

NEW ZEALAND: NICK LA SPINA

About Nick's ministry

My wife, Rebecca, and I currently serve at the Otumoetai Church of Christ in Tauranga, New Zealand. This is a congregation of about 120 people of all ages, and it is a group of people who truly love the Lord and who are striving to serve Him. My specific role at Otumoetai is to do several things: lead the youth ministry, preach up to 12 times per year and I also help plan the direction and material for the teaching and preaching at Otumoetai.

How do you communicate with the people you are trying to reach?

There is a saying that goes something like, "people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." In my experience, that is extremely true in ministry. I strive to develop a positive relationship with those who I am trying to reach. I feel blessed to have a good, strong relationship with the entire youth group. I have really just striven to be myself, trusting the Spirit to open up opportunities for spiritual discussions and opportunities to share Scriptures with the youth, and that the Spirit will give me the wisdom and boldness to say and do whatever it is I need to say and do. I also strive to share experiences from my own life, my victories and my struggles, so that they can see that I am just like them – human with my fair share of weaknesses that with God's help I am trying to work through. I find that this then gives them the courage to open up themselves.

What do you like to do for fun?

I'm blessed to live in a beautiful country (and I live by the ocean), so I love going to the beach, at least in summer when it's warm enough. In Tauranga we have an extinct volcano that's right on the ocean called Mount Maunganui and it is a popular place to walk up or around as it provides such beautiful views of the ocean and the surrounding countryside. So I like to climb 'the Mount' regularly. I also like to go on hikes, play games, listen to music, and of course spend time with my wife and friends.

How have you seen God at work in your ministry?

I have seen God working to grow the young people in the church, both spiritually and numerically. In recent times I have seen the youth really start to mature in their faith. I am seeing the older ones really step up and be a positive example to the younger ones, challenging them to live for Christ. I am seeing others step up and serve in various ways, whether it's preaching and teaching, or whatever else they are gifted in. I am seeing them grow in confidence and they are opening up and sharing things about their lives. I am seeing other young people my age develop a passion for also leading the youth, developing relationships with them and teaching them. I am constantly being shown that I am simply a vessel, and I just need to be open to wherever God is leading me each and every day.

What is your future vision for this ministry?

My future vision for this ministry is for the young men and women that I have the opportunity to serve to be strong, mature Christian leaders, husbands, wives, parents and workers for the Kingdom no matter where they end up around New Zealand or the world. I see more opportunities for mentoring in the future. What I mean by this is that I dream of a ministry where there are men and women of all ages pouring into the lives of the youth and working together to equip them for the future.

What can we do to help?

I think that the biggest thing is prayer. Being on our knees petitioning the Father to work in our lives and in the lives of those around us has the power to do things that we can only dream of. Pray that God will continue to work in the lives of the young people here, rising them up to be a powerful force in the Kingdom. Pray also for Rebecca and myself, for the strength to lead as we work together to serve the congregation as a whole.

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