

Philosophy of Youth Work

I. Purpose

- A. Youth work should seek to develop teens in four main areas of life, based upon the life of Jesus Christ as a young man (Luke 2:52). These areas are the following: mentally, socially, physically and spiritually.
- B. Youth work should have the proper balance to equip the teens to be well-rounded, with the program centered around the Word of God and the person of Christ.
- C. One of the great needs of youth ministry today is vision. The youth leader needs first and foremost a vision of the holiness of Christ, the Christian's full and complete standing in Him, for what our young people can become by the grace of God. "Activity not motivated by the sight of God is merely busywork." To not have a proper, specific objective or goal towards which one strives leaves one's ministry shallow, nearsighted, and focused only upon the immediate. Life is too short to flounder and waste time. This vision for our youth needs to be communicated with the senior pastor to make sure both staff members are seeing the same thing. Then that vision needs to be communicated to the parents.
- D. A written Biblical philosophy of ministry that governs every phase of youth ministry will bring that vision into a well-defined strategy and a purposeful plan of action. Otherwise, youth leaders will find themselves being tossed to and fro by every wind of teaching that comes along as national youth ministry trends and fads come and go, and swept away by the popular, pragmatic, and prevailing but well-intended opinions of others in our local communities or congregations.
- E. One of the youth leader's tasks is to carry out the truth founding Malachi 4:6: "Turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers...." Instead of the "hired gun" or "Lone Ranger" approach to youth ministry [OK, youth pastor, we hired you to reform our kids and grow a successful (i.e. big, entertaining, reach 'em at any cost) ministry], the youth leader directs his ministry to the home, not just the teenager or child. Parents are **the key** to having a successful youth ministry and are to be the primary spiritual influence upon their child/teens. (According to Deut. 6:3-25, neither the church, the Christian school, nor the youth pastor is responsible for the spiritual maturity of teens: that responsibility falls upon the home.)
- F. By buttressing the authority of the father in the home, by the teaching of Biblical principles to children and teens, and by giving careful attention to potential scheduling conflicts so as to not disrupt family unity, the youth leader can be of great help to parents as they train their children.

II. Strategy

- A. Activities are an integral part of any youth program in the spiritual, physical, and social development of young people (Luke 2:52). When contemplating various activities, three things

need to be kept in mind:

1. *Person – Whom are we trying to honor?*

Since Christ must have the pre-eminence in all things (Col. 1:18), no official youth group activity will be selected that is dishonoring to the name and cause of Christ. If any activity would reflect poorly upon a good Christian testimony, it should not be seriously considered even if “others are doing it.” We represent the Lord and must give others a good opinion of Him (1 Cor. 10:31).

2. *Principles – Why are we doing it?*

Group functions are to accomplish certain objectives for the teen. Since Christians are called upon to imitate the character of their God (Eph. 5:1), activities are excellent means to either stress particular traits God has and which the teen is to adopt or a specific truth about the Christian life. [Examples—Obstacle courses and treasure hunts: need for patience and endurance; Ice Skating: stability; paintball wars: Christian warfare; Pizza Panics or other various “panics”: dealing with fear, stress; etc.) If the principles ones is trying to instill are not actively kept in mind, then “goofing around” becomes the only reason and chief goal.

Besides being an outreach tool, activities can also provide for relationship building time for the entire group. It is also a time for the youth leaders to observe the teens and to model Christ before them.

3. *Practice – What are we to do?*

If this is the only concern, immaturity and short-sightedness will deprive teens of an important tool in the molding of their lives. The result of such a mindset is that the youth leader becomes carried away doing only the things that are popular to do.

B. The thrust of youth work should be to help parents produce spiritually-minded and maturing Christian youth. To that end, I have six goals in mind for each teen to achieve.

1. *Salvation* – Each teen should have accepted Christ as his/her personal Savior.

2. *Scripture reader* – *Joshua 1:8* – Each teen should be having a regular time of reading and learning about God’s word on his own. A daily “God and I time” must become part of a teen’s life.

