



## 5 ESSENTIALS

### FOR FRUITFUL AND SUSTAINABLE MINISTRY SITES

Here's the challenge. If we take the YFC mission seriously we realize that the change that we seek to bring about in young people is of the supernatural variety. Unless we cooperate with the Spirit of God our best efforts to develop lifelong followers of Jesus will fall short. Our fruitfulness—as Jesus made so clear—is made possible only to the degree that our lives and work are embedded in him, the Source of Life (John 15:1-17).

When it comes to biblical truth, creativity is not nearly as important as discovery. All innovative program methodologies should submit to—and not overshadow—timeless biblical principles. The 5 ESSENTIALS are means to help us be faithful, attentive and responsive to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of young people. They are our common ministry principles in YFC, not because we invented them, but because we confess that their truth transcends context and culture. So we agree to line up and make sure that we practice the 5 ESSENTIALS throughout our many diverse ministry sites, where our mission gets worked out and lives are changed.

### WIDESPREAD PRAYER

*"Brothers, pray for us." - 1Thess 5:25*

Prayer is essential to our life and work in Christ. This familiarity cannot lead us to neglect its necessity.

**We deliberately engage lots of Christians to intercede on behalf of the ministry site.**

Paul's pattern reveals that his work of forming Christ's life in people (Gal 4:19; Col 1:24 - 2:8) could not happen without prayer. His prayers for the Ephesians seek breakthroughs in their understanding that can only be accomplished by God (Eph 1:17-19; 3:14-19). Jesus taught the disciples that they could not meet the needs of some people without prayer (Mark 9:28-29).

We need wisdom and grace to move with the precision, pacing and personal renewal that happens when God directs our paths. That's why the apostles coveted the prayers of others (Acts 8:26-40; 10; 12:5-12; Rom 15:30; 2 Cor 1:8-11; Eph 6:18-20; Col 4:2-4; 1 Tim 2:1; James 1:5-6).

Not enough volunteers available or enlisted for the mission? Our best recruitment and training skills must be practiced against the backdrop of Jesus' own words that the challenge of an under-worked harvest field is met when we "ask the Lord of the harvest" to supply the need for workers (Luke 10:2). Before Jesus chose the twelve to be deputized for ministry he bathed the decision in prayer (Luke 6:12-19).

The more frequently we ask for prayer from growing teams of people, the more likely it is that our requests will be specific and detailed, putting our hearts exactly where they need to be: humbly dependent on God to accomplish what is most important. Always be adding people to your prayer team and ask them often for help.

### LOVING RELATIONSHIPS

Since we have an obligation of love that is "up close and personal" (Rom 13:8; James 2:5-10; 1 John 3:11-18), it only makes sense that our relationships will inform our prayer activity for them.

The love of God is a transformational powerhouse for all who come into contact with it, especially those—like teens—who hunger for meaningful relationships. God's love is both undeserved and inescapable (John 3:16; Rom 5:8; 8:31-39); kids can experience this love because we enter into caring relationships with them. We can't afford to be described by garden-variety social goals—like "friendly," "nice," or "fun." Such words are too tame. The love of God is a force to be reckoned with, and no amount of program creativity or activities can match its impact in the life of a young person. Our YFC strategies must be ordered to deliver—rather than dilute—the radical love of God.

**We consistently pursue lost kids and engage them in lifelong relationships with Jesus.** God's love takes initiative. Jesus punctuated his encounter with Zaccheus by reminding those who questioned his actions that he came to "seek and save" the lost (Luke 19:1-9). We are called to follow his pattern (John 20:21), propelled to pursue young people by the aggressive love of God (2 Cor 5:14).

Our transformational work is in the world of young people. Where do they live and hang out? Schools, athletic events, coffee shops, fast food places, malls, social networks on the web...the possibilities are endless. When we show interest in what's important to them and discover their stories we can custom deliver God's love to teens.

Ultimately, teens need to become part of a community where God's love nurtures and launches them (Eph 3:16-19; Phil 1:9-11). Our groups should try to represent the diversity of our ministry sites—including age, gender, ethnicity, economic backgrounds, musical interests, and social status. Then they will testify to how divine love smashes barriers, invigorates life and reveals the glory of God (John 13:34-35; Acts 2:42-47; Gal 5:2-15; 1 Thess 4:9-12).

