

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

“Attracting Youth Back to the Local Church”

Executive Summary

The Challenge:

Most adults are of the opinion that youth are rebellious about religion. We found that they are not rebellious, that they are generally benignly positive about religion, and that they think it is a good and a positive foundation for their lives. Kids need to know that their parents really care about what they are dealing with in terms of thinking, desires, and emotions at a deeper level. Not just their external behaviors.

More youth would participate in church activities if they had consistent transportation and more parent involvement. Participation decreases because the Youth Leader changes or because of non-interactive programs. Churches experience an increase in participation when it has committed leaders, cohesive groups and engaging programs. We need more relevant Biblical Studies for our youth to help them evangelize, develop a stronger prayer life and to realize their purpose and destiny.

Supporting Research:

Youth Research - We discovered that teens are among the most religiously active Americans. They participate in religious activities as a way to connect with their peers and adults. Our research suggests that outside activities do not compete with church activities. Families usually have a systematic balance between both activities. To that end, family involvement is crucial in the development and motivation of the child's Spiritual journey. Our research states that youth are much less inclined to evangelize and talk with non-believers about their faith.

Youth Leader Research – The role of the Youth Leader is often viewed as a stepping stone to the next level of ministry. Therefore, Youth Leaders have a very short tenure in serving in their position. This inconsistency creates a void for our youth and makes it difficult build upon reliable, trusting relationships with the youth minister. Our Youth Leaders must have a clear, long-term vision that involves a partnership with parents.

Youth & Youth Leader Surveys:

Youth Survey – We had thirty respondents and eight questions relating to church involvement, connection with Youth Leaders, the use of social media and relevant Biblical Studies.

Youth Leader Survey – There were nine respondents and fourteen questions that included, but is not limited to: frequency and content of programs, increase/decrease in attendance, use of social media, and the successes/challenges in attracting and retaining youth participation.

Survey Analysis:

Youth Survey Analysis– Our youth seek more authentic relationships amongst their peers and with adults. They rely on committed leaders in whom they can speak in confidence. Fifty-five percent of the respondents feel that social media (Facebook, MySpace & Twitter), when used in a church settings, enhances their Christian experience. Sixty-one percent say that the use of video has improved their understanding of the Bible.

Youth Leader Survey Analysis – Youth Leaders have experienced great success in attracting and retaining youth because they encourage the kids to invite other youth to church. Additionally, a strong volunteer network that supports the Youth Ministry added value to the increase in participation. On the contrary, our Youth Leaders felt that other outside activities and lack of parent participation contributed to the decline in participation. Our previously mentioned research supports the statement about the parents' involvement being a factor in the decline. However, the national research suggested that outside activities were not a competing element. We surmise that the perceptions are different with each church's experience. Lastly, six out of nine leaders feel that audio/video mediums add value to their lessons.

Recommendations:

It is important that we treat our youth like they are truly the future leaders in our church, community and world. We should involve them in the decisions that impact their Spiritual development. Teach them Biblical principles and make it relevant to what they are experiencing in their lives today. Thereafter, let them become the teacher and share the good news with their peers and younger children. You can use different types of tools (audio/video and social media) to encourage and share what God's Word teaches.

Partnerships with our parents are critical to the success of our Youth Ministries. The increase in youth participation has a direct correlation to the level of parental involvement. Enlist parents to help you teach our youth how to evangelize in their own way. Have the parents share their "faith" story to encourage the children to talk about their Spiritual journey.

Lastly, high turnover in the Youth Leader position stifles the growth of our ministries and the Spiritual development of our youth. We recommend you hire a career-minded Youth Leader that has focus drive and determination. The candidate must view the role as a long-term commitment and not as a stepping stone to the next level in your church. Compensate this role on the same level as an Associate Pastor and you will retain the leader for a long tenure.

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