:

1. OUR OWN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The most important discipleship relationship we can ever forge is the one between ourselves and God. The Apostle Paul knew this because, as we see in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, we are advised to “pray without ceasing.” It is only through constant communion with God – the bonding of our hearts to His, that we can grow and be in tune with how and when and where He is calling us to go deeper.

2. OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN OUR FAMILIES

The most natural place to experience deliberate and diligent discipleship the way God designed is within our own domiciles. Again, looking to the Apostle Paul, we find that he wrote two letters to Pastor Timothy about how to serve the congregation. In one of these letters, Paul specifically identifies the home-life of

Timothy as a focal point of his discipleship process:

“I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you.”

The things that form us will form our children. The things that shape our lives will shape our children. It is no wonder, then, that we ought to ensure that we are shaped by God first. We are shaping the next generation to come.

3. OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE BEYOND OUR FAMILIES

In Acts 18, we are shown a picture of discipleship that could very easily have ended in hurt feelings, prideful arguments, and a broken relationship.

Apollos was an effective and enthusiastic elocutionist. But he wasn't without error.

So, capitalizing on their established relationship, Priscilla and Aquila *“took him aside and explained the way of God even more accurately.”*

The result was that Apollos continued his ministry with power. This particular story gives an example of something that happened quickly and had long-term effects.

Far more often, however,

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INTENTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

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reality proves that discipleship is a long, slow process (such as with Timothy and his mother and grandmother).

Whether you are just experiencing the joy of a discipleship relationship, or you have been intentionally pursuing the heart of God in any one (or all) of these three areas, the greatest gift and best tool at our disposal is the gift of praying without ceasing. *"Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most."* (Hebrews 4:16)

- Jason Salyers

FOCUSSING ON MISSION

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solution, not the problem. We can't be blinded by the injustices that are taking place in our communities. The people need to know that we are with them, that their interests are our interests, and that we care. They need to see the active love of Christ in us, helping them through difficult times. As we navigated through the crisis, our mission was simple. We just wanted to be the hands and feet of Jesus. We were sharing his love with our service. I believe that in the long run, people will remember what you did by serving them during a time of need.

I'm personally involved in the community faith-based police organization, which consists of police officers, political leaders, and other religious leaders. We meet regularly, trying to find ways to deal with Chicago's woes.

The key to leading through a crisis is focussing on the mission that Christ has given us. Make disciples of every nation. This mission must drive our vision to keep us on track to serve.

Once you have your team in place, it is time to execute the plan. Even if you don't have the resources readily available to you, that's where faith comes in. Jesus, when he fed the 5,000, didn't have the resources in his hands, but that didn't stop Him from telling the disciples, "You feed them!" I believe He was testing their faith, and when they acted on His word, the resources were provided. If we're going to lead during a time of crisis, we must be leaders of faith and prayer.

- Gordon Fraser

INTRODUCING...

Mi nombre es Luis Eduardo Parra Mota nací en la ciudad de San Félix Estado Bolívar Venezuela. Miembro de una familia de cinco hermanos. Desde la niñez viví en la isla de Margarita y luego fui trasladado a la ciudad de Puerto Ordaz donde realicé mis estudios de primaria y bachillerato en el Colegio Adventista Andrés Bello.

Estudí una Licenciatura en Teología en el Seminario Adventista Setaven en Venezuela donde pude egresar en el 2008. En la universidad conocí a Deixi Altuve con quién contraje matrimonio. De ésta unión llego a nuestro hogar Verónica Parra Altuve en el 2010.

Inicié el Ministerio el 30 de Octubre del 2008 en la ciudad de Puerto Ordaz, laborando para la Conferencia Venezolana Sur Oriental de la Unión Venezolana Oriental durante seis años. En dicha Conferencia fui Pastor de distrito, Departamental de Evangelismo y fui ordenado al sagrado ministerio en Septiembre del 2015.



Ese año recibí un llamado a la ciudad de Caracas, para trabajar como Secretario Ejecutivo y Departamental de Evangelismo en la Conferencia Centro Oriental donde presté servicio durante un año.

Después de llegar a los Estados Unidos, comencé mi ministerio en el año 2018 con la Conferencia de Texas. Hoy gracias a Dios y sus bendiciones estoy sirviendo para la Conferencia de Illinios en la iglesia de Fairmont City.



Pete Braman
Ministerial Director

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY

"Lord, teach us to pray!" This request is arguably one of the most insightful, vital questions asked of Jesus by any disciple. The disciples began to realize the correlation between Jesus' strength, character, and miracles with His habits of prayer. One imagines the disciples being captivated by the intimate, authentic prayers of Jesus to His Father. His prayers were a stark contrast to the often-rote incantations of religious leaders.

I love reciting the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4), but this teaching prayer of Jesus captures the essential ingredients of a disciple's prayer. Jesus invited His followers to address the Almighty God with both intimacy and deep respect. It captures our purpose in life in seeking His will and not our own. It elaborates our dependence on Him for our daily needs. It embraces the mercy of God's deliverance from our sins and provides strength against temptations. It reminds us of the hope we have in His glorious return. All of these invitations and promises are the catalyst for our mission as disciple-makers.

