

STARTING A YOUTH GROUP

Introduction:

Suppose you are starting a church, or have been called to a church as a youth pastor. Perhaps there are no teenagers, or very few. Where do you start in guiding a program that will be honoring to God and draw teens, and their parents, to church? Starting a youth group or helping a small one grow can be an exciting challenge. Here are some proven steps toward developing a strong youth program:

- I. Soulwinning
 - A. Personal soulwinning
 1. Look for teen prospects and then go after them.
 2. Go where teenagers are: malls, high schools, parks, ball games, etc.
 - B. Teach soulwinning to those who are saved.
 1. Teach them how to go door-to-door.
 2. Teach a plan of salvation to use and assign verses to memorize.
 3. Demonstrate
 4. Practice techniques in the class.
 - C. Take teenagers with you to go soulwinning.
 1. Go to their contacts or friends.
 2. Teens need a good example, as well as step-by-step instructions on what to say and how to act.
 - D. Teach them to follow up on the converts. Let them make contact with them at least once a week. This is the only way the group will grow from the soulwinning effort.
 - II. Public School Bible Clubs
 - A. Work in and through the local church youth group.
 - B. Gather teens together from a particular high school or junior high. Have them meet in your home or at one of the teens' homes. Teens from the youth group may only come if they bring someone with them who is lost.
 - C. Sing some choruses, have a testimony, give an evangelistic message and a short Bible study.
 - D. Have some light refreshments and a game after the meeting.
 - E. Encourage the saved teens to M& M and D&C. "Mix and Mingle" and "Divide and Conquer."
 - III. Evangelistic Meetings
 - A. Several different activities or meetings can be used with evangelism as the goal.
 1. A week of meetings just for teenagers.
 2. Special youth rallies.
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- 3. Special activities.
 - B. Regular teens must get involved in this to bring in lost teenagers.
 - C. Good music, testimonies, and sound Bible preaching are necessary.
 - D. Have a way to register the visitors. Give them a gift with a card to fill out or have a sign-in table.
 - E. Have competent personal workers.
 - F. Register all decisions.
 - G. Follow up on them as soon as possible.
- IV. Activities
- A. Young people are drawn to:
 - 1. Fun
 - 2. Food
 - 3. Other teens
 - B. Be organized.
 - C. Have plenty of help and supervision.
 - D. Always have a time to preach the Gospel.
- V. Music
- A. Always have good music in the meetings and services. If it's important to adults—it's important to teens.
 - B. Start some groups or even a choir.
 - 1. This is a good way to involve teens in service.
 - 2. It is a good testimony to unsaved teenagers.
- VI. Sports
- A. Develop a regular intramural program that will not only excite your regulars but draw in visitors.
 - B. Everyone should be allowed to play, whether saved or unsaved, regular attender or not.
 - C. Have a separate program for guys and girls or use sports where they can both play, such as volleyball or softball.
 - D. Always present the Gospel.
- VII. Some General Considerations
- A. Keep senior high separate from junior high.
 - 1. There is a temptation to combine them to have larger numbers.
 - 2. The senior highers will drop out because they feel junior highers are too immature to be around.
 - B. Always make the program appeal to young men.
 - 1. If the program appeals to girls it will make Christianity look like it's just for ladies and children (often a preconceived notion already).
 - 2. The girls will be where the guys are.
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- C. Friendliness is a key.
 - 1. Every visitor must feel special.
 - 2. A good youth leader will attend high school.
 - 3. Have a high visibility at teen activities, fast food places, etc. This will show that you care and are interested in them.

Conclusion:

If teenagers are reached, their parents will automatically be impacted. They rejoice in positive changes in their teens. Don't squelch their sometimes fanatical zeal. They may want to have all night prayer meetings, go on extended fasts, rent an airplane and bomb the city with Gospel tracts, etc. Channel these ideas and energies into productive outlets. A balanced, stable, and productive youth group can be built.
