

Empowering Your Ministry



Ten Things That Will Empower Your Youth Ministry Programs

1. Have a clear vision. Spend time visioning for the highest quality program you can imagine and then create a plan to bring it into manifestation.

- Create a team to create the vision.
- Prioritize items and create a plan of action.
- Involve the entire congregation in holding the vision.
- Implement the plan.

2. Value the children and teens. Recognize that they are members of your current congregation and deserve respect and to have a place to share who they are. They deserve the same time, space, staffing and budget considerations as the adult ministry.

- Validate children as individuals of worth—just as Jesus did.
- Let your children and church know how much you value kids. Greet them at eye-level and honor them for who they are and what they bring.
- Recognize that we are all exploring and learning together.

3. Good Communication. Let people know what is happening in your programs. Help them to understand how you are contributing to the spiritual growth and unfoldment of each student. Invite people to support the vision.

- Talk about your ministry with your minister other staff members, volunteers, parents, the community and the children.
- Create displays showing your programs in action.
- Share with the adults, each Sunday, what the children/teens are doing/experiencing.

4. Promote your what you offer. Share what you are doing and how you are growing and evolving. Get people excited about your programs so that they will tell others.

- Create a youth ministry flyer for your welcome packet.
- Create a parent's handbook and a teacher's handbook.
- Create an on-line newsletter.
- Add pages to your ministry's web-site that give details of what you offer.

5. Create age appropriate spaces. Fill your rooms with furnishings that are age appropriate. Make sure the rooms are clean and bright and fully stocked. Show that the children/teens are wanted, loved, and honored.

- Walk through your children's space twice.
- Evaluate it from an adult's viewpoint, then from a child's perspective. List needs and make changes!

6. Be a Team Player: Stay connected to the minister and board. Attend weekly staff meetings so you know what is going on in other parts of the ministry and they know what is going on in your area.

- Enlist ministry volunteers to help with special projects.
- Don't try to do it all yourself. Have a team mentality and invite others to assist you.
- Recognize that you are part of a ministry team. Youth ministry is not an island unto itself.

7. Develop a family ministry. The primary shapers of a child's development are parents and immediate family. Create resources and events that encourage the learning/exploration to continue at home.

- Create ministry events that give families an opportunity to get to know one another.
- Develop ministries to reach the entire family, such as home visitation, parent-training courses or family-crisis counseling.

8. Train your volunteers. Create a straight and clear path for volunteers to join your program. People are more likely to volunteer if they know what is expected of them, that resources will be provided and that they will receive training and support.

- Require back ground checks.
- Create a spiritual educator's application
- Offer regular meetings and trainings
- Support them
- Ask for commitment

9. Show your gratitude. Everyone wants to feel needed and valued. You do. And so do the people who help make your ministry possible. People will go the extra mile for someone who appreciates them.

- Take time monthly to thank those who have helped make your programs possible.
- Acknowledge the parents for their willingness to bring their children on a regular basis.
- Thank the children/teens for joining you in the fun.

10. Be mindful. The most dangerous threat to any ministry is "neglect." Stay present to both the needs of your ministry and of your personal needs.

- Stay connected to what is happening in the whole ministry and address the issues that affect your program in a pro-active way.
- Keep holding the vision of what you want to be happening.
- Take care of yourself in all ways. Keep up a daily prayer life.

The Wonderful World of a Mickey Mouse Ministry

Information taken & adapted from an article in *Children's Ministry Magazine* March/April 2004

Do you have a Mickey Mouse ministry?

Discover how it's a good thing for kids and families in your church.

As he walked through the doors of the Magic Kingdom, author Dale Hudson, asked himself, "What cues can I take from the mouse that will help me more effectively spread the most important message in the world to children and their parents?"

Read on to discover 10 cues from the mouse for your ministry...

CUE #1: BIG DREAMS

Walt Disney has big plans for his vision and did not let setbacks or the appearance of lack to move him from his vision.

- Through prayer and strategic thinking, get a vision for your ministry.
- If Spirit has already given you a vision for your ministry, affirm that your vision and passion are renewed. Be open and receptive to new possibilities.
- Formulate a plan that will bring your vision into reality. Use "The Creative Process" which includes:
 - ◇ Divine Idea
 - ◇ Faith
 - ◇ Imagination
 - ◇ Understanding & Willingness
 - ◇ Judgment
 - ◇ Love
 - ◇ Sabbath
- Decide now that nothing will stop you from bringing the vision into manifestation.

CUE #2: CLEANLINESS

If you drop a piece of paper in Disneyland, an employee picks it up. There are trash cans every 17 to 25 steps - just the right distance to throw away a hot dog wrapper when you have finished eating. No matter how old your building is keep it clean.