After healing Peter's mother-in-law, word traveled swiftly throughout the town of Capernaum (estimated 2000 people). The Bible records that "the whole town gathered together at the door" (Mark 1:33). A multitude of sick and demon-possessed were healed that evening. Not surprisingly, many gathered again to be healed and satisfy their curiosity. With the mounting demands and pressures, the disciples formed a search party to find Jesus. The Master Healer needed a solitary place to recharge and receive a fresh supply of strength and guidance for the day. The weight of the world (sin) was on Jesus' shoulders, and the demands He faced daily were beyond words. The ministry of Jesus quickly amplified to a furious pace. Jesus' example of solitude and habitual prayer mirrors the sentiment of Paul in 1 Timothy 2:1, where he says, "I urge you, first of all," pray. With the pace of life and its daunting challenges, we are taught to come away and rest in the presence of Jesus. With the whole town waiting for Him, Jesus received instruction from His Father to go to "another town, that I may preach." Not only do we receive strength, but God aligns our purpose, direction, and opportunities to witness and serve.

Jesus' longest recorded prayer in John 17:1-26, gives us further insights into the effective prayer life of the disciple. John 16:33 sets the stage for chapter 17 as Jesus proclaims the coming tribulation that His disciples will face but offers the assurance that He has "overcome the world." With the disciples gathered around, Jesus offers a prayer of intercession on their behalf. Jesus prays that His disciples will continue in close relationship with Him. He desires that they experience His joy. He prays that God's word and truth would be their anchor. Jesus transitions from His disciples to all who "will believe." He prays for his Church to be united in God's love. As His disciples who are "sent" into the world, we must pray for those yet to be reached for the Gospel.

As a doctor, he was usually the one giving bad news to patients. On this occasion, his own tests came back with the diagnosis of cancer. His cancer was in advanced stages, and he knew the challenging road ahead. As a man of deep faith, he prayed earnestly for recovery. The next few months were saturated with chemotherapy and medications. He lost significant weight, his hair, and his energy. At one point, he nearly died due to infection. He suddenly began to rebound, and indicators pointed towards a full recovery. The doctor ordered another round of scans to verify his remission. A short time later, he received a call from his doctor, and his voice was monotone; "I am sorry to tell you that your cancer has returned and has spread throughout your body. You may only have one month to live." After a sleepless night, his doctor called again in the morning. "I have some great news to share with you, the labs accidentally read another person's results; you are 100% cured of cancer." Life took on new meaning and vibrancy for the doctor and his family. Jesus has switched our diagnosis from death to life. For this, we pray with thanksgiving and praise, giving glory to God.



FOCUS ON YOUTH

The process of knowing Jesus more intimately is often different for each individual. Many factors impact the way our growth will look.

This month Pr. Felipe Soares, Youth & Young Adult Pastor at North Shore Church, shares with us, **"Three Bad Habits That Ruin Young People's Faith."**



Are you a young person, or do you know one, that is struggling with their faith? In one of my latest YouTube videos, I outlined what I believe are three bad habits that ruin young people's faith. Here they are!

1. BELIEVING THAT ALL CHRISTIAN ADULTS EMBODY AN APEX CHRISTIANITY.

Adults make mistakes too, and some young people set themselves up for disappointment when adults let them down.

2. THINKING THAT YOUTHFULNESS DISQUALIFIES THEM FROM LEADERSHIP.

I was 13 when I first became a local church youth director. Passion for something can take you on a journey of growth. Experience is a part of that journey.

3: THINKING THAT THEY KNOW ENOUGH. THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN'T WORK WITH A CLOSED MIND AND HEART.

Remember Romans 12:2's renewal of the mind? Faith is a process!

Work on dumping these bad habits and experience a renewed faith!

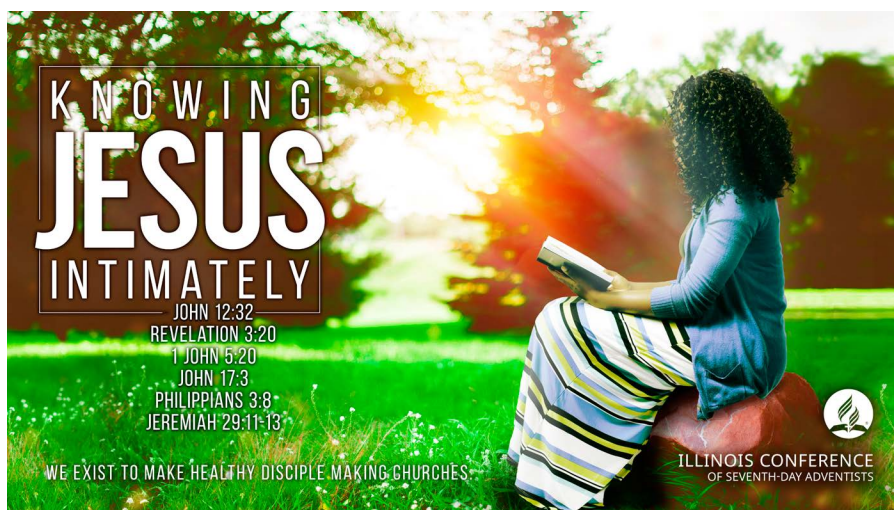
Connect with Pr. Felipe on YouTube as Pastor Dreamer & Instagram at @_pastordreamer_.

Get the latest happenings in the Youth Department by visiting www.ilcsda.org/youth and Instagram @ illinois.youth and share with us what your youth group is doing.

UPCOMING VIRTUAL EVENTS:

1Day Youth Rally Oct. 23-24

Young Adult Worship Night Nov. 6



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