

Hindsight: Youth Group

Hey Everyone! I want to apologize for missing several weeks in a row of writing "Hindsight". As you all know by now, we are in the process of moving to Tupelo, MS where I am originally from. So, in the last few weeks, we sold our house (in a week!!), found a new place to live in MS, got Kellie enrolled in Kindergarten here, packed up our old house, moved to the new place, Kellie started Kindergarten, etc, etc. So...yeah...it's been crazy these last few weeks. However, I didn't want to leave you all hanging and not share a final (but not final) Hindsight. I say "not final" because I have really enjoyed sharing these articles with you. I hope you have enjoyed reading them. I am going to continue to write a monthly "Hindsight". I still want to chronicle all these stories and lessons learned for Scott and Kellie, too. Even though they are 2 and 5, one day they may enjoy reading about Mama's crazy fails and successes and silly moments, etc. I hope they can learn something from them. I hope you have as well. So, if you'd like to still receive "Hindsight", email me at Lstrube141619@mail.com and let me know and I will send you the article for that month.

However, this will be my last official "Hindsight" as part of the youth leadership at FBC Troy. May I just say what a blessing it has been to get to know you. Thank you for playing with Kellie and being patient with her before Sunday School began! Thank you for letting our family get to know you and step into your lives for a time. I pray blessings on this youth group going forward. You are amazing young women and men (for the guys reading this). Seek the Lord in your lives. He is eager to spend time with you. Speaking of spending time with God, I want to share with you a lesson I learned in hindsight from being a youth pastor's wife.

To begin, let me take you back to my 6th grade year. This was my first year to play basketball through my small Christian school. Nothing was very serious in 6th grade. I don't think we had many games except maybe playing each other. No travel. Just fun. And I stunk at it! I was not coordinated. I didn't know the rules, etc. I was your typical first year starting out basketball player. It was rough, but it was fun! I really liked it, so I played my 7th and 8th grade years, too. We started a real season then. We would have Away games where we would travel to play other teams. The farthest we went was a couple of hours away or so. I practiced Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday after school for a few hours. It got busy very quickly. Basketball became my identity. I began to get better (slowly..very slowly), and I began to get awards. Now, let me explain. I wasn't great. But most of us got an award of some type at the end of the year basketball banquet. Most Improved Player 1998 (I'm old) and Best Defense 1999. I loved the rush of getting that trophy, and I worked for that reward and status all season long. I wanted the coaches to notice me, and I wanted to be the best. (See Hindsight#1 about competition and comparison).

When high school rolled around, it was a given that I would play. I loved it, and I was 5'10" (see Hindsight #3 about the Tall Girl). You couldn't be from a very small school and be tall and not get drafted to play sports. I wanted to show how awesome I was, too. The girls and guys team practiced around the same time, so I enjoyed that because I was a boy crazy high school girl. I wanted them to notice how awesome I was at basketball, so that then they would like me. Hindsight- my hoop skills didn't affect how much I was liked or not. It didn't impress them that I could do a lay-up with one hand. That was

faulty thinking. I should have been more worried about getting to know my Savior and working through my struggles with doubt. None of those guys remember how good I was at basketball now. It doesn't matter anyway because we have all grown up, and I married a man originally from Illinois! I wish I could speak to myself back then and say, "Lindsay, stop trying to impress these fellas with your hoop skills. You won't even marry any of them anyway, and by the way, you need to focus more on things that really matter in life like knowing the Lord and seeking Him. The man you will marry will be looking at your heart and your faith in God, not if you can sink a free throw consistently."

So, back to the story...In high school, I played all four years from my freshmen year to my senior year. I got better and better but never great. I am 5' 10" so I was pretty good at defense and blocking shots. Those poor little 5' nothing point guards didn't stand a chance. I thought I was pretty awesome too. Basketball was my identity. I worked really hard each season for those basketball banquets. I wanted to hear my coach speak good words about me, and I wanted that trophy. Each year, I got a new one. Most Improved Player, Best Defense, Best Offense...I loved it! I put my trophies up on my bookcase at home and proudly stared at them. I treasured them and that recognition. However, I was never satisfied until I got the one trophy and title that surpassed them all- MVP (Most Valuable Player). This was the trophy I watched being given out each year from the time I was in 7th grade. It was my goal. It was the ultimate prize! It meant "You are the best!" I wanted that title!

So, I worked and worked! I tried and tried until finally, at my senior year banquet, I was awarded "MVP". I could've cried. I probably did! I had achieved my goal. All the games and practices led up to this. At the time, it was such a great honor, and it still is. I type this with that same old feeling of pride creeping in. However, what did I give up to get this honor?

We practiced alot! Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 3-5 pm. Then, games were either Friday or Saturday for a couple of hours-not to mention the travel taking up a huge chunk of time if the game was not at home. Basketball took up most of my time, and I was ok with that for the season. I loved it! But what did I give up? Let me tell you about my lack of involvement in church. My parents are awesome! I love them to pieces. However, we were Sunday morning church goers only for the most part. We didn't go Wednesdays or Sunday nights. We just went Sunday morning. My mom and dad gave me the option of going on Wednesdays or not to our youth group at our church. They thought that we are so busy throughout the week that one night a week to rest was a good thing. And it was! I crashed on Wednesdays! I was exhausted! I didn't want to make the effort to go to youth group if I had a choice!