### 3STORY RESOURCES

The youth landscape is characterized by relativism, experientialism, and distrust for sources of authority outside of self. This makes it tricky to navigate contemporary waters while holding fast to another transformational focus: all of our lives need to be reconfigured around the truth of scripture. That's why **we accurately handle biblical truth, regularly coaching kids to apply it in their lives**. We want to be diligent, not just in our study of the Bible, but also in walking with young people, showing them how to make connections between their lives and the Bible.

As Jesus concluded his famous sermon on the mountainside, he offered that the way of life he was describing was accessible through a narrow road and small gate. He warned of teachers who would lead us away from the ultimate goal of knowing and doing the will of God. Finally, he used a parable to dramatize that, while difficulties are a certainty in life, persons who build their lives around hearing and practicing Jesus' words will be able to withstand whatever may come (Matthew 7:13-27). An oft-repeated scriptural truth is anchored here. The Bible must be taught—and learned—for obedience, and not just knowledge (Matt 28:20; Mark 7:11-13; Luke 8:11-15; 11:28; John 5:36-40; 15:1-11; Phil 3:15-17; 2 Tim 3:14-17; Heb 5:11-14; James 1:22-25; 1 Pet 1:22-25; 2 Pet 1:3-4).

Real change is a two-way street. Scripture is a force for change when it is lived out in the experiences of young people. We could start by opening up the Book, or growth can begin when kids open up their lives. Either way, this focus is well established when young people increase the traffic between their experiences and God's word.

### COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

When God's love gathers God's people into otherwise unexplainable communities, the expression of unity actually reveals, or glorifies, God in our world (John 17:20-23). Unity is a force to be reckoned with; it has been since the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9). Nowhere is this power as clearly evidenced as in the days of the early church, when being together was a normal precipitator for unleashing the power of God (Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4, 42-47; 5:12-15). By focusing on unity our young people will benefit from a powerful force of transformation. **We intentionally work together with local churches, agencies and other partners to provide sustainable youth and family ministry in the community.**

But there is a rub that makes this as challenging as it is obvious. Many of us practice what might be called program unity. That is, all of those who choose to participate in the activities of the group experience a nice attraction to one another. This sort of program unity certainly falls short of the more radical biblical unity that is the subject of so much teaching in letters to the early church. Of that unity Paul made it clear that party affiliations must be set aside, a collective dwelling of the Holy Spirit is being built, and extraordinary preservation efforts should be exerted (1 Cor 1:13-15; 3:16-17; Eph 2:19-22; 4:1-6, 11-16). To the Colossians alone he provides a connecting arc from the supremacy of Christ through ethnic distinctions so that the believers might weave the smallest details of their life together into a unified tapestry that honors God (Col 1:15-20; 2:1-3; 3:11-17).

Far from being a descriptor of internal group health, biblical unity will force most of us in YFC to get beyond ourselves in order to practice oneness with those in our communities who are also part of the body of Christ. The vision of the kingdom of God that young people acquire as a result of our investing in biblical unity is exciting, compelling and worthy of sacrifice—a far more fruitful outcome than might be expected from lesser versions of unity.

### ADULTS WHO EMPOWER

Stated simply, powerful formation—toward whatever end—takes place through largely non-formal means, like modeling. This reality of influence requires a focus for everyone who works with teens. That's why **we strategically develop leaders to reach young people from every people group**.

Social science research affirms that teens will naturally gravitate toward other teens as exemplars, though adults who are accessible and open may also have a strong impact. But the bottom line is that kids, like all of us, need to be shown how to follow Christ. They need to be shown how to pray, to love, to conform their lives to biblical teachings, and to live together in unity with all believers. Jesus' investment in his disciples and Paul's offers of himself as an example testify to the timelessness of this transformational principle (Mark 3:14; Luke 11:1; 1 Cor 11:1; Phil 1:27-30; 2:5; 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thess 1:4-9; 2:1-12; 1 Pet 2:18-21). If young people are formed by following exemplars, then we adults who work with youth must always be aware of the impact that our own modeling

has. But we also have to be intentional about developing other leaders who—because of age or ethnicity or gender or interests—will be more effective than we can be.

Empowering leaders is, of course, more complicated than simply showing the way. But if this fundamental principle of “passing the torch” is not done well, other efforts cannot be expected to result in the sort of qualified persons who can keep the torch moving from group to diverse group until every kid is reached (2 Tim 2:2). If YFC ministry training follows Jesus’ apprenticeship multiplication model we can expect it to be very fruitful (Matt 9:35-11:1; Luke 10:1-24).