

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
From *YouthWorker Journal* and YouthWorker.com

Season of Giving

Summertime Can Be a Great Time to Be Selfless

By Paul Asay

What Happened

Before the senior class of Profile school in Bethlehem, N.H., collected its diplomas and threw the mortarboards, students had one last important duty to do in high school. Instead of taking a group senior trip, the class voted unanimously to donate the cost of the trip to their principal, who's battling a rare form of cancer.

In all, the seniors donated \$8,000 to Principal Courtney Vashaw's medical care. "She's just very caring, very selfless, and we wanted to be selfless, too," says senior Ian Baker. Vashaw was overwhelmed.

"I feel like this has been a beautiful experience as an educator," Vashaw said. "You work so hard to try and help cultivate not only academically astute young people but kids who care. I am just so impressed and so proud of these kids for being the embodiment of that."

It was an appropriate way for the students to begin their summer vacation—traditionally a time when many middle- and high-schoolers find new ways to give back. While summertime for many is simply a time of fun and sun for some, many others use their extra time as an opportunity to help others.

Many teens go on short-term mission trips or help with their churches' Vacation Bible School. Others go out into the community to volunteer for worthwhile causes, working with underprivileged children or doling out meals at a nearby soup kitchen. Still others get summer jobs and donate part or all of their paychecks to charity.

Giving back to the community or the people around you doesn't have to be a big production or an extravagant gesture. It can be very simple—mowing an elderly neighbor's yard, maybe, or befriending someone who really needs a friend. The key is simply to be a little selfless as were those young men and women in Bethlehem—putting someone else's needs before their own.

Talk About It

What have you done so far this summer? What are you hoping to do? Has it been fun so far? Rewarding? A little boring?

Can you think of ways to be selfless this summer? Are there folks you know who could use your help? Are there services that you might be able to provide? Are some of your friends helping your community? Do you think you could help them?

Is it important to be charitable and giving? Why? We all know it helps the person who receives help, but does it also help the giver? How?

What the Bible Says

“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God” (Heb. 13:16).

“But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?” (1 John 3:17).

“Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38).

““For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed Me, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me ... Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to Me”” (Matt. 25:35-36, 45).

Paul Asay has written for *Time*, *The Washington Post* and *Christianity Today*. He writes about culture for *Plugged In* and has published several books, including his newest, *Burning Bush 2.0* (Abingdon), available now. He lives in Colorado Springs. Check out his entertainment blog at Patheos.com/Blogs/WatchingGod or follow him on Twitter @AsayPaul.