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Ever get bored of the same old routine? The same old youth work? Does your work need an injection of something? A boost. A new move of the Spirit? Do you have a vision statement, clear goals, know where you're going? Do you need to change up where you're going, think about why you do what you do? Do you even evaluate what goes on in your youth ministry and its effectiveness or otherwise? Do you have a spirit of evaluation, do you involve other leaders and students?

I think we've asked that question a lot in our youth leadership team over the last few years. We're always evaluating, seeking God, talking to young people, each other, looking at what God is doing, what others are doing.. and then seeing if we need to learn or change. What about you?

WHERE WE WERE - The early pattern of our youth work..

- Sunday mornings for 11–14s, they have their own group, programme from various sources and leaders who rotate on a rota basis to lead and support the group
- Sunday nights, a weekly youth service, attracts all ages but aimed at the 15 plus age group, teaching, worship, funky stuff and more, run by one person but delegated to many including young people
- Cell Groups, currently two for girls split by age and one for lads. We also run a regular Alpha Course
- Outreach includes weekly football against local lads aged 15–19 at a sports centre, schools work and involvement in evangelism events across the city
- Many other individual pieces of work, mentoring young people 1 to 1, having people round to the home of couples to build relationship and give support, playing basketball and football, working with groups of rappers and bands of young people within the church, discipleship courses, weekends away, festivals, days away, special events such as relationships talks, murder mystery meals etc.

- Regular socials such as bowling, quasar, pizza nights, cinema, the beach, swimming, ice skating etc.
- Also encourage them in personal and corporate evangelism through serving God abroad or in the UK, involving them in evangelistic events and training etc.

WHERE WE WENT - Outline of the youth work (led by youth pastor)

- Sunday mornings for 11–14s, they have their own group, programme from various sources and leaders who rotate on a rota basis to lead and support the group. The material is 'The Grid' by Salt.
- Sunday nights, YFC's material 'Mettle' – aimed at 14–18s from both 'churched' and 'un-churched' backgrounds, to journey together. Includes fun elements, spiritual elements, weeks for socials and games. Interactive and team-led, with (flexible) teams of students led and disciplined by youth workers – to take Mettle on different weeks. This is an access point into the ministry of the church.
- Cell Groups, one for young ladies (Years 11–13), 2 cells for the other college age groups, a younger women's cell, a younger lads cell with a student leader. These are all in the weekday evenings. One other cell starting for 'unchurched' girls mixed with 'churched' girls on Sunday mornings. Cells are essential for involvement in other church ministries – place of going deeper spiritually and accountability.
- Rock Solid Club on Monday Night (again, materials from YFC). This is for 11–14s, mainly from unchurched backgrounds. A mix of fun, games and with a spiritual element. Includes many 'Christian' student leaders, high ratios of leaders / student leaders, to young people. Tightly controlled, numbers controlled and time controlled (1 hr 30). At age 14–15, these young people are 'fed' through to Mettle.
- Rock Solid type evening on Mondays for 8–11s. These are then fed through to Rock Solid. (Rock Solid from Youth For Christ)

- Highly relational and student–empowering / discipling. Young people play an increasing role across the varied ministries of the church.
- Many other activities, including social action, one–off events, evangelism, social evangelism, weekends away, music worship, PA/AV training, holiday club involvement etc.

Some of the things we have done in our youth work..

- Had weekly socials, one for church young people, one for local teenagers. Sometimes these would run on a Thursday and a Friday, then we alternated socials between Thursdays.
- Worked very closely with the local schools project and run events for young people across the city to theme parks getting Christian bands into schools etc. These have regularly attracted well over 300 or 400 young people.
- Done big one–off social events aimed at both church and unchurched teenagers
- Had peer–led cell groups with the support of youth leaders
- Got young people involved in all aspects of the church such as creche etc. This has also involved doing joint evening services with the church (both having the church join them, and them joining the church), the young people taking services in mornings and evenings
- Helped students running their own group for themselves
- Worked with local teenagers on various projects such as rap, breakdancing, streetdance, DJ–ing etc. Also provided a venue for local teens to practice dance.
- Paid for young people to go on various mission training or training projects. Many have taken years out abroad or in the UK, or done short–term mission. They continue to do this and we actively encourage it

– Done a social action project in the local community, with limited success initially. As this has gone on and had more effective leadership, it has progressed.

Asking the young people

Here is a list of the questions that we recently asked our young people. We regularly do surveys but I have found that the basic tick box or yes/no questions are OK but pretty pointless!

A great idea is to get groups of students together (perhaps 2–4 at a time), take them out somewhere and ask them their honest thoughts about things. Don't be afraid and don't take things too personally!

OUR YOUTH WORK

- 1. What one thing do you want to see this year, Christian style?**
- 2. What one thing do you want to achieve in your life of faith this year?**
- 3. We like to empower you, release you into opportunities, and help you but it takes a massive amount of time. How can you help with this?**
- 4. How can you help in the youth work, the church this year?**
- 5. What activities do you want to see this coming year?**
- 6. Do you have any strategies for the youth work that are helpful.. for you and evangelism**
- 7. Are there any gifts that you want to develop this year?**

- 1. What should the priorities of the local youth leaders across the city be this year?**
- 2. Thinking of any events run... how can we use it more effectively? Should we even do it?**
- 3. What other ideas for evangelism do you have?**
- 4. How would you like to be more involved in events put on?**
- 5. Anything else (useful!) you want to say about the youth work?**

SO

1. Is God speaking to you about something? Through his Word, through others, directly to you?
2. Think about why it needs changing and how? Be led by the Spirit and the Word not by trends
3. Look at the signs – are young people voting with their feet and not turning up? Are they bored? Are you feeling increasingly weary doing something?
4. Think about future and the way God is moving in the area, country generally. Think about what might be, envision yourself with possibilities.
5. Do things seem tired and in need of a boost?
6. Are leaders unhappy or having to leave because of moving away? Do you need to nationalize and bring things together? Have you got a lot of leaders looking for God to use them?
7. Does something appear to be blocked – a spiritual attack or God shutting a door? Do things appear to be opening up? Is God opening the door?
8. Make sure it's not simply your frustration that leads to things changing!

How do things need to change?

1. What is God saying to you? Look inside your heart and be real with God and yourself
2. Look at the skills and abilities of the leaders? Do you need to pray people in or encourage more involvement from people in the church? Think about the needs and ideas of leaders, the church, yourself, parents etc.
3. Think about the needs of the young people, yes, but do not obsessively follow their every whim. You're there to befriend, encourage, equip, disciple but not to be their mate or do whatever they want

4. Do you need to split ages, combine ages? Need to split sexes or join sexes? Need to do more or less socials? More or less 1 to 1 work? More or less big less frequent socials? Need to combine groups or split groups? Need new groups to achieve new or existing aims?

I hope all this helps, remember the most important things..

1. Your relationship, character, integrity, openness, obedience and closeness to God through the Holy Spirit in prayer and the Bible, especially in your private life

2. Your private life with your family, wife, husband. This MUST always come ahead of the youth work and young people. That is Biblical. If your relationships are being sacrificed in place of work then that is very unhealthy and will cause problems. Make the change