

# **IDEAS FOR GROWING YOUTH MINISTRY IN YOUR CONGREGATION**

## **(your ministry to children, teens and college-age young adults)**

### **Some practical tips for jump-starting youth ministries:**

- Lead the congregation in praying for a passionate youth-ministry leader (and then train and otherwise support him/her when God provides)
- Lead the congregation in praying for open doors to connect with youth—walk through the doors the Spirit opens.
- Begin to build the “nursery” (construct a youth ministry structure, train the workers)
- Have grandparents bring their grandchildren
- Hold a vacation bible school in the summer
- Make youth ministry (at the teen and young adult levels) youth-led and small group based
- Integrate the youth you have into the life of the congregation. Do you, for example, have an older teen or college age youth on your advisory council? Are youth participating in the worship team? Are youth doing some “up front” teaching/preaching? (see ideas below)
- Pair up youth with adult coaches/mentors. One-on-one and one-on-couple/pairs
- Reach out to the parents of youth—give them assistance and a break—don’t expect them to always be the youth ministry sponsors/leaders.

### **Some practical tips for making your congregation more youth-friendly:**

(Some of these ideas are from “Children’s Ministry That Works” from Group Publishing)

1. Welcome the youth to church—teach adults (including greeters) to notice the children: stoop down and talk eye-to-eye with the children, call them by name.
2. Can children see the screen with the lyrics for songs?
3. Are there announcements directed toward the youth?
4. Is there a children’s sermon (talk)?
5. Do youth participate in the offering (both the giving and the gathering)?
6. Do youth participate in Scripture reading? Do they turn to Scriptures?
7. Include at least one song specifically for the children; make most songs youth-friendly
8. In congregational prayers, keep the needs/concerns of the youth in mind.
9. Provide a children’s bulletin or worksheet for young children to use during the service.
10. Actively involve youth of all ages in the service: scripture reading, hand out bulletins, assist greeters, collect the offering, hold up a sign or poster to help with an announcement, provide special music, work the overhead projector for singing, move a microphone when needed, give a prayer.
11. Celebrate events in the youth’s lives: birthdays, end of school year/graduations, beginning of school year, return from camp, accomplishments in school/sports/church/work. Such celebrations send the message that youth matter and that we care.

### **Resources for growing youth ministries (where to go for assistance):**

1. Your District Youth Coordinator (DYC)
2. WCG—national youth ministry development team: Jeb Egbert [jeb@mail.sepcamp.com](mailto:jeb@mail.sepcamp.com) Ted Johnston [Ted\\_Johnston@wcg.org](mailto:Ted_Johnston@wcg.org)
3. WCG Youth Ministry web site: <http://www.wcg.org/youth/>
4. WCG Regional SEP camps: [http://www.wcg.org/youth/regional\\_camps.asp](http://www.wcg.org/youth/regional_camps.asp)
5. WCG district youth Discovery Weekends
6. WCG district YouthBuilder conferences
7. Partner with other area churches and with parachurch youth groups such as Youth for Christ and New Life.

8. Youth classes curricula and youth leader/worker training:
  - WCG Covenant of Courage: <http://www.wcg.org/youth/COC/>
  - Sonlife Youth Ministry Strategy training: <http://www.sonlife.com/youth/>
  - Youth Specialties: <http://www.youthspecialties.com/>
  - Group Publishing: <http://www.grouppublishing.com/>
  - Serendipity curricula (Lyman Coleman): <http://www.serendipityhouse.com/prdctstcurr.html>
  - TeamCE curricula (by subscription): <http://www.teamce.com/>
  - Awana Clubs: <http://www.awana.org/>
  - ChildrensMinistry.net: [www.childrensministry.net](http://www.childrensministry.net)
  - Childrens Ministry Today: [www.childrensministry.org](http://www.childrensministry.org)
  - On-line review of various resources:  
<http://home.earthlink.net/~dfreemansr/youth/youth.main.html>
9. Youth training/equipping:
  - Sonlife SEMP/EQUIP conferences: [www.sonlife.com](http://www.sonlife.com)
  - Youth for Christ DC/LA conferences: <http://www.dcla2003.org/>
  - Teen Mania (Acquire the Fire conferences, camps, missions, etc.):  
<http://www.teenmania.org/>
10. Missions trips:
  - World Team: [www.worldteam.org](http://www.worldteam.org)
  - Friendships: <http://www.friendships.org/>
  - Youth With a Mission International (YWAM): [www.ywamfm.org](http://www.ywamfm.org)
  - Group Work Camps: <http://www.groupworkcamps.com/>
  - Teen Mania Global Expeditions: [www.teenmania.com/globalexpeditions](http://www.teenmania.com/globalexpeditions)
11. Miscellaneous youth ministry related resources:
  - Children's sermons: <http://www.childrensermons.com/sermons/sermonhome.htm>
  - Sermons for kids: <http://www.sermons4kids.com/>
  - Drama (free skits): [www.nailscars.com/index2.html](http://www.nailscars.com/index2.html) <http://www.iovf.org/witness/drama/>
  - Free stuff: <http://www.thesourcefym.com/>
  - Children's ministry links: <http://netministries.org/kids.htmls>
  - Vacation Bible School planning: <http://www.gbgm-umc.org/marshltn/VBSmain.html>
  - Youth workers network: <http://youthworkers.net/>
  - Youth ministry.com: [www.youthministry.com](http://www.youthministry.com)
  - Youth Leader Connection: <http://www.youthleader.org/>
12. Get into the schools/colleges:
  - Go Campus: <http://www.gocampus.org/>
  - Every School: <http://www.everyschool.com/>
  - Young Life: <http://www.younglife.org/>
  - Intervarsity Christian Fellowship: <http://www.iovf.org/>
  - Youth for Christ: <http://www.gospelcom.net/yfc/>
  - Fellowship of Christian Athletes: <http://www.fca.org/>

