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editorial

... truth is that many times change doesn't come when or how we anticipated.



CHANGES...

Jonatán Tejel

Changes... Change is something evident, part of everyone's daily lives. If we were to glance at the daily changes around us, we would be surprised that, almost imperceptible, there is something near us that is always changing.

Seasons change, and we wait for change anxiously when winter has frozen even our bones, or when the rain has wet more than we'd wish, or when the burning heat makes our body shine because of the sweat.

We wait for changes.

We wait for changes in **nature**. We have been mistreating and destroying nature for a long time. And we've done it for such a long time, that we don't see it renovate from all the harm we did. Nature is sick, agonizing...

We wait for changes in the **government**. We have been observing them for years and felt hopeful and frustrated... With frequency they move driven by economic, ideological, and personal interests while the vast majority of humanity is dying of hunger, without a roof...

We wait for changes in the **family**, which is a special target for the destructive power of Satan during the last few decades.

How many have separated, how many are divorced, how many are thinking right at this moment to break the commitment: "*til death do us part.*"

We wait for changes in the **church**, that one that is, obviously, not perfect. We criticize certain decisions, or how certain things develop. We wait for a change so we can continue walking towards our goal, Christ. But truth is that many times change doesn't come when or how we anticipated.

The church waits for **my change, for yours, for ours**. In many cases, the changes are of only external appearance, a light make-up, without implicating an internal change. We live in a society that only cares about images, a society that is pleased with what is seen. We give a lot of importance to the appearance, to what is in front of us. But...

And me, where am I? What attracts me? What/who moves me? Is my appearance reflecting my internal life? Today's human being, agnostic and even believer, lives, in general, without moral, empty of values, and with perishable goals... Due to the overbearing invitation for changes, we quickly excuse ourselves asking: What

about the church? And the pastor? And the administration? And society?

And I answer myself, who cares about those people? I care about me, how is my relationship with God, what changes I have made in my life that contribute to enhance what surrounds me! I shouldn't wait for my friend to change, and then I do it. It is something of eternal and personal value that I need to do and that's it. The Lord is waiting on me, and if this individual change becomes a reality, it will be a personal testimony, like a message. I change **for the church to change** and, if possible, for the world to change. It is the only way to make this world, **my world**, a better place.

The Lords tells us: "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God." (Ezekiel 11:19-20). What are you waiting for? Allow God to change your heart, give yourself to Jesus and He will make great miracles through you.



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viewIT: *movie review*



When someone
does you a
big favor
don't pay it back...

Discuss: After viewing the movie *Pay It Forward*, discuss change, love, unselfish help, commitment.

The boy is the person who surprises you the most during the entire movie. Try to look for meeting points between the boy's constant attitude and what we should be able to find in our society if we would really believe what we preach, with the strength that the character shows during the entire movie.

Analysis: If someone does you a favor, an important favor, something that you probably couldn't do it for yourself, and besides does not ask anything in exchange, but if you could do the same to three other people...and each one of them to other three people...How long would it take to change the world? **But you should change first...**the movie shows us a wide variety of subjects to be discussed, one of the main ones is that it's more important that your lifestyle is to help others than to return a favor to the person who did something for you. Watch this movie, analyze it, share it with your youth group. You will not regret it.

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SUBSCRIPTION

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Martin's Millstone: How I Killed A Youth Ministry

by A Allan Martin, PhD



A Allan Martin, PhD, and his wife, Deirdre, co-founded dre•am VISION ministries [www.dreamvision.info], a para-church agency dedicated to empowering new generations in Christian lifestyle and leadership. Along with their daughter Alexa, they reside in Celebration, Florida.

It started out so innocently. I had recently started graduate school and was looking for employment as a youth minister. Working with young people had always been a passion for me, and my graduate studies were part of the plan to continue my education as a youth ministry professional. For the experience and helpful additional income, I was looking for available positions.

Christ has got all the connections. Within a month I found a church interested in hiring a part-time youth minister. Their former youth pastor had gone back to seminary and there was a definite void that needed to be filled. I jumped at the chance and it really did seem providential that this opening came about. Reviewing my résumé and thoroughly interviewing me, the committee made up of parents, elders, and pastors gave me a good look over (e.g. This was one of their first questions, “What are your views on pre-marital sex?” They weren’t fooling around; About this interview that is...). Within a week they welcomed me as the new minister for youth and young adults.

It all just happened so quickly. As soon as I said yes, I was thrown instantly into the hub of church life. I will never forget the Sabbath they introduced me to the youth and young adults. The young people were in the middle of Sabbath School, 30 to 40 of them, youth and young adults energetically playing a Bible game. Collegiate-age leaders were up front coaching, coaxing, and cheering participants. The adult sponsors were seated in the back making

efforts to monitor and lure the “hallway crowd” into the action. A young married couple got up ready to take a stab at teaching the lesson when...

“I would like to introduce you to your new youth pastor,” the senior pastor cheerfully interrupted as he pushed me towards the front and then skirted out of the classroom. I was at a loss. But dredging up some of that good ol’ youth ministry ad lib, I managed to briefly introduce myself and let them get back to their regularly scheduled program. I have to admit, once I sat down, I got really excited. All those youth and young adults so actively involved thrilled me. I couldn’t wait to jump in.

I met with the leaders, the core group. They were a mix of collegians who had grown up in the ministry of the former youth pastor and had taken over the reins of leadership since his departure. The former youth guy’s move was an abrupt and traumatic transition for them; I could sense their tentativeness with my new face in the picture. The core group was anxious to trust, yet reserved. We had a great time during those first getting-acquainted meetings, and during that time I wanted to share with them my vision of youth and young adult ministry. The core group seemed hesitant, but respectful of my “expertise in ministry.” I assured them that we would work together to implement my model.

Of course my model was right (What an ego!).

With over a decade of youth & young adult ministry under my belt and the affirmation of the latest ministry resources concurring with me, I felt confident that we needed to make changes. We “needed” to move towards separating youth from young adults. This would allow us to specifically address their needs and issues, based on age/developmental

stage. We would also start leadership development training. We would initiate a whole bunch of things. The core group thought that was all good and well, but they felt an urgency to plan a retreat which they were trying to put together last minute.

I axed it. With understanding (yeah right! #@!*!) and a firm rationale, I persuaded the core group to rethink their plans. I felt they needed to make sure and give themselves time enough to plan the retreat right. As it turned out, we never had the retreat. The timing never panned out and I had other things that needed to get started in this new ministry.

I stepped right in. With the new model in place, the ministry was growing by leaps and bounds. Youth and young adults began to actively participate and feel as if they had a voice that could be heard. We started our own youth church service and held a youth/young adult worship for the entire congregation once a month. The model ministry was flying and I felt very proud of the progress we were making. Accolades came from old and young alike as the program grew exponentially.


But what about “them?” The core group was involved in the progress, trying to keep up with my fresh ministry legs. But in my rush to rebuild a ministry that was theirs, I had smothered some of their fire. Since they were all students, I could really empathize with their gradual tapering down of involvement. I was happy to rescue programs when they had other obligations. I felt I was doing them a favor by being “superman minister.”

Pretty soon the core group was making other “involvement investments” at school and in the mission field. Yet the youth and young adult ministry kept on growing. With that growth came new leaders and core people. Somewhere along the way, the original “core group” lost the sense that they were needed and vital.

Our role as mentor, elder, and sage can serve to nurture our energetic youth and young adult leaders, innovators, and pioneers.

I admit it; I murdered a youth ministry. Believe me it was involuntary ministry-slaughter, but none-the-less I phased out the active involvement of enthusiastic young leaders to implant my model. The core group was an invested set of volunteers willing to make mistakes, take risks, and lead since there was no youth ministry professional. But now the “pro” was here. Unintentionally, I robbed them of their sense of value and importance. I trampled over their special place of involvement to do my model ministry. They visit now and then, spectating mostly. Make no mistake, they are making an impact leading in their particular niches at school and work. As for our church, I murdered their ministry.

I’ve got to live with my millstone. Luke speaks plainly about harming youth and young adults (Check out the amplified version, Luke 17:1, 2). No matter how much our youth and young adult ministry sparkles today, I still am reminded of the “clearing out” I am responsible for. It wasn’t so much that I intentionally initiated a hostile takeover. I just honestly thought that our church would benefit from my “expertise and know-how.” As a minister, an adult, and a fool, I fell into the same trap many adults in the church seem to be caught in: **“Since we are older, our ideas are better, and therefore we are more important.”** As we adults communicate this generational bigotry through our actions (verbally and non-verbally) youth and young adults get the picture...clearly. Then they leave. Or worse yet...They lose hope. They lose vision.

