

PRINCIPLES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY

1. Give praise, not flattery.

Flattery deals with outward changeable characteristics and appearance. Praise focuses on spiritual character qualities and every teen has some, though they may be few.

2. Never make fun of a young person in a harmful way.

Teenagers are very sensitive when it comes to being teased or ridiculed. Teasing and joking must be done discreetly and with discernment. Please be very careful not to belittle or hurt them in any way.

3. When teaching, do so practically and relevantly.

We are preparing teens to face real life and death issues. Our teaching must be very practical. When preparing a challenge or lesson, constantly ask yourself, "So what?" If need be, place yourself in their shoes. Remember when you were a teenager. Use personal illustrations of when you were a teenager, but somehow bring the biblical truth down to a level that applies to their lives.

4. Always give biblical reasons for what we believe.

The teenager often struggles with reasons. That's why, when a boy turns 12 or 13, he begins asking Mom and Dad, "Why?" whenever they request something. Teens begin searching for answers and wanting real-life reasons for why they do what they do. This may mean that, as a youth worker, you will have to dedicate yourself to Bible study and searching the Scriptures, but never leave a teenager hanging as they seek you out for answers and reasons. Always try to be prepared to share God's Word and show them that God's Word is credible and reliable. In the long run, the teens will see that God's Word is what they must build their lives upon.

5. Choose activities that reinforce character.

If you are ever put in charge of games or activities, please never use games in which someone will be humiliated or ridiculed. Be sensitive to those who are uncoordinated, nonathletic or slow learners. One simple example is when dividing up teams, it may be better to count off (one, two, one, two) than to have team captains choose teams.

Realize that every activity is held for a purpose. That purpose is to build spiritual character. Though each activity should be fun and light-hearted, there is a real purpose behind it; keep this in the forefront of your thinking.

6. Be a real person with the teens.

Teenagers can immediately spot a phony and if they feel that you are trying to put on a hypocritical air to impress them, or if they sense that you are not being genuine with them, they will close up to you. Nothing can build respect and break down barriers quicker than just being yourself with the teenagers.

7. Follow through on commitments.

When making a promise, be sure to keep it. A teenager has the longest memory in the world when it comes to broken promises and unkept commitments. We cannot afford to hurt the spiritual progress of a teenager by not fulfilling a commitment.

8. Be patient.

Youth workers must realize that teenagers will be unstable, inconsistent, emotional, immature and sporadic. Be prepared for these teenage normalities and commit to working consistently with them, developing them to be stronger, spiritually.

Always be careful not to snap or lash out at a teenager at the wrong time. They may get on your nerves, or do something really stupid, but always be patient.

9. Create ways for new teens to fit in and meet friends.

This may involve a game, social event, lunch or something very simple. The most successful way to involve new teenagers in a youth group is to involve them in games and activities that require them to get to know new friends.

10. Live above reproach.

In other words, be blameless. For the most part, teenagers live in a world of phonies and hypocrites. Teens are constantly living a lie and posing to be somebody they are not. As teens see your lifestyle and that you are a real person, and as they see your godly walk, you will have an enormous impact.

Always guard your speech, conduct, and actions. Everything you say and do has an effect for good or bad.