Plus, youth group was awkward to me. We were all from different schools and that meant I had to talk to new people. I am truly introverted deep down inside, but I fake being an extrovert pretty well. Meaning that I can talk and be social pretty well in public settings, but when I get home, I need to rest up and be alone for awhile to refuel. It's just the way I am. So, for me to go to youth group felt exhausting. I had to talk to people I didn't know. I was super insecure, too, and didn't want to sit with anyone except my one friend from church who also went to my school. I was around basically the same people from 2nd grade to my senior year in my school, so I didn't feel comfortable with anyone else but them. I also went to a private Christian school and alot of the kids went to Tupelo High School. That made me nervous, too, because I felt intimidated by them because they went to public school, and I did

not. I don't know why. I was just nervous. So, it was way easier for me to stay home, and so I did! I went to a few Wednesday nights, and I went to a lock in one time. However, as a whole, I was not involved in my youth group. I was too busy, and it felt awkward.

God has a sense of humor they say. I believe it is true because I was far from done with youth involvement though. After I graduated high school and my official time of being in youth was over, I went to Mississippi State University. It was there that I asked Jesus to forgive me of my sins and help me to know I was His. After that, I felt a desire deep down to serve in some capacity that summer between semesters at school. Where did I serve? I became a youth intern at the youth group I was never really a part of! I led Bible studies, and I helped lead worship every Wednesday. There was no basketball to distract anymore. This was my job. I was a youth intern the following summer as well in the same youth group. When on a camp trip, I had an incident with one of our youth girls where she was unkind to me. It really hurt my feelings, so after that summer, I decided not to work with youth again! I was done!

God has a sense of humor they say...didn't I already say that? Well, it's obviously true because in June of 2013 I met none other than a youth pastor who swept me off my feet, and we got married in 2014. So, yeah....I was back in youth again! This time, I was refreshed and ready to go. For the last seven years, I have gotten a chance to meet various students. I have helped to lead worship on Wednesdays. I have attended youth Sunday school. I have been to youth events. I have gone white water rafting. I have been to Shocco Springs. I have done it all! When our kids came into the picture, my involvement scaled back because of their needs. However, I have experienced youth group life these last 7 years. And here's what I have to say about it.

I missed out in high school. I wish I could go back to my middle school self and say, "Lindsay, you need to make this a priority in your life. You've got spiritual questions and doubts. You need to ask your youth pastor or other leaders. Lindsay, your basketball career is not as important as developing your faith. Lindsay, you will make new great friends that are from other schools or home schooling students. Don't let your fears stop you from learning more about God. This has eternal value. Basketball does not!"

I wish I had gone every Wednesday. I wish I had made it a priority! Hindsight! What I have seen these last few years of youth ministry is that it is a good thing! It is there to help you grow. You can ask hard questions to caring leaders and find Biblical counsel. I would have been farther along in my faith and maturity if I had gone. I missed out on making new friends. Who knows that there wasn't a young lady from another school that I would have become good friends with? Youth group is a good thing! Please get involved.

Let me tell you where my trophies are now. In storage, in a plastic box, in the dark. I don't have them on a shelf anymore. Those days passed long ago! And by the way, I was homecoming queen my senior year of my very small high school. You know where that crown is? Broken in the trash because I let my 4 year old play with it for dress up. Am I sad about it? Nope! It's just a thing.

Do I regret playing basketball? No, I don't. Those are my favorite memories from high school. I have taken things I learned in basketball with me in my life. Perseverance and hard work. Those really

came in handy as I was doing hard new things after high school like getting a job. I am not telling you to give up the things you really enjoy doing at school or outside of school like dance or travel ball. However, here's my question to you: Do you have so much going on that you don't have time to go to youth group? What do you need to cut out to make time? What is more important? Developing your faith in God or attaining a shiny trophy or accolade? When you get to heaven, what will be most important? The stuff of this life fades away...trophies and crowns. Our relationship with God is most important. He longs to spend time with you. Do you have time for Him? Will you make time for Him?

Thank you for letting our family be a part of your lives! I pray blessings on you ladies and young men reading as you continue in this school year! Let my failure in this area encourage you to not miss out on a good thing! Youth group and college ministry after that! Let this be a new start for you to get involved from henceforth. Let it begin with a fresh commitment to attending youth to grow in your faith and to get to know your Father who longs to know you and teach you about His love for you! Let it carry on after that to college ministry! And then to being an active member in a church committed to serving God and getting to know Him more! Patterns set now concerning your involvement will follow you into adulthood. What kind of adult will you be? Don't wait until things slow down because after this busy high school season, there will be another busy season of college and then work. I wish I had carved out time from basketball to make God a priority by attending youth. Don't make my same mistake! We love you guys!

Sincerely,

Lindsay Strube