Do it; Did it; Done it. Too often I get caught up “doing” ministry to youth instead of helping them realize that they are full-fledged, commissioned, God-ordained ministers (2 Corinthians 5:11-21).  Nurturing their identity as Christ’s liaisons should be my role. But no, no, no! Being a typical adult, it has been easier for me to “minister” to them, essentially using them to fuel my own sense of ministry prowess. And before you heave my stone to the bottom of the Pacific, let’s (us adults) be honest. When one hears “youth and young adults” mentioned by

adults in today’s pulpit, one can almost always count on the orator being in the middle of some religious/political/fundraising appeal or pushing some personal holy agenda.

This is a murderer’s confession. I have seldom come to my teens asking them their opinions and hearing out their visions for our ministry. I honestly can’t remember the last time our elders ever asked one of our high school students their opinion on an important issue. Few of our church officers do any mentoring. I don’t ever recall, our pastoral staff “doing lunch” with our collegians to get their input on our building project. Board members don’t consult with youth. Even more remote: I have yet to see our current church allow youth and young adults to lead in the same way our founding ~~fathers and mothers~~ **young people** led this movement. Instead, we adults do our studies about youth and young adult attrition and, still baffled, watch them leave. We talk about the church of the future, but cling to the power and the purse-strings. We moan about their leaving the church, their apathy, their lack of commitment, all the while neglecting to change our adult ways. (Okay, now you can throw my millstone overboard...)

But wait! No doubt I have done my share of good to youth and young adults. But even if I helped bring a deluge of youth and young adults to the kingdom, I am still better stuck at the bottom of the sea unless I change my ways. Ministering to youth and young adults leaves very little room to minister **with** them, and I perpetuate the false adult assumption that they are inferior, incapable or inadequate. For all my adult experience, my adult maturity, my ministry ability...I am no better a swimmer with this millstone hung around my neck. My ministry murder has caused harm, and Christ says it’s better from me to be plunged into the Pacific with millstone necklace to give me speed.

I request the King’s acquittal. Taking seriously His warning, I have come to Him for forgiveness with a heart (and ministry) willing to change. If anyone can, He can

cut me some slack. By Christ's grace am I forgiven. And you know what? He even has enough left over grace to modify my ministry to reflect His design.

In Christ's world, things are different. He picked fishermen not Pharisees to lead His movement. He used a kid's lunch offering to overcome the skeptical pragmatism of the disciples. He seemed to care less about meeting with the adult leaders of His day and cared much more about hanging out with the "parking lot crowd."

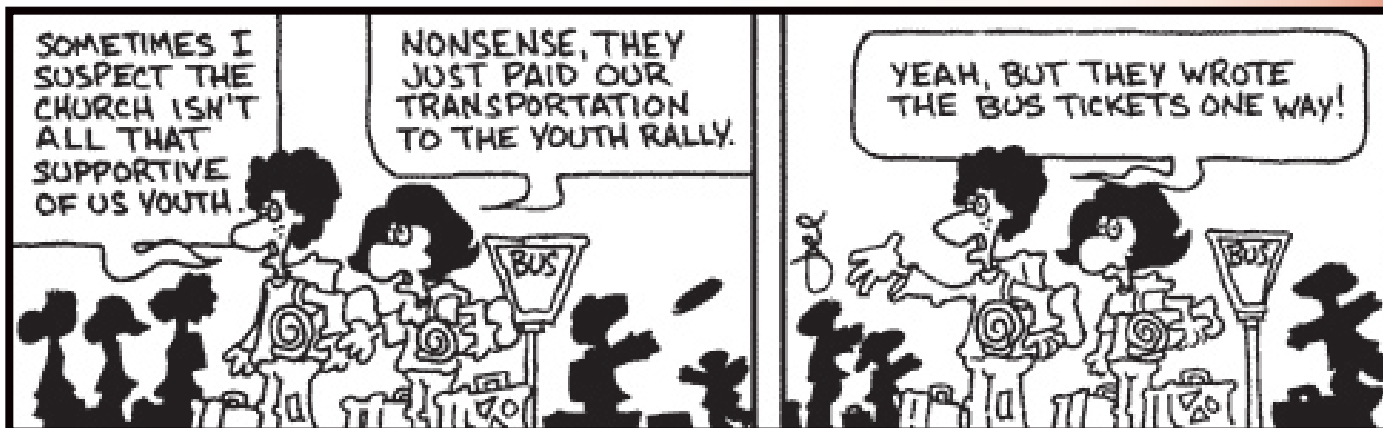
"Let them come to me." Just like He challenged the disciples, I sense He is challenging me to let go a little. Okay, okay, a lot. Give youth and young adults a chance to see their reflection in Christ's eyes. Give them the room to flex their spiritual muscles and lead our church. I need to listen to them sing His ordained praises from their lips. I need to take

notes. I need to learn from them. I need the innocent wisdom that their young minds can share with me. I need them to balance my convention with their creativity. I need them to lead my ministry. I need them to lead our church.

Christ is asking you to change too. Far too many youth dreams and young adult visions have died in bureaucracy cages designed and perpetuated by adults. Too many adult leaders see youth and young adult programs as "icing on the cake." Many adult administrators feel more comfortable in the company of regulations than in the company of young people. Too little effort is given to opening venues for adult-youth relationships and mentorship. We have not proactively invested in new generations and so it is no wonder our church is getting older and young people are vanishing into thin air.

Instead of talking about young people, we need to be pouring our lives into them and letting them blossom into leadership with our gratitude and support. Christ is asking all of us adults to let go a little. Okay, okay, to let go a lot. But the great news is...

It's an exchange program. As we learn from them, no doubt they will learn from us. Adult and young person alike will be benefited in the process. Our role as mentor, elder, and sage can serve to nurture our energetic youth and young adult leaders, innovators, and pioneers. And in the process of it all, we, youth, young adult, and adult, will all become more like Christ. I am all for becoming more like my youth and young adults. You see, Jesus gave me this notion that if I become more like them, I can trade this millstone in for crown. Not a bad trade in. Not a bad trade at all...



Beginning a Relationship with God – Triangle Players Needed!

by Paul Tompkins

I have always hated triangles! Not the mathematical type (with apologies to Pythagoras) but rather the musical type, the small percussion instrument.

It all started in my first year at school when the entire class was lined up for a voice test. You know the scene, perhaps you experienced it too, the “good” singers are pulled out to form part of the choir and the “bad” singers...well, we’re left standing. I was left standing.

And, as if that was not bad enough, then came the percussion class. The whole class was given instruments ranging from drums (which led the parade) to cymbals (that came next) to tambourines and then triangles (that brought up the rear). I badly wanted a chance to play the drum but the teacher, sensing my complete lack of musical ability, gave me the triangle. Week after week I hoped for a chance to play the drum, or even the cymbals or perhaps the tambourine – anything but the triangle.

You’ve guessed it! Each and every week I got the triangle and soon hope gave way to despair. I knew the basics of how to play it but felt it was pointless as no-one could really hear my little noise and anyway surely the other players were much better anyway?

Many years later I saw something amazing when I was at the Royal Albert Hall in London for a Prom Praise concert. The orchestra was playing a magnificent rendition when suddenly every instrument (including the drum) went quiet. And then I heard it, the small audible “ting” of a triangle. I suddenly realized that the musical score had been written with a special place for the triangle, and



Paul Tompkins has been a Youth Director for over 20 years. He is currently the TED Youth Ministries Director based at St Albans (near London), England.

that the whole performance would have been ruined if the triangle player had not played the right note at precisely at the right time. Triangle players are needed after all!

My guess is that many of us feel like Christian triangle players! We know the basics but other things shout louder, and so our faith development never really get off the ground. Perhaps it's happening just like this to you too – a nagging feeling that there is a score written with a special place for you and yet you're not sure if you are ready or able to play. Surely others have gotten it much better together, anyway?

Mike Yaconelli, in his book *Messy Spirituality* (M, Yaconelli, *Messy Spirituality*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2001) put it this way; "It can sometimes seem as though a close walk with God is only available for candidates for sainthood or those who like living in deserts. But for the rest of us – the ordinary, scattered, busy, over-committed rest of us – it is not really an option." He then goes on to say; "But what if we have got the wrong idea about spirituality? What if we discovered that our messy, ordinary lives are the very place we are most likely to find God and deepen our knowledge of him." For those interested in the "what if" I have adapted four important points he made in the book to include (*in italics*) my own points of emphasis:

- **Spiritual growth encompasses a lifetime of decisions.** You and I grow one decision at a time and that is the starting point of beginning and maintaining a relationship with

God. *Today choose to make time with God a priority and do so again tomorrow and the next day too.*

- **Spiritual growth looks different for each of us.** If we charted our spiritual experience like a graph it would have many very individual and personal ups and downs. *We too often value only the high points but in reality perhaps God can teach us more during the low points.* Look back over your life and you will be amazed how you can see God's hand leading you.