- Schedule regular walk-throughs of your buildings - inside and out. Get several people to go through classrooms areas and restrooms with you and make notes of areas that need special attention. Prioritize that list and knock it out one item at a time.
- Train people by example to never walk by a piece of paper lying on the ground.
- Organize a work day to do spring cleaning at the church.
- Keep your areas neat and clean with things in their proper place.

CUE #3: CREATIVITY

At Disney teams of creative people come together to dream up new rides, events and activities. Don't fall into the pattern of doing the same old program. Constantly make improvements and creativity to help the children stay engaged.

- Identify creative people in your church who could form a creative team of six to eight members.
- Set a time to meet with these people on a regular basis to have creative think time.

- Consider any programs or parts of your ministry that have outlived their usefulness and to be replaced with something more creative.
- Let your team's creativity flow, and list their creative ideas. Then choose the priority items to do.

CUE #4: SEEING WITH KID'S EYES

Disneyland is decorated with bright colors and kid friendly environments. Make your Youth Ministry areas inviting to the kids.

- Identify children's ministry rooms, hallways, and areas that aren't decorated in kid-friendly ways.
- Pick out kid-friendly colors to decorate with by asking children, looking on leading kids' Web sites such as www.nick.com and www.disney.com, and visiting local kid-friendly places such as toy stores, amusement parks, and restaurants.

CUE #5: FIRST CLASS SERVICE

Disney has first class service and their mission is to serve. Make sure your church has a wonderful greeting program so visitors feel welcomed and wanted. What first impression does your church make? Is your room easy to find? Is there follow up to visitors? Do you have information that you can hand out about your programs?

- Formulate an effective system to give guests a first-class touch.
- Enlist greeter to give guests special attention. Choose friendly, caring people who can make guests feel at ease. Station these people at key entrances.
- Make sure you have clear signage for each room and area of the building.
- Train your team to personally walk guests to rooms rather than pointing the way.

CUE #6: FUN

Create an environment where both children and parents have FUN. Adults don't always have a positive memory of their youth ministry programs so show them that learning is fun. When your program is meeting the needs of children in a fun and relevant way, kids will wake their parents on Sunday morning ready to go.

- Plan children's time at church to include lots of fun, interactive learning.
- Use methods relevant to today's kid culture to relay your message.
- Do a survey of the children and families in your church to ask them how you can make church more exciting experience for them.

CUE #7: VISIBLE MISSION

I noticed that the mouse's mission statement was clearly stated in a prominent place for all to see. It reminded me of how important it is to let people know why we exist as a ministry. A mission statement unites your team, gives you a grid to run all programs and ministry decisions through, and provides your team with direction. (Disney Mission Statement: "May Walt Disney World bring joy and inspiration and new knowledge to all who come to this happy place...a magic Kingdom where the young at heart of all ages can laugh and play and learn together.")

- Gather key leaders from your ministry team and develop a mission statement. Make it short, easy to remember and precise.
- Post your mission statement for all to see, and ask your ministry team to memorize it.
- Go over your mission statement with your team often.

CUE #8: THE EYE GATE

We live in an extremely visual generation. Throughout the park, the mouse used visual means to capture people's attention. In fact, one of Mickey's 10 Commandments is "Communicate with visual literacy."

- Find out what Spiritual videos appeal to children and have them playing when children enter your area.
- Each week plan to use some type of visual communication in your lessons and services, such as video clips, object lessons, and Powerpoint presentations.
- Gather a team of computer-savvy people in your church and create a Web-site to connect with children and families.

CUE #9: TEAMWORK

Disney says, "You can dream, create, design, and build the most wonderful place in the world...but it requires people to make the dream reality." Realizing their people are their most valuable asset, Disney goes to great lengths to train, equip, and care for them. Extensive training and interviews take place before placing people on the team. Each person is brought up to speed on the philosophy and mission. The success of your ministry depends on the strength of the team you build.

- Work hard to create a culture of family and fun within your team.
- Take time to share the philosophy and mission of your ministry with new team members before placing them in service.
- Give your new team members a spiritual gift and personality test so you can help them find their unique places of service. This leads to people enjoying their place of service and gives them "stickability."
- Provide regular training for your team to help them grow in their leadership and ministry skills.
- Keep communication lines open with your team. Give team members opportunities to give you feedback and share their ideas.
- Regularly honor, encourage, and award team members.

CUE #10: NEW IDEAS

The mouse has kept signature ideas that work and is constantly adding new ones.

- When was the last time you got a fresh idea and implemented it?
- Do you purposely take time to look for fresh ideas?
- Are you willing to look for fresh ideas outside your comfort zone?
- Do you think you have arrived or do you have an attitude of learning and growing?