

PARENTS: THE OTHER SIDE OF YOUTH MINISTRY

It is shocking to realize that the people who have the most available time, the God-given authority, and the greatest opportunity for impact are often not an active part of youth ministry. When approaching teen ministry, a leader must understand that teens live with parents in a family. Whatever ministry the youth pastor pursues must be conducted with the parents in mind.

SEVEN STEPS FOR EFFECTIVE PARENT RELATIONSHIPS

- I. Understand the parents' role and authority (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, 20-25).
 - A. The well-being of the child is their responsibility.
 - B. The training of the child is their choice.
 - C. The youth leader's role is secondary; the parents' are primary.

- II. Get to know the parents by spending some time with them.
 - A. Arrange a time to visit.
 - B. Earn the right and then ask them about their relationship with God.
 1. Make a point to hear each parent's salvation testimony.
 2. Present the Gospel to any unsaved parent (2 Corinthians 4:3-6).

Witnessing to parents who do not attend your church may be uncomfortable; but you must take the opportunity God has given to present the Gospel, and give Him an opportunity to work in their lives.

Time spent with parents, even at the expense of time with the teens, is time well spent. Parents (all of them) are keys to healthy, eternal ministry with the teens.

- C. Acknowledge their role and your supporting one (1 Peter 5:5-7).
 - D. Explain your intentions (2 Corinthians 4:1-2).
- III. Listen to parents talk about their children and their children's needs. Seek to know:
 - A. The strengths of their child.
 - B. The relationship between them and their child.
 - C. Their perception of the best way you can help their child.
- IV. Consider the family as you plan youth meetings and activities.
 - A. Be predictable on the dates and times of activities. Perhaps using a certain week (every third) of the month for activities would be helpful.
 - B. Announce activities and camps well in advance.
 - C. Talk with parents about the best summertime events.
- V. Include parents in your activities.
 - A. Have at least one activity where the parents are invited to participate.
 - B. If the parents are concerned about an activity, invite them to come.
 - C. Use parents as youth leaders where you can.

- VI. Teach the parents (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- A. Plan regular group parent meetings.
 - 1. Seek a time good for the majority of them.
 - 2. Schedule them four to six times a year.
 - 3. Use them to inform.
 - 4. Use them to instruct.
 - a. Cover pertinent topics.
 - b. Give practical and Biblical instruction.
 - c. Instill hope.
 - 5. Use them to unify.
 - B. Make personal time for parents when they want help or have questions.
 - 1. See this as a valuable opportunity.
 - 2. Be sure of the counsel you give.
 - 3. Make sure your instruction has a Biblical foundation.
 - 4. Seek help from the pastor on tough questions.
 - 5. Be sure to hear the whole matter before you formulate a response.
 - C. Build a parent's library of good resources.
 - 1. Give them a "TBR" (to be read) list.
 - 2. Assist them in finding books (titles, web sites, publishing information).
 - 3. Share what resources you have.

Often God uses the problems and questions of others to teach us something He wants us to know.

- VII. Pray for the parents (James 5:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12).
- A. Pray specifically with knowledge.
 - B. Pray regularly with discipline.
 - C. THEN tell parents that you are praying for them.

The youth leader's role in the spiritual and physical guidance of teens should be governed by the parents' God-given wisdom and authority. Remember, both parents and teens form the "youth ministry."