- **Give God as much as you can.** This may seem controversial but let me ask an important question - is there such a thing as 100% commitment all the time? Perhaps the 60% or 70% we can give at the moment is actually the 100% of all we can give at this time. What is certain is that God understands our situation and knows what commitment we can give. The important thing is to realise that God is with us whatever percentage we can give "which motivates us to give even more." *Keep giving more!*

- **A small amount of growth is still growth.** As Yaconelli points out; "No matter how much we've grown we still need to grow more." And "as long as we want to grow Jesus will show up in the lives of even the messiest of disciples." Take you and me for instance. *Even if we do not presently feel like a spiritual giant the potential for being like Jesus today, and to impact the lives of those we meet, is still very real.*

I still have my doubts about triangles, but I definitely want to have a small part in the Christian orchestra. Won't you join me – the next practice session is at your convenience.



"But what if we have got the wrong idea about spirituality? What if we discovered that our messy, ordinary lives are the very place we are most likely to find God and deepen our knowledge of him."



Patience Mulumba lives in Nairobi, Kenya. She is a 7th grader at Maxwell Seventh-day Adventist Preparatory School.

Reflections

by Patience Mulumba


My name is Patience Mulumba and I am eleven years old. I am a Pathfinder in Companion Class. This is what I want to share with you.

On September 11, 2001, in New York City, thousands of people died and the all story started like this. An aircraft hit the first tower of the Twin Tower at the famous Trade center where thousand of people were working and got stuck inside. A few minute after another aircraft hit the second tower and before people could understand what was happening, the two towers started to collapse. Some people escaped but many lost their life because they were trapped there inside and also the planes exploded causing fire and destroying the buildings.

I met a lady on internet. She said she lived in New York City and worked in the World Trade Center but she did not go to work on that day. On the Tuesday morning of 9/11 while she sat at her computer, all set to begin writing a story about surviving breast cancer, she received a phone call from her husband. He told her to turn on the TV- a plane had hit the World Trade Center. Her first thoughts were sorrow for those who could have lost their life in the tragedy, friends, colleagues and men and women who went there for a reason or another. It was so sad to know that many innocent people perished that day as a result of terrorism, as it was announced later by the Medias and the television.

“Dad where was God when the innocent people were dying?” My dad, smiled, paused for a while abd then asked, “ Patou (a shortened form of Patience), tell me where God was when His only Son was dying on the cross that Friday afternoon. Wasn’t He innocent?” “I don’t know, tell me”, I answered. “Find out where He was, then you will know also where He was on September 11, 2001. Another challenge! I had to find the answer.

After reflection, I realized that the calamities we face in life today, the floods, hurricanes, diseases, crimes, and disasters, including the death of Jesus are the consequences of our sins, that God is always there ready to save us if we accept his word. They were already predicted by the Bible (Mat.24). It even seems according to our teacher that EG White had already predicted the nine eleven event. So God can’t stop them, not that He doesn’t have the power to stop them, but to help us know how bad sin and the devil are, and make our choice for a better life in Him. Jesus died for all these things and that’s why God did not stop it...

 As seventh-Day Adventists, we all believe that we are in the last days of the world. The Bible tells us that storms and many other dramatic events are signs of the Lord Jesus’ second coming. We all know about it. Like these innocent people who died on September 11, 2001, we don’t know when we can die. Now, the question is, Are we ready for His coming? I don’t know how many of those who died on that day will be able to be saved. My advice is that we should always be ready for His coming, because the Bible says that Jesus shall come like a thief in the night, which means that He shall come unexpectedly. It’s hard to believe that he can even come when I am still eleven. Even us children, we have to be ready by accepting Jesus as our Savior. That’s why I even think that we should believe and get baptized in order to have eternal life. My Dad told me we will stand individually before God for Judgment. Even us children, that’s what the Bible says.

These are lessons I learned through the 9/11 event. May be there are many other lessons, but I am tired and have to sleep. You can also find other lessons for yourselves.

Where Are All The Youth

by Robert Holbrook

I recently read an interesting editorial in the Columbia Union's paper called *The Visitor*. It asked the question "Where are all the Youth?" After a brief trip through some mathematics and hypothetical possibilities, it gave some solutions for remedying the current situation (a high loss index of youth in the church). I was very much encouraged by the first two suggestions. Both represented excellent creative approaches to Youth Ministry. Then I read the third suggestion and was truly amazed; "throw away the manuals and start all over..." was the recommendation. The main reasoning behind this idea was that today we no longer live in the world of the "MV Society" of 40 years ago. The author seemed to have forgotten that that is exactly what happened to Youth Ministry about 35 years ago—the manuals were thrown out and we've been paying a pretty high price ever since—except in those parts of the world where the manuals were not thrown out.


We could take a brief ramble down history's lane and we'd notice that way back in the beginnings of formally organized Youth Ministry in the church (1907), the cry was that youth were

leaving the church in fairly large numbers. That cry with carefully researched stats has been brought up numerous times ever since. Yet, in spite of many different concepts implemented through the years, youth still leave in somewhat similar numbers.

I went to the Bible for some answers (yes, I know that it means I went back a few thousand years to see if I could find solutions to a problem we've not solved in the last hundred). What I found was rather unnerving! I found the problem existed even back then and there was no sure-fire, fail-safe answer then either. I realized there is no guaranteed approach to saving all of our youth or even a majority. I saw two men of God approach youth ministry from two opposite directions and both failed. Eli did what was wrong in raising his sons and lost them. Samuel did everything right in raising his sons and still lost them. I saw Jesus pointing out the reason. He told us "narrow is the gate, narrow is the way, few there are who find it." While it is our work as youth leaders to show the youth the gate and the way, we can't force them to enter.

It has sometimes been called God's biggest mistake, but He did give us the

freedom to choose. No manuals, no kinds of entertainment, no amount of community service, no expenses in mission projects, no music styles tolerated or encouraged, that's right, nothing can force a young person to accept the best and only worthwhile path life has to offer. They—we still have the power of choice. And what happens if even we as leaders have not actually found that narrow gate ourselves?

 I read the results of a doctoral thesis done a few years ago. It was evident from the outset that the author's initial idea was to show that the curriculum in use at the time for our Youth Ministry was antiquated and in bad need of a major overhaul. I was probably as surprised at his conclusions as he was. He discovered that the curriculum content (the manuals so to speak) were not as critical to the success of a youth program as was the training of the leaders involved. The better the leaders understood the manuals, the more likely their Youth Ministry would be successful. It brought to my mind the words of Elder Bradford, a giant among our leaders. He said: "You can't teach what you don't know, and you can't lead where you won't go."

Drama

Baggage

By Vanessa Pham

Main character walks on stage left (SL) with empty backpack in hand. We'll call her Hope.

Hope: Well, I didn't want to wear this thing (*looking at backpack*), but I guess I need it, so (*puts it on back, keeps walking*).

Character wearing sign that says "LOSS" and carrying a large book walks up from behind Hope, entering stage left.

Loss: You'll need this for the time you lost your older brother to a car accident two years ago. *Puts large book in backpack. Leaves quickly at stage left.*

Hope notices weight, makes inquiring expression, looks behind her, but "Loss" is gone. She keeps walking.

Character wearing sign that says "REJECTION" and carrying five books enters stage left and walks up from behind Hope.

Rejection: Let me add this for the time you didn't make cheerleader (*puts book in bag with each act of rejection told. With each weight addition, Hope*

sinks a little but steps back up.), this for the time you asked Josh Thomas out, and he told you he was dating Mindy Reasoner, and this for all the jobs you applied for and didn't get. Oh, and this for all the times you felt left out or like a fifth wheel. Oh yea, and the time Jake dumped you. (*With the last rejection book, Hope lets out a complicated "Ugh." She almost stumbles but gets back up and keeps walking, now more slowly.*)

Rejection leaves SL quickly. Hope looks back, but Rejection is gone.

Hope: (*Wipes forehead*) Gosh, all of a sudden this backpack has gotten heavy. I'm getting tired, but I should get home. (*Keeps walking*)

Character wearing "WORDS" sign enters from SL carrying four books.

Words: (*With each insult/name called, adds a book to the backpack. Emphasizes the insults.*) You can't leave these behind. The time Shelly Weeks called you "scarface," or the time your ex Jake said you were "plump." The time your 6th grade teacher called you "stupid,"

oh, and most importantly, when your Dad said he was "ashamed" of you (*bigger book*). *With last book, Hope falls to the ground, exhausted, but is still sitting up. Words exits SL.*

Hope: Man, I'm tired. I'm thirsty. I just want to get home, but this bag is so heavy.

