



youth ministry

the MINISTRY PAPERS

missed opportunities...

As cars pour into the church car park, masses of young people emerge. Most have come dressed in the latest fashions—low cut jeans or high cut skirts. With i-pod in one hand and mobile phone in the other, they pack into the hall.

The year 7 boys are already inside seeing who can throw the football the entire length of the hall, leaving a demolition path of music equipment and stained glass windows. The “nerds” are talking about the latest release of the X-box 5000 and giving each other tips on a Gameboy one of them has brought.

Meanwhile a year 9 “item” are making out in the store room but are interrupted by one of the leaders who tells them to “come and join the rest of the group”. The year 12 guys are working out who’s taking the bourbon to Andy’s party tomorrow night, while the girls are talking about who’s going to “get with” who .

Finally, one of the leaders interrupts the fanfare. Everyone is asked to sit on the wooden floorboards. After a 2 minute talk on how “Jesus died so we could be mates with God” everyone is asked to stand in a circle, ready to play pass the banana.

At the end of the night the young people leave happy: jumping and yelling, waking the neighbours as they go. The leaders congratulate each other on another successful “Friday Around God” group—the number of young people who come through the doors each week is phenomenal.

Another great night of youth ministry.

LEADERS:...before taking someone through this paper, review the two key introductory MINISTRY PAPERS: ‘the ministry training church’ and ‘meeting one to one’.

Connect. Grow. Serve. After **connecting** to God through trusting in Christ, a vital way we can **grow** is through a growth group and a vital way we can **serve** is through a ministry team.

This MINISTRY PAPER is designed to help your youth ministry team leader introduce you to what it means to be part of serving in the **youth ministry** team at our church.

It’s much more than a training tool, it’s all about relationships: who you minister *for*, who you minister *with*, and who you minister *to*...



Ephesians 4 is a great starting point for all our ministry teams...
read **Ephesians 4:1-16**

1. Who are we ultimately ministering *for*? Explain.

2. What do we learn here about those we minister *with*?

3. What do we learn here about those we minister *to*?

4. We must ‘speak the truth in love’. What is this? Why is it crucial?



5. *What personal challenges are you aware of in terms of playing your part in this ministry team?*

6. *What role will being actively involved in a growth group play in enabling you to carry out this ministry well?*

flexible & fixed

Many of our ministry teams are focused on a particular age group or demographic, e.g. kids club, youth group, university ministry. That makes sense because each of these groups has its own particular needs. Each group has its own special challenges and opportunities. However, it's sometimes easy to recognise only what's **unique** about each group. It's easy to forget what **all people**, whatever age or stage, have in common. This section of the paper helps us think through what's **flexible** and what's **fixed** in our ministry to young people...



read **1 Corinthians 9:19-23**

1. What is *flexible* in Paul's approach to ministry?

2. What is *fixed* in Paul's approach to ministry?



3. Referring to the 'profile of a high-schooler' opposite, in what ways will ministry to these children need to be flexible?

4. In all of this, what needs to stay fixed in our ministry to these young people?



challenges and opportunities

Have another look at the 'profile of a high-schooler'. Think through the particular challenges and opportunities of this ministry...

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|---|--|
| what are some of the challenges ? | what are some ideas for facing these? |
| what are some of the opportunities ? | what are some ideas for making the most of these? |

profile of a teenager

change

high-schoolers are going through many changes that affect their attitude, mood and self confidence from day to day, and over periods of time.

influence

for the first time in their lives teenagers are now more influenced by their peers than their parents.

the school environment

school is like the animal kingdom. It is survival of the fittest. High school is probably one of the hardest places to live out the Christian faith. However it's also a place where young people can be very receptive to the gospel.

fun

students usually have about six class periods a day. At lunch they don't want to go to another class, they want to talk and have fun.

sex, drugs and alcohol

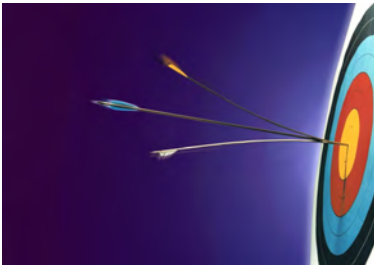
high-schoolers will inevitably be exposed to sex, drugs and alcohol. It all looks really exciting and most of the time their friends are all getting into it. Talk about these issues in the group regularly.

high school certificate

the final years of school can be pretty stressful for a lot of students. They often feel pressured by teachers and their parents (Christian parents can be big offenders).

who am I?

high-schoolers are trying very hard to figure out who they are. They're very conscious of their looks, intellectual capacity and sporting ability and wonder if any or all of these things determine their identity. We need to tell them that God loves them heaps just as they are and that through Jesus they can be children of God.



staying on target

Hopefully the previous page generated lots of discussion about gospel ministry to high-schoolers. On the *'flexible'* aspects of this ministry, there are certainly many **good** approaches possible. But it's when we come back to the all-important *'fixed'* aspect—the gospel of Christ—that we can get clearer about the **best** approach. We need to remember our key goals in seeing every person grow to maturity in Christ. We also need to keep thinking through the steps or pathway people travel toward maturity. In short, we need to stay on target with what the ministry is there for...

real fun

Cyndi Lauper's "girls just wanna have fun" would make a great catch-cri for many Youth Groups. The programs of these groups tends to be jam-packed full of wild and outrageous activities. But sadly, building gospel-centred relationships doesn't appear to be on the agenda.

Fun will certainly get kids along to Youth Group and it will probably keep them coming (at least until year 9 or 10). But the time will come in a teenagers life when the fun on offer at Youth Group just can't compete with the fun that the world has to offer.

