

7 Questions to Ask When Starting a Youth Ministry

By Brad Fiscus

OK, let's say you have passionate adults and you've got some young people. You're probably wondering where to start. It's been our experience that the first step in starting a ministry with young people is to get the critical stakeholders on board. The key stakeholders in starting a youth ministry include:

- All potential youth group members (of course).
- Their parents.
- Other adults who are interested (who might just discover they're called to serve on the ministry team).
- Most importantly, the pastor and several key leaders in the church.

We've found that getting these people in a room together for dialogue is the first step. We call this a visioning meeting. It is a time of asking questions, listening, and taking notes on large sheets of paper. We've found it best to break the group into subgroups of four to six people. Each group will discuss the same questions and then share their input with the larger group. This approach makes room for more persons to share and be heard. As you gather the responses from the questions, look for similarities, look for new insights, look for opportunities to create a unique ministry with young people.

To begin the dialogue about gaining a vision for youth ministry, you might ask questions such as:

1. Who are the young people in our congregation and in our community?
2. What do the young people in our congregation and community need?
3. How can our church meet those needs?
4. What assets do this congregation and community possess to assist in ministry with young people?
5. What challenges do your congregation and community face as a barrier to ministry with young people?
6. What goals do we hope this ministry will achieve?
7. Who are the people in our congregation and community who value young people?

It is essential that the young people in the room have the chance to participate fully. You'll discover they have much to offer! You might just be surprised when their reason for starting this ministry is more deeply connected to Jesus Christ than many of the older perspectives in the room.

Starting with Why

Simon Sinek, who wrote the leadership book *Start With Why*, shares that we most often focus on what we do instead of why we do it. He goes on to say that until we pause to consider the *why*, we can never truly understand how to have the greatest impact. We must seek to build with a clear understanding of

why we are building. If *what* we are building is not connected to our *why*, we're wasting our time. So while you continue with the youth ministry you have started, pause for a moment, pull a group of youth, parents, and stakeholders together, and ask the questions. Take time to ask, listen, and understand. This will help you formulate a deeper understanding of the *why* for your ministry.

Once you're clear on the *why*, you'll start to see where you want to go. The temptation to avoid is to begin to move in the new direction without a strategy to get there. It is important to take the time for a strategy that flows from a clear understanding of *why* you are in ministry to take shape. Your strategy will include the *who* and the *what* components necessary to achieve the vision. Together, these parts will form the foundation for the ministry—the stability needed to build a sustainable ministry.

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