Hope's coach jogs on from SL. He or she is energetic and peppy, with a bounce to his/her jog. Coach is in his/her own happy world and doesn't notice Hope until Hope speaks.

Hope: Hi Coach Stewart.

Stewart: Hope! Hi! What are you doing on the ground? You're stronger than that! Show me what you've got – I've seen you jump those hurdles...

Hope: But...

Stewart: Get up, girl! (*Gingerly yet hurriedly walks off stage right while clapping hands, chanting "Come on, you can do it."*)

Hope: Wait, I need your help! (*Stewart is gone. Hope sighs.*)

Hope's best friend Kristi enters SL. She is happy and bubbly. Everything is great.

Kristi: Oh, hi Hope! What are you doing on the ground?

Hope: Well, this bag got so heavy, and...

Kristi: You didn't fall did you? Miss track star, I know you didn't.

Hope: Well, actually... *(reaches out arm to Kristi for help, but Kristi doesn't notice).*

Kristi: *(Interrupts)* Guess what? I think Brian Lowe likes me. Today at lunch, he sat across from me, and I think he smiled at me a few times...

Hope: Kristi? *(reaches out arm again, but Kristi is clueless)*

Kristi: Yea, I know, isn't that great! I hope he asks me to prom. What should I wear? *(Is distracted by something off stage right. Eyes widen as she stares and gets more excited.)* Oh, I think that's Brian over there! Gotta run. Bye Hope. *(Runs off to SR)*

Hope: *(Tries to get up but can't.)* Like Coach says, I can do this, right? *(Tries to get up again, but doesn't even get halfway up and falls back)*
Hope's pastor enters from SL and approaches her.

Pastor: Hope! What are you doing on the ground? Are you okay?

Hope: *(Sighs with relief)* Oh pastor, I'm so glad you're here. All of a sudden my backpack got so heavy, and I got so tired, and, I'm ashamed to say this but...

Pastor: Let me guess – you can't get up?

Hope: *(Smiles really big and is excited)* Yes! Exactly! And Coach Stewart came by, but she thought I could get up. Then my best friend saw me, but she got distracted and ran off.

Pastor: Oh, that's okay. I'll help you get up. *(Extends arm, Hope takes hand, pastor pulls with all his might, but can't lift Hope)* I know – why don't you take the bag off? *(Hope tries to take the bag off, but it's stuck to her.)*

Hope: I can't *(tugs at it, gets frustrated)*...it won't come off!

Pastor: Huh, that's strange. *(Pastor pulls at bag, trying to take it off but can't)* Well Hope, it won't seem to come off, and you're so heavy with that bag on...I don't know how to help you. *(Sincerely)* I'm sorry. *(Shrugs)* I'll pray for you about this. *(Walks off SR.)*

Hope: *(Now frustrated and anxious, looks up)* Oh God, do you hear me? I just want to get up and go home. Help me home, God. *(Props arms on knees, puts face in hands or arms. More softly)* Help me get home.

Holy Spirit enters SL wearing "HOLY SPIRIT" sign. Walks up from behind Hope, unzips pack and removes books one by one.

Hope: Hmm...my backpack feels lighter *(Begins to move, gets up a little. Holy Spirit continues to remove books slowly. Hope is now up halfway, but struggles to rise all the way. Holy Spirit*

removes more) I'm almost there! Wow, thanks God! *(H.S. finally takes out book of LOSS, the first and heaviest one that was put in. H.S. holds all books, making the weight seem light. Hope stands straight up, then jumps.)* Yea! We did it, God! I'm ready to head home, but one more thing... *(turns to look at H.S.)*

Holy Spirit: Yes?

Hope: I'm thirsty.

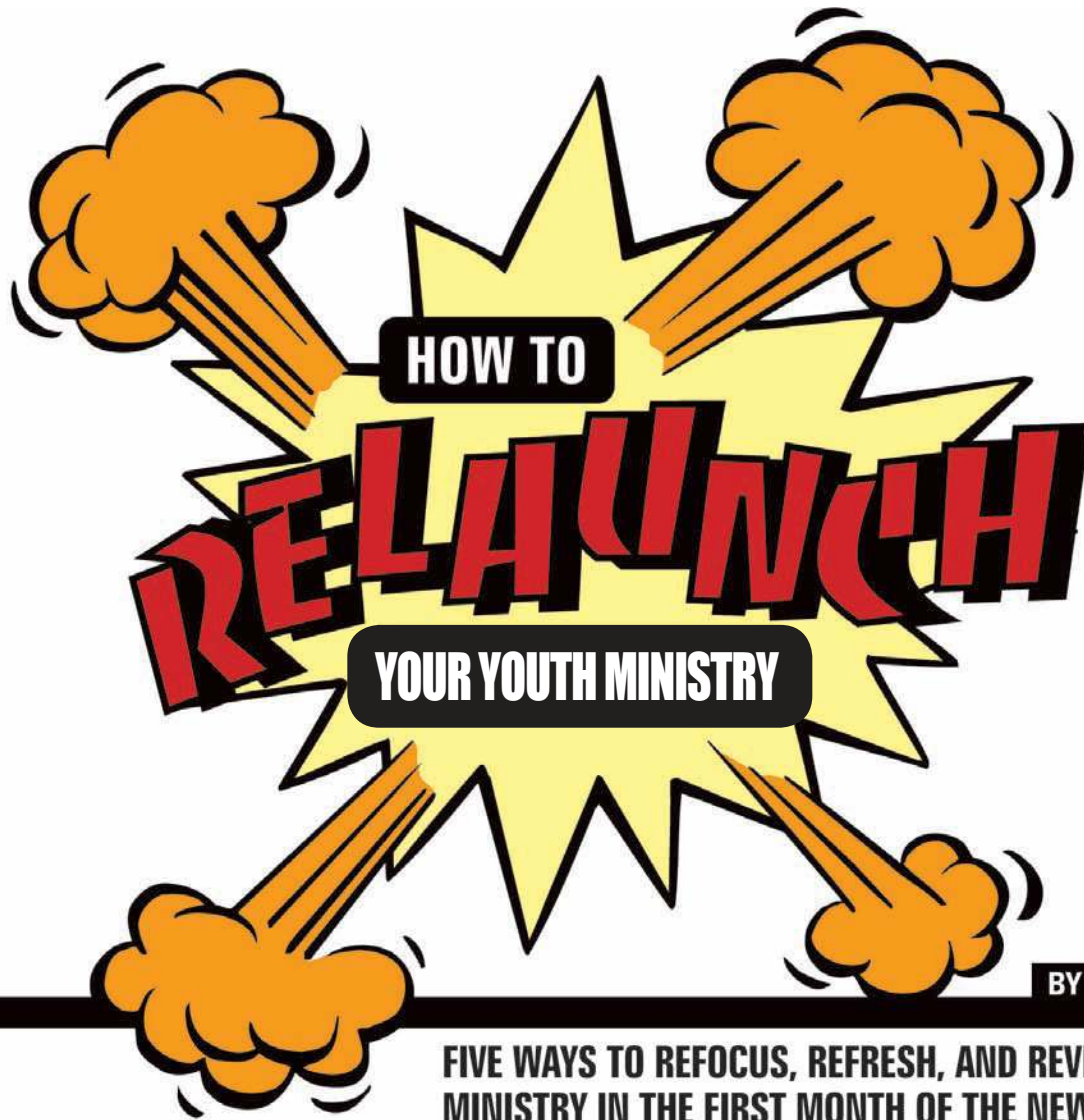
H.S. pulls out a bottle of water out of his pocket and hands it to Hope. She takes a long, satisfying drink. H.S. smiles with satisfaction. Hope heads home, then stops halfway and looks back at H.S.

Hope: Oh, and one more thing, *(takes off empty pack and throws it on the ground)* I won't be needing that anymore. *(She smiles and walks off SR, still drinking water. H.S. smiles, turns to audience, stretching out his arms to them)*

Holy Spirit: Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest...For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.* He who believes in me shall never thirst.* *Lights dim.*

* Scripture references taken from Matthew 11:30 and John 6:35.

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BY KURT JOHNSTON

**FIVE WAYS TO REFOCUS, REFRESH, AND REVITALIZE YOUR
MINISTRY IN THE FIRST MONTH OF THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR**

ILLUSTRATION BY
rob woodrum

We all know the road to recovery starts with admitting you have a problem. So I have a big problem...here in southern California, summer is officially over. Granted, where I live the difference between summer and the rest of the year is about 10 degrees and the occasional need to wear long pants with my flip-flops. But when summer is over, so is a lot of stuff I really like about life and ministry.