A Youth Group that tries to compete on the world's terms will fail in one of two ways - it will either become indistinguishable from the world or it will be exposed as a cheap imitation. So what's the alternative?

The alternative, as the French say, is to "vive le difference"! Let's face it Christians *are* different - and we should thank God that that's so. We've got a lot to offer a lost world by sharing the life-saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

So Youth Group will still be fun, but it'll be fun with a difference - real fun based on real relationships with the goal of building real Christians who'll stick with Jesus for a real long time.

Through modeling prayer and Bible reading, having a time of singing (if resources are available), and a series of segments that are relevant, enjoyable and gospel-focused Youth Group can offer teenagers something real they won't get anywhere else. And with growth groups at the centre, Christians are built up in Christ, and at the same time non-Christians are exposed to the Gospel.

Fun might be "all they really want" but it's not all they really need.

think small

Growth Groups are key in nurturing a young person's relationship with Christ. Establishing Growth Groups centred around God's Word and caring beyond the group time keeps with the goal of seeing young people grow to maturity in Christ.

a lounge room not a classroom

Growth Groups in youth ministry can often become a lot like a classroom. A leader asks questions, hands are raised and answers are given. But having already spent 30 hours at school, a classroom setting may not provide the most edifying environment for teenage Christians. Perhaps there's a benefit in steering away from written answers, where young people aren't worried about how to spell propitiation or righteousness.

Of course, God's Word remains central and ground rules of the group are set - but the environment is different. The atmosphere is loving and warm, struggles in the Christian life are dealt with, evangelism is encouraged and prayer points for each other are shared.

a youth leader not just a youth group leader

The role of a youth leader isn't just about facilitating questions in a Bible study on a Friday night. Caring for high-schoolers beyond the weekly meeting is a far bigger role. With many temptations on offer for teenagers, we need to consider creative ways of building relationships that reach beyond the night of Youth Group . Running a school lunch time group, circulating a fortnightly prayer email, or having a "group day out", are all means of building contact that keeps young people maturing in Christ.

For significant relationships to form it's important to consider what is a reasonable "span of care". A group of about 4-6 is a good limit. Any more than this is not only draining but makes it difficult for effective care to be provided.

While a genuine interest in all those in our Growth Group is vital, Picking out a couple of "core members" within the group is also crucial. A discipleship role with this "core" is a great way to ensure that teenagers will grow to maturity in Christ and be equipped for ministry to their peers and the next generation.



1. What are some practical ways you could care for a Growth Group of guys or girls beyond the night of Youth Group?

2. How can we make sure that the gospel of Jesus remains central to what we do at Youth Group?

getting equipped

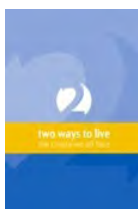
Given the extent of high-school populations, evangelism opportunities are endless for the teenager. The resources listed below are helpful for students to read through and to give out to their friends. There are also some resources listed that will help leaders to become better equipped in youth ministry. The youth leader needs to become familiar with the material available for training, as well as evangelistic resources for students. This will all the more prepare the youth leader to make the most of evangelistic opportunities.



But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. **1 Peter 3:15a**

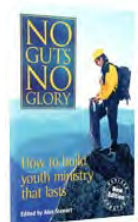


training resources



two ways to live (Matthias Media)

This is a well-known evangelistic tool. It clearly outlines what the gospel is, in six easy points, that teenagers can understand. This is a great resource to take students through. It helps them to clarify what they believe and it also helps them to be able to clearly explain the gospel to their friends.



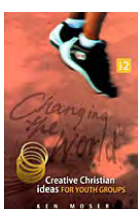
no guts no glory

This book is written from the firm conviction that youth ministry is only effective when young people are confronted by Jesus, through the gospel. They apply this conviction to topics such as setting and achieving goals, programming, evangelism, camps and many more. The results are a great stimulus for evaluating your ministry.



changing the world (book 1)

This book is designed to help you put in place a program that will work for you not against you. It will help you think about your goals, shape your program and run meetings that will help bring solid growth.



changing the world (book 2)

Over 100 ideas for your youth group meeting that are thoroughly Christian, build strong relationships and are fun! This book will help you run youth groups that no longer need to rely on pointless games and shallow entertainment.



hanging in there (Matthias Media)

This is a great book for all young Christians. John Dickson writes in away that is very relational and tackles issues such as; God, you, the Bible, prayer, church, relationships, sex, feelings, doubts, love and, above all, 'hanging in there' as a Christian.



discipleship training (youthworks)

A leader's manual and five study books provide more than a year of material that are ideal for use in a one-to-one discipleship relationship. The studies are ordered logically from "My New Life", through "My Awesome God", "My Intimate Relationship" and "My mission From God", to "My Personal Obedience".

child protection

safety first

While the focus of this paper has understandably been on meeting the spiritual needs of the young people in our care, we must remember that we minister to the whole person and as such are concerned for their total wellbeing.

A significant part of this concern is ensuring that the Youth Group environment is one of **uncompromised safety**. This is our "duty of care". Sadly this duty has not always been taken seriously in churches and some terrible stories of abuse have resulted.

Our Child Protection policy - "Breaking the Silence" - aims to protect both young people (first and foremost) and leaders from the terrible effects of abuse.

checklist

- do you know who to talk to at your church if you want to report an incident or ask a question about child protection?
- have you completed the Breaking the Silence training so that you are aware of your responsibilities for notification of abuse and the signs of abuse?
- do you have a copy of the Breaking the Silence brochures "Our Policy" and "Our Code of Conduct"?
- do you have a position description?
- have you filled out the working with children check?