

# Freedom Fellowships Newsletter

November 20, 2021

## The Summer of the Parking Lot

By Elli Rozler

Pulling into 500 VFW parkway, Kent on a Saturday night this summer you would've discovered a packed-out parking lot, like a smaller version of Cleveland's Muni Lot before kickoff.

That's what it felt like. People parked around a podium with trunks open, chairs out, truck beds used for elevated seating. Sometimes people even had Christmas lights & canopies around their allotted parking spaces. People came early for grilling out and delicious coffee from the outdoor coffee hut. They stayed late for games of volleyball and, when the weather started to chill, multiple bonfires around the lot. Every Saturday night felt like a party. Even though this was a Bible study, mid-pandemic, in a parking lot of an old VFW. For many, the summer of 2021 will go down in the Freedom Fellowships history books as one of the greatest yet.

As a fellowship, we have a lot to be grateful for as we reflect on 2021. The pandemic forced so many churches across the country to shut down or resort to drive-in services that ultimately decreased church attendance to the lowest it has ever been. Yet, Freedom Fellowships just seemed to thrive.

In past summers, we have always taken advantage of good weather for outdoor meetings.

But this year, we had a plot of land to call our own, which of course is

now renovated into our study center. Just as the pandemic was causing meetings to be put on hold, God gave us a way to continue our warm fellowship. With so much of life being halted or different, it was beautiful to come together on a Saturday night to be able to listen to an edifying Bible teaching, with friends, and God's beautiful hand painting breathtaking sunsets silhouetting the speaker just as the teachings wrapped.

Sure, we had to use porta potties, but by the grace of God the Ohio weather was the best it's been in many summers to allow these wonderful meetings to take place. I know I'll never forget being able to see so many friends at once and watching all our kids run through the field together in pure delight.

Along with outdoor CT meetings, we were also able to host a baptism, New Year's Eve party, Halloween parties and more. God has provided, and we look forward to many more provisions to come!

Sitting in rising anticipation for our new building, quite literally, as we were forced to meet in the shadow of the then incomplete structure was a blast!

## Upcoming Events:

**2021 Freedom Fellowships Christmas Gala**  
Sat 12/11 @ 6:00PM

**Family and Kids New Year's Eve Party**  
Study Center, 12/31 @ 5:00-8:00 PM

**Identity Project New Year's Eve Party**  
Study Center, 12/31 @ 8:00PM

**Church History Class**  
*For current or graduated LTC students*  
Spring 2022

**Basic Christianity Class**  
Spring 2022

## Announcements:

**No CT:**  
11/27 (Thanksgiving)  
12/25 (Christmas)  
1/1 (New Year's Day)



## Elders attend Amplify Outreach Conference

By Kyle McCallum

On October 19, the elders headed over to Wheaton, Ill to attend the 2021 Amplify Outreach Conference hosted at Wheaton College, the same college attended by the late great Billy Graham. The focus of the conference was evangelism in a post-Covid world, and we heard from several great speakers including Ed Stetzer and Mark Mittelberg.

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*Elders attend Conference cont.*  
Stetzer, ever the stats guy, presented new stats regarding lower church attendance as a result of the Covid pandemic. He said in general every church can be broken down into thirds: one third of the congregation are the highly involved and invested members, the second third are fairly involved, and the last third are those members who tend to drift in and out. It's that last third, he pointed out, that tended not to come back to church after the pandemic hit. Stetzer pointed out that this shouldn't be overly alarming, however, because it's keeping the highly motivated active members that is most important.

We were excited to find a kindred spirit in Dhati Lewis, who is the pastor of an urban and home church-based fellowship in Atlanta, GA called Blueprint Church. He taught about the church as family and that it's the close intimate relationships in the church that God is trying to cultivate. He pointed out that non-Christians often fall in love with the church family first before they fall in love with God. We had the privilege of grabbing lunch with Lewis in the college cafeteria after his teaching and he told us all about the wonderful work God is doing through his home church movement.

One refreshing aspect of the conference was that speakers were finally shining light on the issue of convert vs. transfer growth. Convert growth is growth that happens through people coming to know the Lord. Transfer growth happens through people leaving their current church to come to yours. Many churches don't distinguish between the two types of growth, but speakers at the conference rightly pointed out that transfer growth is simply draining nearby churches of their people to grow your own church. There's no net gain of converts into God's kingdom.

Pastor Rick Richardson led a breakout session where he detailed strategies for increasing convert growth. He also wrote a book called "You Found Me" where these strategies are explored in more detail along with updated church growth stats. Richardson said an ideal target for church growth is that 10% of your growth should be through convert growth (most churches fall well under that target.) Afterwards, I talked to Pastor Richardson about our own church here at Freedom Fellowships. We typically see anywhere between 60% and 80% convert growth, which is virtually unheard of in Christian America. However, Pastor Richardson pointed out that comes with its own issues: in churches with high convert growth, it can be difficult

raising up new leaders and you run into a much higher rate of moral setbacks and failures. Having a strong process of discipleship is key here.

The conference got me thinking, why is it we see such a high convert growth percentage compared to most churches? Is it because we are just better? I have a hard time believing that – there are so many solid, Bible believing, God-honoring churches out there that are living faithfully to God's calling. We discussed this question as an eldership and one thing that stuck out was that we put a tremendous focus on reaching the youth. So much of our time, money, and resource goes towards reaching the youth. We even relocated our entire church years ago to be in proximity to the Kent State campus. Just recently, we completed our study center located right in the city of Kent. Many churches are not ready or able to make such a radical commitment to reaching the youth because church is often structured around the adult and family population, which is a population less likely to rethink their beliefs and become Christian.

We came out of this conference with a renewed burden for reaching the lost and particularly for reaching the youth. May we never lose that burden as we move into this new season as a church.

## Book of the Month:

**Playing with Fire:  
A Modern Investigation into  
Demons, Exorcism, and Ghosts**  
*by Billy Hallowell*



Spooktober is over, but if you're still looking for a scary book that will keep you up at night, look no further than "Playing with Fire" by Billy Hallowell. Hallowell is a Christian journalist who brings his skeptical eye to bear on the topic of demon possession, infestation, and oppression. He investigates real-life cases of demon possession and the truth behind them. Remember the movie The Exorcist? Did you know that was based on a real-life case of a demon-possessed boy? He investigates that case fully in this book and the facts of the case will shock you.

The real value of the book, however, is not in its shocking investigation of the real-life possession cases, but in its exploration of Biblical teaching around the topic. He talks about what causes demonic oppression and what we as Christians can do to fight against the forces that are here on our planet. The book is a tremendous resource for fighting victoriously in this spiritual battle.

The book is available to read here at the study center right now! Find it on the shelf in the Café. I also recommend you check out the "Playing with Fire" podcast by Billy Hallowell available on iTunes and Spotify where he does real-life interviews with people who were afflicted by demonic possession and oppression and who were released by the power of the Christ.