Surfing until dark...over. Late-night bonfires with my wife and kids...over. Trips with my youth group to Knott's Berry Farm, Angels games, and the beach...over. The slower, more relaxed, youth ministry season ...over.

It's not like I didn't see it coming, but when I'm deep into summer I see fall as if it was reflected in a trucker's mirror—it's closer than it appears. I spend my summer enjoying summer, not thinking much about the fall. Guess what? Fall is here, your students are excited, momentum is high, and the expectations on your youth ministry are even higher. The whiplash effect that results when the slow pace of summer merges into the hyper pace of fall produces two common youth ministry mistakes.

MISTAKE #1 Overzealous youth workers decide that fall is the best time to make sweeping changes to their ministry. It's true that the beginning of a new school year with its corresponding influx of new students presents a strategic opportunity to revamp our ministry. It's tempting to "wipe the slate clean" and look for the newest, freshest ministry idea to maximize the momentum fall brings. Avoid this temptation.

MISTAKE #2 Overly cautious youth workers decide that fall brings enough newness and freshness all on its own—they decide that the best way to ensure a strong fall is to maintain the status quo. Doing what we've always done and trusting what worked last year is a tempting way to approach the fall. Avoid this temptation, too.

I propose a compromise—this fall, continue what your ministry does best while pursuing a few changes that can make it better. I'm not talking about flashy, surface-level changes. Finding the hottest new relay game isn't going

to revolutionize your ministry. Neither will playing cooler music before your mid-week gathering (unless you currently play Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, Michael Card or IXUS. . .then the change may actually have dramatic results!). Instead, spend some time this fall thinking about adjustments to your ministry that will result in deep, long-lasting impact on yourself, your ministry, and your students.



top 10 things you should never say to parents

by kurt johnston

10. "Don't worry about it."
9. "What's the big deal?"
8. "I'm sure if we left your daughter at camp there was a good reason for it."
7. "About the minivan we borrowed..."
6. "And you think that's my fault?"
5. "I know you're disappointed, but I'm sure he's only copying behavior modeled at home."
4. "If I were you..."
3. "Look, if you would spend a little more time with your child..."
2. "Calm down."
1. "Trust me."

Excerpted from *Controlled Chaos: Making Sense of Junior High Ministry* (Standard Publishing).

I recently sat down with my team and encouraged them to focus on five key areas this fall.

1. FOCUS ON YOURSELF.

Isn't it easy to get so busy doing God's work that we forget to get busy being God's person? God sees us as so much more than our occupational calling—we have many callings, actually (including friend, spouse, and parent, for starters). He longs to spend time with us. He wants us to have rich relationships with others. He wants us to feel refreshed, rested, and energized. This fall, force yourself to take regular time-outs for the sake of God's bigger vision for you—space to focus on your own needs, your relationship with God, and your relationships with others.

The faster I run in my ministry, the easier it is for me to find my value and sense of self-worth within my ministry. When numbers are up I feel great. When numbers are down I question my giftedness and calling. When parents are happy I'm confident. When a parent is disgruntled I'm insecure. When I take time out to focus more intently on my relationship with God I'm reminded of the true source of my value, my giftedness, and my calling. When I take time to hang out with my family and friends I'm reminded of what really matters in life. A couple of years ago I created a personal "Time Out Plan." I don't follow it perfectly, but it gives me something to aim for.

TIME OUT FOR GOD

- Twenty minutes a day.
- One full day a month.
- One full week a year.

TIME OUT FOR FAMILY

- Date day with my wife every Monday.
- Family night once a week.
- Show up at my kids' games, plays, award ceremonies, and so on.
- Coaching their team if I know anything about the sport.

TIME OUT FOR MYSELF

- Exercise three days a week.
- Write, read, listen to your favorite music at least once a week.
- Do your favorite hobby once a month.
- Hang out with my buddies twice a month.

Often I hear younger youth workers declare, with much fanfare: "Youth ministry is my life!" Well, if youth ministry is your life, you're missing out on much of what life is all about.

2. FOCUS ON GROWING HEALTHIER, NOT GROWING BIGGER.

Forget about numbers this fall. I know, because I work at a huge church that sounds easy for me to say. But numbers are numbers, no matter how big your church. I think it's *more tempting*, not less, to focus on numbers the bigger your church gets. Money can buy a crowd, exciting programs can attract a crowd, and amazing oratory skills can captivate a crowd. But over time, only a healthy youth ministry can maintain a crowd.

So I propose something radical—quit taking attendance. No more counting heads. When your senior pastor asks you how many kids were at your midweek service, tell him you have no idea. When he freaks out, tell him you're just following the "experts' advice". We've got your back on this one.

We all know churches put way too much emphasis on numerical growth. It's the default Q&A at every gathering of youth leaders:

“So how many you running these days?” “Well we average about (insert exaggerated attendance here), but have twice that many

on our rolls.” Instead of focusing on numerical growth this fall, look for ways to focus on your ministry’s health instead.

planning a life-changing fall retreat

BY BOBBY MOORE

PLANNING FOR AN UNFORGETTABLE FALL RETREAT CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS ABC...

ASK FOR PRAYERS—Before you begin planning the retreat, take it to God. We must be willing, as Abraham was with his son, to offer our awesome, fun, and life-changing ideas to God so that he, and he alone, receives the glory and honor.



BIBLE-BASED—Teenagers long to be challenged—they’re bored by “just-for-fun” Bible studies. They want to know what God expects from them. They want to know God loves them, and that he’ll be there when the going gets rough. They need to know he’s not going to walk out on them, like so many others have before.

CREATE THE MOOD—When we create the mood for a retreat, we have to consider what kids are comparing the event to. They can get “fast-paced” and “sensory overload” almost anywhere. They can’t get “slow-paced” or “silence” or “friends who really see me,” so aim for a mood that allows for what they can’t get anywhere else.

DON'T BE SURPRISED—group Magazine research shows that retreats and trips are not just “mountaintop” experiences for kids—they’re a primary

means for significant life-change and long-term growth. So don’t be surprised if you’re out at 2 a.m. looking for a few missing kids and discover them huddled in a little circle, praying. Don’t be surprised if, while you’re eating, you’re asked to pray with a group of young people. And don’t be surprised when you see many of your teenagers making a deeper commitment to Christ.

ENERGIZE YOUR GROUP—Kids expect to go deeper with God on a retreat, and they also need time to let their brains relax and enjoy the fun of being together. So plan plenty of wild, funny games and activities—use them like bookends to your go-deeper sessions.

FREE TIME—Kids need free time between sessions to burn some energy, and they need time on either side of their meal times. They also need at least an hour or two every day for goofing off.

GROUP DYNAMICS—The first session usually sets the tone for the weekend, so get your group working together. For a study on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6), our retreat theme was Armed and Dangerous. An adult volunteer spoke to the group; then kids formed small groups and each group decorated a cardboard piece of armor. Later when each group fastened its piece of armor onto a card-

board soldier, they saw how one piece of armor wasn’t enough to protect a soldier and that victory requires an entire army.

HAND OFF TO VOLUNTEERS—I’d heard the “right” ratio between adults and kids on a retreat is something like 1:6 or 1:8. But I think it’s important to involve as many adult leaders and mentors as possible. If an adult meets our criteria to attend our youth functions, we invite him or her on board. We often have a 1:3 adult-to-kid ratio.

INVOLVEMENT—The more teenagers you get involved in planning and leading your retreat, the closer you get to the “critical mass” of fully-engaged kids needed for an unforgettable experience. ■

BOBBY MOORE is a junior high pastor in Texas.



fall fund-raising tips

BY KURT JOHNSTON

A couple of thoughts about fall fund-raising campaigns.

1. LESS REALLY IS MORE!

At my previous church I decided to do one big fund-raiser a year instead of a bunch of little ones. We ran a Christmas tree lot each year and raised thousands of dollars. It was three weeks' worth of work, but we just did it once a year so the whole church really got behind it.

2. PEOPLE WILL GET BEHIND A CAUSE!

Even if you're selling candy bars or Christmas wreaths, you can't *really* sell candy bars or Christmas wreaths. To make the campaign a success, *you have to sell your cause*. For example, talk about the life-change that will happen in kids' lives at camp, and how a delicious candy bar will help get them there.

Notice the difference in these two bulletin announcements:

#1—BUY A DELICIOUS CANDY BAR TODAY FOR ONLY \$2.

The youth group will be selling candy bars in the foyer to help raise money for camp.

#2—HELP CHANGE A LIFE FOREVER!

If you'd like to play a part in what God is doing in the lives of our students, you can! Students trying to raise money to go to summer camp will be selling candy bars in the foyer for \$2...why not buy a whole case?