## References (recommended books)

1. "Children's Ministry That Works," 1991, Group Publishing.
2. "Reaching a Generation for Christ," Richard Dunn and Mark Senter, 1997, Moody Press.
3. "Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church," Mark Senter, Wesley Black, Chap Clark and Malan Nel, 2001, Youth Specialties Academic.
4. "Student Ministry for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," Bo Boshers, 1997, Zondervan

## HOW TO SHOW KIDS YOU CARE

Everyone in a community can make a difference in the lives of children and youth. Even if you don't think you can tackle tough problems such as violence, alcohol and other drug use, or school problems, you can make a difference by being a caring, responsible friend for young people. Need some ideas for what you can do? Here are 50 of them:

1. Remember their birthday.
2. Ask them about themselves
3. Play with them.
4. Tell them their feelings are OK.
5. Be honest.
6. Be yourself.
7. Notice when they're acting differently.
8. Surprise them.
9. Share their excitement.
10. Send them a letter or postcard.
11. Follow them when they lead.
12. Hide surprises for them to find.
13. Give them space when they need it.
14. Laugh at their jokes.
15. Create a tradition with them and keep it.
16. Show up at their concerts, games, and events.
17. Apologize when you've done something wrong.
18. Listen to their favorite music with them.
19. Thank them.
20. Point out what you like about them.
21. Clip magazine pictures or articles that interest them.
22. Give them your undivided attention.
23. Ask for their opinion.
24. Introduce them to your friends and family.
25. Tell them how much you like being with them.
26. Let them tell you how they feel.
27. Help them become an expert at something.
28. Tell them about yourself.
29. Ask them to help you.
30. Applaud their successes.
31. Nurture them with good food.
32. Let them make mistakes.
33. Visit their schools.
34. Be silly together.
35. Hang out together.
36. Accept them as they are.
37. Become their advocate.
38. Trust them.
39. Share a secret.
40. Do what they like to do.
41. Build something together.
42. Encourage them to think big.
43. Celebrate their firsts and lasts, such as the first day of school.
44. Visit them when they're sick.
45. Tape record a message for them.
46. Introduce them to people of excellence.
47. Give them your phone number.
48. Introduce them to new experiences.
49. Be spontaneous.
50. Love them -- no matter what.

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## STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN YOUTHS

