

# ***HOW DO WE HAVE AN EFFECTIVE & IMPACTFUL YOUTH MINISTRY? ELEVEN QUESTIONS!***

It's a fantastic privilege for us as youth leaders to unlock the destiny of the folk we serve. So how? Three things first:

- Our calling isn't just to teach discipleship, but to model it, be examples of it!
- And, we're to be examples, not of success, but, of deep desire to grow! `Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled!` (Mt 5:6).
- And, if we want an impactful ministry, we must pray! Pray for each area of your group's ministry - make a list for your fridge? And pray for each person!

OK, now some questions: questions to think about with God, so that God shows you what is right for your group; questions to discuss with friends in your church and in other churches: How do you do this?

1. Absolute bottom line: Make sure they really understand the **gospel** (faith not works), make sure that they're each really saved (real repentance – = real determination to live only God's way, by His power), and have the assurance of being really saved that flows from that. There's nothing more important!

2 Pray for them each to be gripped by **the glory and love of God, the wonder of Christ and his cross**. How can we help our people to glimpse these? What areas of Scripture should we aim to flag up, for this purpose, in the near future, & how?

3 Make sure they know how to feed themselves! – that is, that they've learned the vital habit of **meeting God daily, in regular daily Bible feeding and prayer**. (This needs a regular session – every 12-18 months?) How can we encourage a hunger for Bible feeding? Do our people know how to do it fruitfully? What help/tools do they need? Bible reading notes, or apps, or eg Wordlive?

4 How can we get them hungry to **pray**, help them see what they'll gain by it, help them understand how to do it? (Again be an example - not of success, but of desire to grow!) Who do we know who can

helpfully share how they do it? And: how can we help them learn to genuinely praise God?

5. How do we give our folk a sense of **vision, objectives, and direction for the group**, that it's THEIR group? How do we ensure that they're really involved in the planning and thinking about the group's goals, strengths and weaknesses (and their own too)? (One idea is to have planning sessions every three months or so with the whole group, and report back on how the final programme will implement what was asked for: not everything they want, God has made you a leader!; but with the aim of giving them a vision for it.)

6. How do we help our folk to be **natural, effective witnesses**? How can we encourage them to live for the gospel & dream for the gospel?

Do they have **friendships** with people who aren't yet Christians (without slipping into their lifestyle!)? – praying in small groups, for the next small step forward with each friend?

Do they know **how** to share their faith? Do they have a grasp of, and can they express - without too much jargon - the **basic gospel**? Practise it!

Are they confident **why they believe**? And can they answer the **usual questions**? (What are they for your people?- science & faith? how can there be a God when there's so much suffering? different religions? why (because we follow Jesus!) do we think the Bible's reliable? or what?) And: have they grasped the evidence for the resurrection?

How & where can we expose them to the fact that evangelism actually works? (Testimonies of people saved through youth groups like yours will help.) We want to create a prayerful expectancy...

That's preparation. Then: How - with what kind of **events** - can we bring our not-yet-Christian friends into the group, so that they feel what a community of live Christians is really like? **Food** is important! How can we make them feel at home? (The church building may not be the best place for this, nor Sunday the best time.)

And is there any practical way we can go out and present Christ in **public**? This gets people over the emotional hurdle of being seen and laughed at!

7. What OTHER areas of **teaching** need covering? Grasping the basic doctrines – what do they find hard? But also: seeking to know God better and please him will include hating sin and keeping `short accounts`; so, increasing radical holiness and **practising Christ's lordship in every area of life**. How do we stimulate serious, realistic thought about what this means, how as a Christian they will be distinctive? One obvious area is going determinedly for a partner who's a real disciple too, and staying sexually pure, because crashing on either of these can derail their destiny for years. But there are lots of other areas to teach: materialism and bling in a world where 48000 kids die of hunger & preventable disease every day; thankfulness to God (v grumbling and cynicism); doing their work to God's glory (and honestly, v pilfering); healthy relationships (giving and receiving forgiveness where necessary), eg with their family; giving money for others in a regular, committed way – and time too; alcohol and drugs; realistic church involvement (including baptism); coping when things go wrong (eg unemployment); how to find God's guidance?

8. How do we help them grow in **faith** - learning in practice the power of God, and growing willing to take risks in His service; as a result, increasingly exercising the **gifts** God is developing in them... But do they know they each have gifts (Eph 4:7)? And how can we develop their gifts, what opportunities can you create for them to be stretched, to take an active lead? (Cell groups can help here – although, it is important in small group Bible discussions to ensure people know how to lead them, for the sake of the rest of the group!) Pray: Which members in particular are ready for this? How can they be trained and `learn on the job`, how can they share your vision?- what books should you lend them?

9. How can we develop real **friendships** within the group - so that people relax, learn that they can trust each other (and so can afford to fail)- and lose their shyness and participate without embarrassment - eg in group Bible discussions? (Events like `Desert Island Discs` with group members; drama; and time relaxing together can all help here.)

Are we as leaders being models of caring and approachable leadership; and are we sharing this vision with other members?

Do group members **care for one another** – how (discuss this?) could they care better? And how do we get the group to care for those of their own age in the church who don't come?

Are we meeting the group's **social needs**? Are there more things we could do together? Meals? Christian events eg concerts? Even a weekend away together (which also gives scope for in-depth teaching and developing real friendships)? (Remember you'll need a fund to help anyone who can't afford it.)

What about boy/girl relationships? Is the group one in which **healthy and relaxed relationships** exist? Pray about this, & teach it. Not a group where we gossip, where we show off, where we have a sequence of girlfriends or boyfriends...

10 How can we give our people a **sense of destiny and God's calling**? How can we expose them to **mission**, to the needs of the world as a whole: 3 things – the great things God is doing in the world today in places like sub saharan Africa, the needy areas that exist (eg the Muslim world), and what we can do (Pray – Give – Go)? Is this a session your teens could present? Using Google Earth?

Can we encourage older members to use some of their **holiday** in practical evangelism, like with OM (see [uk.om.org/shorts](http://uk.om.org/shorts))?- better still, take them with us? What about taking a team from our group to help another church for a week's evangelism (yes, sleep on the floor) - this can be brilliant!?

11. How do we prepare the **folk who are going to uni** (see <https://www.uccf.org.uk/starting-uni>)? How should we express our care for student members when they're away? And how do we ensure that – without swamping the rest of the group – they feel welcomed back as soon as they return – and know that what they're doing matters to the rest of us?

**GOD IS BESIDE YOU - PRAY ABOUT ALL THESE!!**

Pete Lowman.