As my team prepared for fall this year, I asked them to sift through our ministry with a fine-tooth comb to see what stuff we could choose *not* to do. I felt like we'd slipped into a destructive mind-set—"The busier we are, the better our ministry will be." I was surprised by the number of questionable, tradition-bound activities my team discovered. This fall we're going to do less, and we're committed to doing fewer things much better—with health as our primary goal.

A couple of years ago my son, Cole, participated in a classic rite-of-passage at his school—he planted his own bean sprout in a paper cup. We got the right cup, added the prescribed amount of soil, planted the seed, set the cup on the windowsill, and watered it daily. We did everything we could do to create a healthy environment for growth. It was all a little boring. There were times we questioned if we were doing it right. Then one day, seemingly out of nowhere, up shot a little sprout! I can't remember ever seeing my son as excited as he was when he finally saw that tiny little bean sprout poking out of the soil (it really was a big deal for us...maybe we should get out more). Because we focused on the seed's health—even though we saw no immediate results—we ensured the bean's healthy growth.

Emphasizing the practices and disciplines of healthy ministry is slow going. We often wonder if we're doing it right because it takes longer than we'd like to see the results we're hoping for. Then one day the growth we've been wanting all along happens—often it seems to pop up out of nowhere. Why? Because we've been doing it right all along. Paying attention to our ministry's health helps ensure its growth. In my experience, a healthy ministry:

- Is balanced in its approach to evangelism, fellowship, worship, discipleship, and ministry.

[see pages 30-32]

① For more information on the 5 Purposes of Ministry, check out Doug Fields' Purpose-Driven Youth Ministry (Zondervan), or go to the Purpose-Driven Website at www.purposedriven.com and click on Youth.

- Has volunteer leaders who are **empowered and encouraged to use their gifts.**¹

- Has students who feel a deep ownership of the ministry.
- Has students who feel safe to be themselves—they can ask hard questions, share scary doubts, and be real about their fears.

Let's go one level deeper in our "diagnosis" of a healthy youth ministry. These are questions our team asks ourselves to determine whether we're staying on the right path (the "right answer" to every question is no):

- If our youth pastor stepped away from the ministry, would attendance drop off?
- Do we rely on gimmicks and fads to keep attendance up?
- Are we pressured to keep attendance high by our pastor or other church leaders?
- Does our ministry feel balanced?

Any "no" answers will give your team an area to explore more deeply.

3. FOCUS ON GIVING YOUR MINISTRY AWAY.

You're good...you're really good! The fact that you're taking the time to read this article proves you're a learner—you want to grow. But no matter how good you are, you aren't as good alone as you are with others working alongside you. I've met lots of really gifted youth workers, but many of them lack a key skill: They don't know how to give away their ministry.

A whole lot of average people doing ministry together is better than one above-average person doing it by herself—all of us are smarter than one of us. If you have your hands on every piece of your ministry, it's time to smarten up. You're surrounded by lots of people who want to help carry the load.

You have students who are gifted and have the free time to use their gifts in their youth group. You have adult volunteers who signed on because they want to give what they have. **You have parents who are watching from the sidelines hoping someone will ask them to get in the game.**²

At the end of every school year we organize a big Eighth-Grade Weekend as a final bash for our students before they move up to senior high. Our eighth-graders plan some of the program and one of them is chosen to teach a portion of each lesson. This year we came up with a novel idea—since it's a weekend just for eighth-graders, why not let them run the entire program? Our students planned and ran every aspect of the weekend. **There was not an adult up front at any time, and it was one of our best weekends of the year!**³

What are you doing in your ministry that somebody else could do? Certainly there are some things that only you can do, but part of your calling as a leader is to help others discover and use their gifts. Maybe you have a demanding voice inside that's telling you: "If you want something done right you have to do it yourself." Well, that's only true if you're a perfectionist and prideful.

Jesus spent much of his time helping a small team of unschooled fishermen, shifty tax collectors, and misfits figure out how to upend the world with the gospel message. Jesus did a lot of ministry himself, but it was almost always in the context of preparing his disciples to carry on the ministry in his absence. Just think, if Jesus had insisted on doing it all himself, the church as we know it today wouldn't exist.

[see pages 30-32]

② a. For lots of great ideas that will help you get parents off the sidelines and into the game, check out *Plugging in Parents: 200 Ways to Involve Parents in Youth Ministry* (Group Publishing, Inc.).

b. *130 Ways to Involve Parents in Youth Ministry* (www.adventsource.org)

③ Get great ideas on helping students become leaders from *Crafting a Culture: A Guide to Successful Campus Ministries* (www.adventsource.org)

4. FOCUS ON STAYING SMALL


I'm not sure what the magic number is, but at some point a youth group becomes a youth ministry. You can no longer remember every name, go to every birthday party, or attend every football game. As your ministry gets bigger, look for ways to stay small. Large-group settings are fun and energetic, but they lack relational depth. Students enjoy large-crowd events because they can see others and be seen, but they desperately need smaller settings to know others and be known.

Every youth group needs some type of small-group structure. Some of you are thinking, "Kurt, my youth group IS a small group!" That may be true, but let's pretend you have 10 students in your group and you have some kind of male/female mix. I think they'd benefit from breaking into gender-specific groups once in awhile to provide opportunities for deeper, more authentic discussion.

Out of those 10, you probably have one or two extraverts and one or two introverts. Chances are the extraverts dominate conversation while the introverts rarely speak up. I think breaking the group into two groups of five once in a while might provide a safer place for quiet students to share.

Out of those 10, you have a few kids who are pretty far along in their journey with Christ and some who aren't even aware they're on a journey. I think breaking into smaller groups from time to time may help you zero in on your kids' individual needs.

A few years ago we noticed that our midweek program was growing numerically—but that growth was actually hurting our health. Our teenagers felt disconnected, leaders were having a hard time building relationships, and the program had become



I'VE MET LOTS OF REALLY GIFTED YOUTH WORKERS, BUT MANY OF THEM LACK A KEY SKILL: THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO GIVE AWAY THEIR MINISTRY.

very high maintenance. I decided to take a chance. I cancelled midweek for the entire summer and spent those three months re-designing and launching the "new midweek."

When we started up our midweek program again it was completely different. Instead of a large group meeting at the church, our students signed up to be in a small group that met in a home in the community. I braced myself for complaints and comparisons (of which there were several) and stood my ground.[†]

Within a couple months we began to notice the difference in our ministry as a result of the change. Leaders felt empowered—they "owned" their group more deeply. Our teenagers were building genuine friendships, asking tough questions, wrestling with the answers, and experiencing major life-changes. An extra bonus: Our total attendance was actually larger than our old midweek that took place at church.

Small-group experiences are just one way to focus on staying small. When you make sure to recruit more leaders to keep up with your growth you help ensure that every young person is known by somebody, even if it's not you. And if you have a good follow-up system you can keep kids from falling through the cracks as your ministry grows. Finally, when you decide to hold onto some of your "smaller-group" traditions you'll help leaders and students feel like they haven't lost the "good old days."

Bigger youth ministry could be considered better because more kids are being exposed to God's incredible story. Smaller youth ministry could be considered better because kids are known and cared for at a more personal level. I think it's okay to hope for both this fall.

5. FOCUS ON MINISTERING TO PARENTS.

Ministry to parents is a lot like ministry to students—it's hard work, they rarely say thanks, and you often wonder if you're making a difference. Typically, these struggles don't make us walk away from youth ministry, but they often give an excuse to give up on ministering to parents. If you have a dozen kids in your group, you have *at least* a dozen parents. Unless your ministry is located in an orphanage, you actually have more parents represented in your youth ministry than you do students—what an opportunity! Here are a few ideas to help you make the most of this opportunity this fall.

Start by canceling your Fall Kickoff Parent Meeting. I'm serious. You don't need the headache. Hardly anybody shows up and those who do show up are usually the parents who already believe in you and your ministry. Here's what I suggest instead...

• **Offer "Get To Know Me" time slots.** Throughout the fall, advertise numerous Get To Know Me appointment times and encourage parents to sign up for a one-on-one meeting with you. Meet them at their place of work, at Starbucks, or at the church. Keep the meetings to about 30 minutes, make sure to give a brief overview of your ministry's mission and vision, and be sure to leave time for parents to ask questions and share their concerns.

• **Publicize your "Open Door Policy."** Let parents know that they're welcome to check out your program at any time. My experience is that most complaining, critical parents are simply ill-informed about what really happens in our youth ministry. Every time I emphasize our open door policy I'm communicating that I welcome their presence and that I'm not trying to hide anything or keep them in the dark. Most parents never take us up on the invitation to sit in, but the fact that they know they can earn us a ton of trust.