| grade/age                              | emotional development  | social development   | mental (cognitive) development   | spiritual development  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>preschool (3-4)</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• generally happy</li> <li>• influenced by the reactions of other youths</li> <li>• sensitive to the moods and reactions of adults</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• generally play with same sex</li> <li>• prefer short group experiences</li> <li>• use language in dramatic play</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• can recall some facts and events</li> <li>• can memorize stories, songs, or finger plays</li> <li>• ask lots of questions</li> <li>• have an attention span of no longer than 10 minutes</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hear and enjoy Bible stories</li> <li>• recognize own church: develop sense of belonging at church</li> <li>• understand that prayer is talking to God; pray simple, spontaneous prayers</li> </ul>   |
| <b>preschool (4-6)</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• proud of their accomplishments</li> <li>• have their feelings hurt easily</li> <li>• beginning to gain self-confidence</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learning to share and cooperate</li> <li>• can understand and follow rules</li> <li>• enjoy extensive dramatic play</li> <li>• eager to please teachers and parents</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• can listen to and create stories</li> <li>• can distinguish between real and pretend</li> <li>• need simple directions — understand one step at a time</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand that God made them</li> <li>• trust that God loves them</li> <li>• beginning to develop sense of conscience</li> </ul>   |
| <b>first and second graders (6-8)</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• express feelings with physical action</li> <li>• crave individual attention and affirmation</li> <li>• are self-centered; each wants to be first</li> <li>• feeling capable is directly related to self-esteem</li> <li>• want everything to be fair; black-and-white sense of justice</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• usually prefer to stick to same-sex friendships</li> <li>• thrive on organized games and group activities</li> <li>• want to please teachers but are beginning to recognize their role in relation to their peers</li> <li>• want to win and always be first; have a strong sense of competition with others</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interested in concrete learning experiences such as dramatizations and rhythms</li> <li>• have a limited concept of time and space; interested in the present but not past and future</li> <li>• yearn for competence in developing skills</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand God's love and God's world through personal experience</li> <li>• don't comprehend the spiritual nature of God; think of God as a giant/magician/invisible man</li> <li>• don't comprehend the Bible's chronology except that the Old Testament comes before the New</li> <li>• have a literal and concrete understanding of Bible stories and biblical truths; don't comprehend abstract ideas</li> </ul> |
| <b>third and fourth graders (8-10)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feelings may be hurt easily</li> <li>• sensitive to praise and criticism from adults</li> <li>• developing ability to empathize with others</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• want to be a part of a group</li> <li>• enjoy extended group projects</li> <li>• able to accept limited constructive criticism</li> <li>• naturally avoid interaction with the opposite sex</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• most can read well</li> <li>• like to be challenged but don't like to fail</li> <li>• need to feel independent; don't always want help from teachers</li> <li>• understand cause and effect; like to arrange and organize information</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• able to accept that there are some things about God we don't understand</li> <li>• ready to relate individual Bible events to the scope of Bible history</li> <li>• recognize the difference between right and wrong; able to make deliberate choices about actions</li> </ul>  |

| <b>grade/age</b>                       | <b>emotional development</b>   | <b>social development</b>  | <b>mental (cognitive) development</b>  | <b>spiritual development</b>   |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>fifth and sixth graders (10-12)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• get mixed messages about being mature and accepting responsibility for choices/ actions</li> <li>• possible strong fears about losing parent, abandonment, rejection by friends, being a victim of violence, or becoming ill</li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• spend a lot of time with one best friend</li> <li>• usually prefer to stick to same-sex friendships</li> <li>• thrive on organized games and group activities</li> <li>• strongly influenced by heroes and role models</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• well-developed critical-thinking and problem-solving skills</li> <li>• beginning to question authority figures; prefer to reason things through for themselves</li> <li>• interested in how past and present world events affect their lives</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• want everything to be fair</li> <li>• want to test what they have been taught about God against their own experiences</li> <li>• able to make choices about finding God's will and following it</li> </ul>  |
| <b>junior high (12-14)</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• major time of changeability/ transition</li> <li>• great sensitivity/variability due to hormonal shifts at onset of puberty</li> <li>• initial stages of identity formation with emphasis on role-playing/identity experimentation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• major increase in social awareness/need for acceptance</li> <li>• self-centered — embarrass easily</li> <li>• growing influence of peer group</li> <li>• increased emphasis on meaningful friendships</li> <li>• growing interest in opposite sex with preoccupation with physical and sexual concerns</li> <li>• often extreme idealism</li> <li>• continued emphasis on the present</li> <li>• new emphasis on the importance of role models</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more open to new ideas</li> <li>• a fact-finding/decision-making period</li> <li>• growing ability to reason sequentially and logically</li> <li>• want to make own decisions (need for autonomy)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• beginning to view religion as a belief system rather than an activity system</li> <li>• the beginning of a period of questioning of previously unquestioned beliefs</li> <li>• a growing need to understand the concepts behind beliefs in order to reaffirm those beliefs</li> <li>• a spiritual fact-finding period</li> <li>• continued emphasis on interpersonal relationships in faith formation and new emphasis on the affective (feeling) aspects of faith</li> </ul> |
| <b>senior high (14-18)</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nearing completion of identity formation (commitment to an identity) sometimes leading to rigidity of identity</li> <li>• growing stability of personality</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continued self-centeredness but a growing awareness of the self in relation to others</li> <li>• growing stability of social relationships but continued struggle with sexuality</li> <li>• relationships become deeper and more important</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development of adult-like cognitive abilities (formal operational thinking)</li> <li>• growing ability to understand theoretical issues</li> <li>• growing ability to deal with ambiguity and relativity</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased ability to consider ethical/moral issues in abstract ways</li> <li>• questioning of beliefs as those beliefs are either rejected or internalized</li> <li>• adoption of and commitment to a set of ethics/values</li> </ul>   |

Analysis of ages 3-12 adapted from Group Publishing, Inc; "Hands-On Bible Curriculum, Teachers Guide, Fall 1994. Group Publishing, Inc., Box 481, Loveland , CO 80539. Permission granted for reference only. Analysis of ages 12-18 taken from "Junior High Ministry" by Wayne Rice (Youth Specialties, 1987).