

I grew up born and raised in Unity. Went through the entire youth program, president of my youth group, you know, I Y L U, mega fan, and had the transformational experiences that many of us had in the Unity Youth Program.

I went on to actually start to work with youth again at uni of Las Vegas. I got back involved in being a sponsor for the youth program, Y FM area of that church. Eventually got onto the board, became the minister, got ordained, yada, yada, yada. Here we are in the executive director. That's how quickly it happens.

You just gotta watch out. Stuff starts flying. So I I brought that, that life experience to UWM with me, and I knew that these principles I have found through my work with youth are so much more easily absorbed by youth than they are by adults. I've done work with youth and I've worked, done work with.

And it is so much more difficult to get these principles into the consciousness of adults cuz there's a lot of baggage that has been built up over decades that you're now working against. Where youth come to it somewhat as a clean slate. They have their experiences, but they're still formulating their ideas, their beliefs.

And so you're getting it at the prime time to shift a life and create a new experience for an individual that will last 'em a lifetime. You know, we never forget our experience for the youth program. Even those that don't wind up in unity, they still draw from that in their conscious or subconscious way.

So they knew this was incredibly, incredibly invaluable. And I was of the generation in I L U where we had 450, maybe 500 youth at the IY U event. And that is a crazy powerful experience, just an awesome experience. And many of you probably had that experience either as a sponsor or there as a youth.

And when we thought a lot about what's happening with the youth in our ministries today, one of the things we started bubbling to the surface in these conversations was that the iy I u event was sort of the upside down pyramid, the tip of the upside down pyramid that supported the rest of the entire youth programs at all the ministries for me, my brother's six years older than I am when he went to Iy I u and he sort of came back just with that wild eye, just that was insane.

Look on his. My sister saw it who's three years older than me and she was like, oh my goodness, I gotta get to I and I. And then she went and then I saw it. I was, oh my goodness, I gotta get, I And the whole youth program was charged to get to I Y L U. And so if we can get that energy back into I u, that event and the whole youth program, of course, but for some reason I believe that that event creates the spark that lights the flame for the entire youth program.

Cause those individuals go back to their ministries and that energy now permeates the ministry. So as soon as we thought about this, we put it as a part of our strategic plan. We have to get individuals back into I I L U, these young adults, which means we'd have to help with the costs, you know, that the cost had increased.

So immediately started a youth education fund that we could use to offset the cost of I Y L U. And I was donating money and I still donate every month money into those funds to help offset that cost. Cause we don't wanna see that be a restriction cause we know that can be one of those restrictions.

And we made this, this long term plan to try to get youth back into the program four or 504 or five years from now. And we made a layout to how are we gonna do that? But that's sort of where I didn't wanna take control of this thing. I knew it had to be crowdsource cuz I did not have the solution. We had a plan, we knew it, we had to do in the next few years.

My vision was that people would bubble to the surface, that have ideas, have thoughts, have skills that I just don't have. And this is just answered prayer. I mean, it just, when it came out, I was like, oh my God, it's happening. You put this out in the universe. I had no idea. This is formulating. Next thing I know, I get a slide deck sent to me.

And it's like, well, where did this come from? What is going on? This is so awesome. I'm pumped that we have these individuals coming together. This is beyond what I could have imagined, that I don't have to sit here and try to think, tank this out with just my leadership team or my staff. We have these amazing minds across our movement and now I'm gonna help us do this.

So I wanna thank you so much. This is beyond a blessing. This is just so amazing and you all that are helping to put this together. I'm just, obviously I'm, I'm bubbling to the surface with energy. Like I just came back from iy, I u so one of the things, so you talked about the, the autonomy of the ministries, and that is something that we're working with all the time at Uni Worldwide Ministries.

Even if we have something really awesome, we wanna get out to them. They are autonomous. So what we try to focus on is how do we make something so inviting that they can't resist becoming a part of it? We don't wanna force anything on anybody. We do wanna do something that when the ministries get on board with that, those ministries succeed.

And all the other ministries go, what is the special sauce you have? And they say, well, we jumped on board with the program. They go, all right, we. And really we start to focus on our early adopters. You know, who are the ministries that are ready to dive in and help us? And sometimes that's the 20%, the 80 20 rule.

You find 20% of individuals, 20% of an organization are early adopters and are ready to jump in and take off of something. And when you put your energy behind them, they help pull the rest of the 80% into the direction you need to go. So that's kind of how we do things at Union Worldwide Ministries.