• **Minimize date changes, typos, and other annoying mistakes.** Trust is earned in the little things, and it's in the little things that it can be lost. Be sure to proofread your promotional flyers for accuracy before sending them to parents. With enough advance notice, your parents will likely be willing to spend \$100 for the Fall Retreat. They may not be as willing to spend \$1000 for the Full Retreat.

• **Be sensitive to parents' realities.** There was a time not so long ago when church and youth group attendance were the highest priority in most church families' lives. That's not true anymore. I don't like it. I wish it wasn't so, but it is. Our cultural speed limit is autobahnlike. Technology that once promised to simplify our lives has only served to imprison us. Athletic kids now play sports year-round. Academic-minded students are hitting the books at a frantic pace. Parents are working harder than ever to make ends meet. You can either spend your time trying to roll time back or you can recognize the tremendous challenges facing parents today and look for ways to minister to families who are living under the shadow of those realities.

I hope you have an incredible fall...one that will pave the way for lasting impact.



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program starters

THEME: LIFESTYLE EVANGELISM

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER

Bring a few volunteers to the front and have them say the phrases you give them with all the sincerity they can muster, while giving the opposite message with their body language. For example, they could say, *I love you* with a hateful scowl on their faces. Or they could say *yes* while shaking their heads *no*. Here are some other phrases to say: *Everything's fine—I feel great; I am really depressed; Is there anything I can do to help?; I'm a Christian.*

FRUIT

Before the meeting, prepare a set of 22 index cards. On each card, write one of the qualities of life mentioned in Galatians 5:19-23; on the back of each card, write a number. Use the words and phrases between the commas of the passage (in *The Living Bible*, that makes 13 negative qualities and 9 positive ones).

Have the kids draw cards, one per person, showing their cards to no one. Give everyone a piece of paper and a pencil or pen. Then call those with cards, one number at a time, in order, to the front. They should walk to the front of the group and act out the quality on their card. They may use body language and words, but they shouldn't say the word or phrase they are representing. Everyone else should write the number and the quality they think that person is representing. After everyone is finished, have them circle the numbers of the qualities that they think should characterize Christians.

Then have someone read Galatians 5:19-23 aloud (using the same translation you used to list the qualities). Give the correct answers and see who had the most right. Also, find out who correctly identified the "fruit of the Spirit" as Christian.

TURN THE OTHER CHEEK

This is a messy relay, so be prepared for clean-up. Divide into teams and line them up in parallel columns. At least six feet in front of each team place a very large shirt, a can of shaving cream, and a roll of paper towels. Explain that you have three tasks for every person to accomplish.

This is a relay, however, so they will have to accomplish the tasks one at a time. At your signal, person #1 should run to his or her pile of materials, put on the large shirt, and then run back to his or her team. There, person #2 should pull the shirt off #1, run to the pile, put the shirt on while #1 goes to the back of the team, run back to the front of the team where #3 pulls off the shirt, etc.

- This process should continue until everyone has put the shirt on and pulled it off.

Next, #1 should run to the pile, put some shaving cream on one hand, run back, and *slap* person #2 with the shaving cream hand. That process should continue until everyone has slapped and been slapped.

- **Then #1** should run to the pile, tear a paper towel sheet from the roll, run back, wipe the shaving cream off #2, and go to the back of the line.

- This should continue until everyone has grabbed a towel and cleaned the face of the person next in line. The first team to finish all three tasks, wins.

Note: Be sure to clean up all the shaving cream and to dispose of all the soiled paper towels right away.

BEFORE & AFTER

Give everyone a card or piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Have them draw a line down the middle. At the top of the left side they should write **B.C.**, and on the right, **A.D.**

Explain that *B.C.* means *Before Christ*, and that *A.D.* means *After Decision*. Tell them to write what they were like before they accepted Christ as Savior, on the one side, and then what they are like now, on the other. Everyone should be honest and not put their names on the tops of their cards. Make a few comments about how Christ changes lives, including ours. Then collect the cards, mix them up, and read a few (concealing the identity of the writers) to illustrate the truth. Make the point that we don't have to have a dramatic conversion experience (from being depraved to becoming a super-saint) to have new life in Christ. Some of the less obvious changes could include: desire to read the Bible and pray; desire to tell others about Christ; increased sensitivity to others; desire to help others, etc.

Christ changes lives.

YOU SAY YOU BELIEVE

Have individuals or teams act out the opposite of the phrases listed below. The idea is: *You say . . . but . . .*

- "Christ is number one in my life."
- "The Bible is God's Word."
- "God controls my life."
- "I support the church."
- "I love everyone."
- "We should have convictions and not give in to peer pressure."
- "Christians should tell others about Christ."

discussions : AD-LIB

Divide into small teams and give each team a character type. Explain that they have five minutes to develop a role play of a gospel presentation featuring the approach that their type of character would take.

• *The Condescending Type*

I know you couldn't possibly be expected to understand what I am about to tell you, but I just need the practice. Since I can't imagine anyone like you being interested in spiritual matters, I figure I don't have anything to lose.

• *The Confrontational Type*

Hey, fool! Yeah, I'm talking to you. Do you know you're lost, gone, in deep trouble? And it's your fault! You'd better listen to me . . .

• *The Apologetic Type*

Look, I know this probably isn't a good time to talk about this, and I just know you're gonna be offended and probably never want to talk to me again and maybe even hate me for what I have to tell you . . . but did you know that God loves you?

• *The Embarrassed Type*

Who me? A Christian? Well . . . yeah . . . I guess you could say that . . . After the preparation time, have the teams make their gospel presentations. After each team, discuss why that style of witnessing would be ineffective.

• **ATHENS AGAIN**

Summarize Paul's visit to Athens, especially the part about his looking for points of contact with the people. Then ask students to imagine being an Athenian visitor in their school:

- What idols would they find?
- What points of contact could they make?
- What *locks* would they see that the Gospel key could open?

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starter: BIBLE RACE

OBJECTIVE: *To teach what's in the Bible.*

Do this with teams or everyone competing as individuals. Make sure that everyone has a Bible; then explain that this will be a race to see who (or which team) can find each answer first.

Ask them to find:

- a promise
- a commandment
- a question
- a warning
- a prayer
- a statement about the future
- a condemnation
- praise
- a story
- a good example to follow
- a miracle
- an object lesson

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Bible Reader's Checklist

Encourage your youth to read the AY Bible Year and Encounter Plans as part of their daily devotion. Use this checklist of the AY Encounter Plan readings from the Bible and *Prophets and Kings* for your youth group, and for your personal spiritual enrichment. Give each young person a copy of this checklist. You may choose to give them a month at a time, a number of readings per week, or the entire list. Set goals and reward youth who have diligently completed the list with a certificate of achievement. Plan a special social activity for dedicated readers.

OCTOBER

- 1. PK 570-572
- 2. PK 573-575
- 3. PK 576-578
- 4. PK 579-581
- 5. Zech. 3; PK 582-584
- 6. PK 585-587
- 7. PK 588-590
- 8. PK 591, 592
- 9. Zech. 4; PK 593, 594
- 10. PK 595-597
- 11. Esther 1, 2, 3
- 12. Esther 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
- 13. Esther 9,10; PK 598
- 14. PK 599-601
- 15. PK 602-606
- 16. Ezra 7, 8; PK 607
- 17. PK 608-610
- 18. PK 611-613
- 19. PK 614-617
- 20. Ezra 9, 10; Joel 2, 3
- 21. PK 618-620
- 22. PK 621-623
- 23. PK 624-627
- 24. Neh. 1, 2; PK 628
- 25. PK 629-631
- 26. PK 632-634
- 27. Neh. 3, 4; PK 635
- 28. PK 636-638
- 29. PK 639-641
- 30. PK 642-645
- 31. Neh. 5; PK 646, 647

NOVEMBER

- 1. PK 648-650
- 2. PK 651, 652; Neh. 6
- 3. PK 653-655
- 4. PK 656-658
- 5. PK 659, 660; Neh. 7
- 6. Neh. 8, 9, 10
- 7. PK 661-665
- 8. PK 666-668
- 9. Neh. 11, 12, 13
- 10. Isa. 58, 61; PK 669
- 11. PK 670-672
- 12. PK 673-675
- 13. PK 676-678
- 14. Ps. 22, 69, 72
- 15. Isa. 9, 11, 25, 29
- 16. Isa. 46, 53, Mai. 4
- 17. Zech. 5, 6, 13; Micah 5
- 18. PK 681-683
- 19. PK 684-686
- 20. PK 687-689
- 21. PK 690-692
- 22. PK 693-695
- 23. PK 696-698
- 24. PK 699-702
- 25. Zech. 7, 8; Mal. 1, 2, 3
- 26. PK 703-705
- 27. PK 706-708
- 28. PK 709-711
- 29. PK 712-714
- 30. PK 715-717