3. *Soul-winner* – *Acts 1:8* – Each teen should know how to present the Gospel to the lost and carry that message to them.

4. *Strong family member* – *Col. 3:18-21; Mal. 4:6a* – Each teen should be a God-honoring integral part of his family.

5. *Servant* – *Mark 10:45* – Each teen should reach out to meet the needs of others with a spirit of humility; there should be a desire to serve rather than waiting to be served.

6. *Starting a Christian career* – *Prov. 3:6* – Whether training for the ministry at a college or a layman’s job, each teen should not feel life ends after leaving the youth group. He should be looking to see how he can honor the Lord as he enters a new stage of life. He should be fully surrendered to the Lord and willing to go wherever He may lead.

- C. Parents play a **vital** role in youth work. Regular meetings will be scheduled, as seen fit, to keep the parents up-to-date as to what is happening with the young people and to explain the program to them. *A youth program cannot succeed without successful parental support.* If there ever happens to be a problem with a policy I have, activity that is planned, etc., **PLEASE** communicate with me about it (short-wave radio, mail, e-mail, phone, ***in-person***, smoke-signals, sound waves, notes...I take it all.) You may be aware of something that I am totally unaware of and could greatly profit from your input. I want to be available and approachable. I want open lines of communication between us and would be more than happy to spend any time necessary with you. *Teens can be greatly harmed when problems due to miscommunication or misunderstanding arise and are openly discussed in a negative manner at home (Lunch menu: Roast Youth Pastor, etc.).*
- D. Loyalty to the local church and to the senior pastor must be held and taught to the youth group. Unity of the group is a most pleasant sight and a secret to strength (Psalm 133; Eph. 4:3; Eccl. 4:9-12), while strife and rebellion are a great detriment and cannot be tolerated (1 Samuel 15:23). Good teaching will be an important necessity to reach the young people with God's life-changing principles and truths.
- E. The teens must be taught "excellence" (Phil. 1:9-10) in every phase of their lives from the music they listen to, to the clothing they wear, to the way they conduct themselves on the ball field or classroom, to the kind of relationships they have with others. *Great confusion will arise in the minds of teens who are challenged spiritually towards change but then see by example and hear from their parents that such strides are not really necessary.* Again, if there is a problem or conflict that arises, please come talk with me.

III. Structure (Some of the ideas that could be implemented – by no means exhaustive)

- A. "Inner Prison" – To be held on Wednesday nights during the evening service in an informal setting. The name comes from Acts 16:24-25, and is to be a time of singing, prayer, testimonies, and a short challenge.
- B. Bible Quiz Team Competition – An intense program of study and competition on Scriptural knowledge. Usually a book or several books of the Bible are covered at one time.
- C. Outreach Ministries – Opportunities to reach out and meet the needs of others through physical labor, social and spiritual contacts and in turn know the blessing of service.
1. S.C.O.P. – **Senior Citizen Outreach Program** – These could be ministries to nursing homes or to our own senior citizens in the church.
 2. C.S.P. – **Christian Service Projects** – Teens ministering to senior members of FBC (such as widows) and others within our fellowship; singing in a choir, ushering; working in children's programs such as VBS.
 3. Mission Teams – (EPS – **E**dification, **P**rayer, **S**ervice Teams) – The name is taken from the man "Epaphroditus" and his ministry (Cf. Col. 4:12). Summer ministries that promote individual responsibility to the command of Christ to win the lost and encourage the saints. Each EPS team demands much preparation and requires dependability.

D. Summer Camps – Such as The Wilds

E. Retreats – Overnight stays/campouts at various locations; “Recoup time” allows for an escape from the routine and an opportunity to re-evaluate goals, priorities, etc. The focus is on the Scriptures, time with leaders, contemplative personal assessment, and good old-fashioned fun!

F. *S.N.A.C. Attack!* - **Sunday Night After Church Fellowships** – The group will meet for an informal time of food and fellowship--usually at a church family’s home. Families volunteer to host the get-together and thereby allow families to have a part in the youth ministry. From time to time, the father in the home may be asked to share a short devotional or someone asked to play the piano for singing.