We're not trying to catch everybody cuz it's just too difficult's, just too many people involved. If we can get something that's really awesome and enticing, it's an opt-in experience that you want to be a part of, then we support those early adopters and we really give them what they need to thrive knowing that the rest are gonna start to come on board without us having to put all the effort, reaching everybody.

So that's that's where we're at. We know something went off course somewhere in the late eighties, nineties, early two thousands, something went off course with our youth program. And for me personally, I don't, you know, people say the youth have left Unity and I don't think that's the case. I see it actually as the opposite.

We left them when they were starting to shift, when they were looking for something different. When they were doing things different, we left them. We did not go with them. And so what we find today is. What I see is a disconnect, which I'm sure all of you see as well, if we don't actually match the needs of the youth, we're becoming irrelevant.

We can try to match the wants, but wants come and go. We all know wants can be fleeting, they might be a week, they might be two months, whatever they might be. But a need never goes away. Well, we're fulfilling someone's need now. They're truly dedicated to what we have going on. So it's finding what does the youth need.

It's not that it's so different than what they've always need, but when we did match a need with a platform now or a conduit for getting it to 'em, that's where I think we lost our, our niche. That's where I think we lost our relevance is we have that need, we have these principles, they need that. But the conduit and the delivery system got off course.

So I know you guys have probably a thousand ideas that are 10 times better than anything. I have just wanted to share where my head is at. I'm super excited. And so that's how we came to where we are today. Worldwide Ministries, we're committed to this. You know, we've got staff members working on this with you all.

There are funds that are starting to grow to help support this and and I talk about it as I travel around with the ministries. Cause just about every ministry I see says shed, where did the youth go? And part of my message

to them, which might be counterintuitive to what you think is we need to decide which ministries should be going after.

Not all of 'em can, not all of 'em are situated, well situated to go after youth. And we could be putting energy between, behind ministries that are just too detached from the opportunity of youth to really make this turnaround in time and for them to put the energy behind it. You know, they might have an older demographic, they might be in an area that's mostly retirement.

It's not realistic for them right now. But what we can do is look at the ministries that are situated to really start bringing youth back, to really start engaging with youth and put the energy behind them. Some, some the people have lost their billing. They don't even have a space for youth. So it's time to say, all right, you've got something else you might need to focus on.

But there are ministries that are poised and they're ready to make happen, what we need to happen in new and innovative waves that we may not even imagine. Let's put the energy behind that. So that's, that's what I've got. If anybody has a, a quick question or comment, I'm happy to listen to that. Then we got like four minutes left in the 15 minute section.

I had,

I just wanna thank you for being here and sharing that shad. That was really, really, it's great to hear where you're coming from and I can hear your energy and love for it in your words. So thanks for sharing.

My pleasure. Yeah. My, my daughter just oh shit. I, wow. You probably let see about two years ago now.

So I got to see her go through that process. And it was, her not being able to go to have the 400 youth experience was hard for me to watch, especially during the lockdowns and everything. And everything was just, that was hard. And I, you know, she had heard my story, so we gotta do something. We just have to gotta get that energy back cuz it's just so vital.

So thank you all for what you're doing.

Hey

Shad, it's Ed Requi from unity Renaissance in Chesapeake, Virginia. I had a group of 14 to 16 three years ago taking 'em to rally and I've got a group of zero today. Significant teenagers now are all working on weekends. They found jobs during the shutdown. Discouraging for me, but it's really kind of an insight of exactly what you are saying is how do we hook 'em back?

What's the ability to do that? I always saw it as a they wanna have connection not just spiritual connection, but a spiritual connection with others and finding the nucleus and, and getting a good nucleus of young people together that's willing to lead that forward is such an ex important.

Process of what we see. So I, I just see that the need of, how do we get out our message out a little bit more, but really, you know, the message of how do you connect, how do you share, how do you help each other as they're trans transiting the teen years. So my input,

thanks. Yeah, well, if I had the answer, I'd give it to you.

So I think this group is gonna be working on that, and I look forward to see what comes out of it. Yeah. Thank you for being here, ed. I appreciate that. Okay. I don't wanna suck up any more of your time. Thanks for having,

and it's so exciting that you're here. I was wondering if we could ask that you'd say it's a very short history.

I believe that our history information has some of the information that you're seeking, and it's pretty brief, so but if you have to go, we understand and we'll get back to, we'll do history and then our breakouts. All right. So this thank you also just for it's exciting to feel like you're one of us.