DECEMBER

- 1. PK 718-721
- 2. Isa. 26, 28, 35
- 3. Isa. 43, 51, 54, 60:15-22
- 4. Isa. 62, 65; Solomon 6, Ps. 8
- 5. PK 722-724
- 6. PK 725-727
- 7. PK 728-730
- 8. PK 731-733
- 9. Eze. 34-36
- 10. Eze. 37-39
- 11. Eze. 40-42
- 12. Eze. 43-45
- 13. Eze. 46-48
- 14. Obadiah; Zech. 11, 12, 14
- 15. Ps. 1-12
- 16. Ps. 13-21
- 17. Ps. 23-31
- 18. Ps. 32-40
- 19. Ps. 41-50
- 20. Ps. 51-59
- 21. Ps. 60-70
- 22. Ps. 73-75, 77, 79, 81
- 23. Ps. 84-86, 89, 90, 92
- 24. Ps. 93-100
- 25. Ps. 101, 103, 106, 108-110
- 26. Ps. 111, 113-117
- 27. Ps. 118-123
- 28. Ps. 124, 125, 127-130
- 29. Ps. 131-137
- 30. Ps. 138-143
- 31. Ps. 144, 145, 147-150

The Waldensian Valleys • Northern Italy

goIT: travel sites info



WALDESIAN

The origin of the name Waldesian can be traced back to a wealthy merchant of Lyons who lived around 1200 and translated the Bible into the local language so that the Gospel could be preached and understood by the people. Condemned for heresy by the Church of Rome, the followers of the movement were persecuted throughout Medieval Europe. Witches burned at the stake were often accused of “waldesian practices”. In the 16th century, the Waldesians joined the Reformation, adhering to the line advocated by John Calvin of Geneva. Vernè is located in the heart of the valleys where the Waldesians survived the turmoil of the inquisition.

On February 17, 1848, King Charles Albert I signed the Edict which granted the Waldenses the same political and legal rights as other citizens. Though not a declaration of religious liberty, the Edict allowed Waldenses to organize congregations and conduct evangelistic and educational activity outside their Valleys. His act was the direct result of a visit to the valleys a few years earlier where he was received with surprising

affection. Waldenses in Italy would wait another hundred years for the new constitution to read these words: “All religious confessions are free before the law.” Museums and historic sites testify to the tragedies and triumphs of the Waldesians throughout the centuries.

ANGROGNA

Angrogna, situated in the Heart of the Waldensian Valleys (Torino, Italy), played a very important role in the Waldensians’ history to the extent that during the years 1500-1600 the Waldenses of all the valleys were called “the Angrognaians”. Also, during another time, it served as a tool of Evangelism for many “Barbas,” pastors and martyrs.

Planning to travel there? Visit http://piemonte.indettaglio.it/eng/comuni/to/angrogna/trasporti/trasporti_a_angrogna.html for more information.

GHEISA D’LA TANA

Known as Gheisa d’la Tana and situated in one of the mountains rising from the Angrogna Valley and with a low, narrow entrance, this cave served as a safe place for the Waldenses to worship God.

The Waldenses long history of secrecy was of great value in enabling them to avoid and escape capture and death.

In 1587, Miolo tells about the work of the Barbas: “They preached during winter in Barbas’ towns and houses, they had secret doors to enter and leave from one house to the next one, and they preached in the mountain where people would go with their cattle.”

In 1332 when the inquisitor Castellazzo arrived in Angrogna, some of the meetings had up to 500 people. The inquisition started its work. There were many periods of persecution and relative peace during several centuries, many destructions and reconstructions. Many well-known caverns by the surrounding inhabitants have served as a place of refuge and worship, and while the sentinels guarded the surroundings, the Waldenses looked for inspiration and strength in the Word of God.

Tradition tells the story of the big massacre of believers that took place at the exit of Chiesa d’la Tana. I would suggest that while you visit this grotto you sing a hymn inside the cavern and light up your eyes through the torches and your hearts through the spirit of Christ.



The West Wailing Wall or the wall of prayer, Jerusalem.

PHOTO BY DENIS TENEV

FIRST-FRUITS OF ADVENTIST-JEWISH FRIENDSHIP CONFERENCE ALREADY SEEN

ST ALBANS, ENGLAND [TED News] - A unique Adventist-Jewish Friendship Conference was arranged by the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists and the World Jewish Friendship Centre in Abu Gosh, Jerusalem, earlier this year. The conference participants issued a statement at the end of the conference highlighting

the many connections between the Jewish and Adventist faiths and expressing a sincere commitment to removing any obstacles to Adventist-Jewish relations in the future.

Daniel, a young man of a traditional Jewish European family, began some time ago on a journey towards satisfying his spiritual needs.

For more than a year he regularly attended the Buenos Aires Adventist Hebrew Community, where he was happy to find out more about Adventist beliefs and the close attention Adventists give to the Ten Commandments. At the same time, Daniel confessed that he felt uncomfortable and concerned about the behaviour adopted by the Adventist Church during the Nazi Holocaust, and also by finding expressions of “replacement theology” in some books published by Adventists. Replacement theology is a belief that became widely supported during the Patristic era in the Christian church which was very anti-Jewish and also gradually abolished the Sabbath. Daniel recognised that the replacement theology had contributed to the holocaust committed by the Nazi regime in the middle of the 20th century. “Those things were constantly boycotting my spiritual progress”, Daniel observed.

However, things changed, and Daniel now says: “The statement asking for forgiveness to Jewish people issued by the Adventist Church in Germany and Austria and the recent statement issued at the Adventist-Jewish Friendship Conference, markedly influenced my decision to become an Adventist.” In less than a



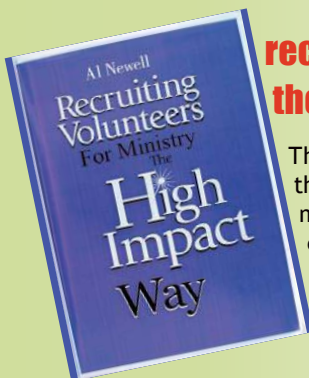
year he found that the Adventist Church was showing a growing will and a commitment to challenge and re-study some of the old Christian teachings that have led to hatred, particularly towards Jewish people.

Daniel says: “Impressed by the statement made by repenting Christians, I started to appreciate Adventism because of its exemplary rectification of itself. I took that as a providential sign that proved the spiritual vitality of Adventism. I now ask the Lord that we might be able to transform the consciousness of the errors from the past into a firm commitment to build a new future, in which there are neither anti-Jewish feelings amongst Christians, nor anti-Christian sentiments amongst Jews, but a mutual feeling of respect, as is convenient amongst those that belong to the same olive tree, as the Bible says.”

Daniel identification with the Bible teachings and his profound faith in Jesus were crystallized last Sabbath (Shabat Jol hamoed Pesaj) at the sea, when he sealed his pact with the Lord.

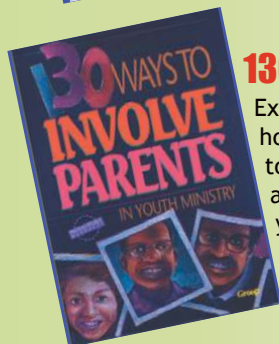
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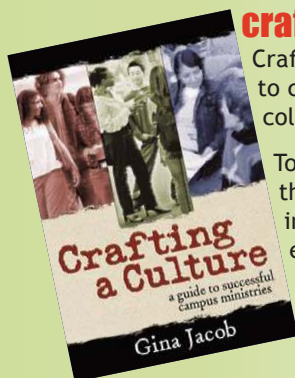
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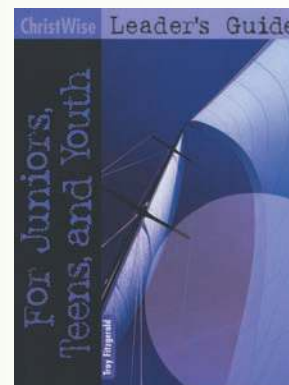
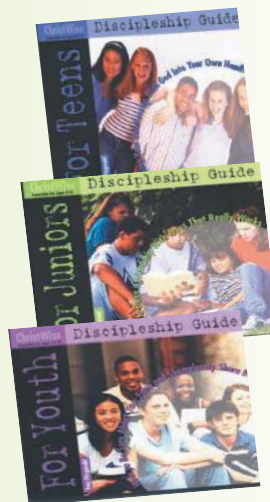


crafting a culture By Gina Jacob

Crafting a Culture is a comprehensive guide to creating successful campus ministries on a college or university campus.

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