

The purpose of this manual is to help you build a strong team- centered youth group.





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REVIEW:

Book One: *A Place To Belong*

By Steve Case and Hubert Cisneros

This youth ministry resource builds on the foundation of *A Place to Belong*. Following is a page for each session of the six chapters of that volume. For more details and further explanations, obtain a copy of *A Place to Belong* from AdventSource.



A Place to Belong: Best Friends Forever

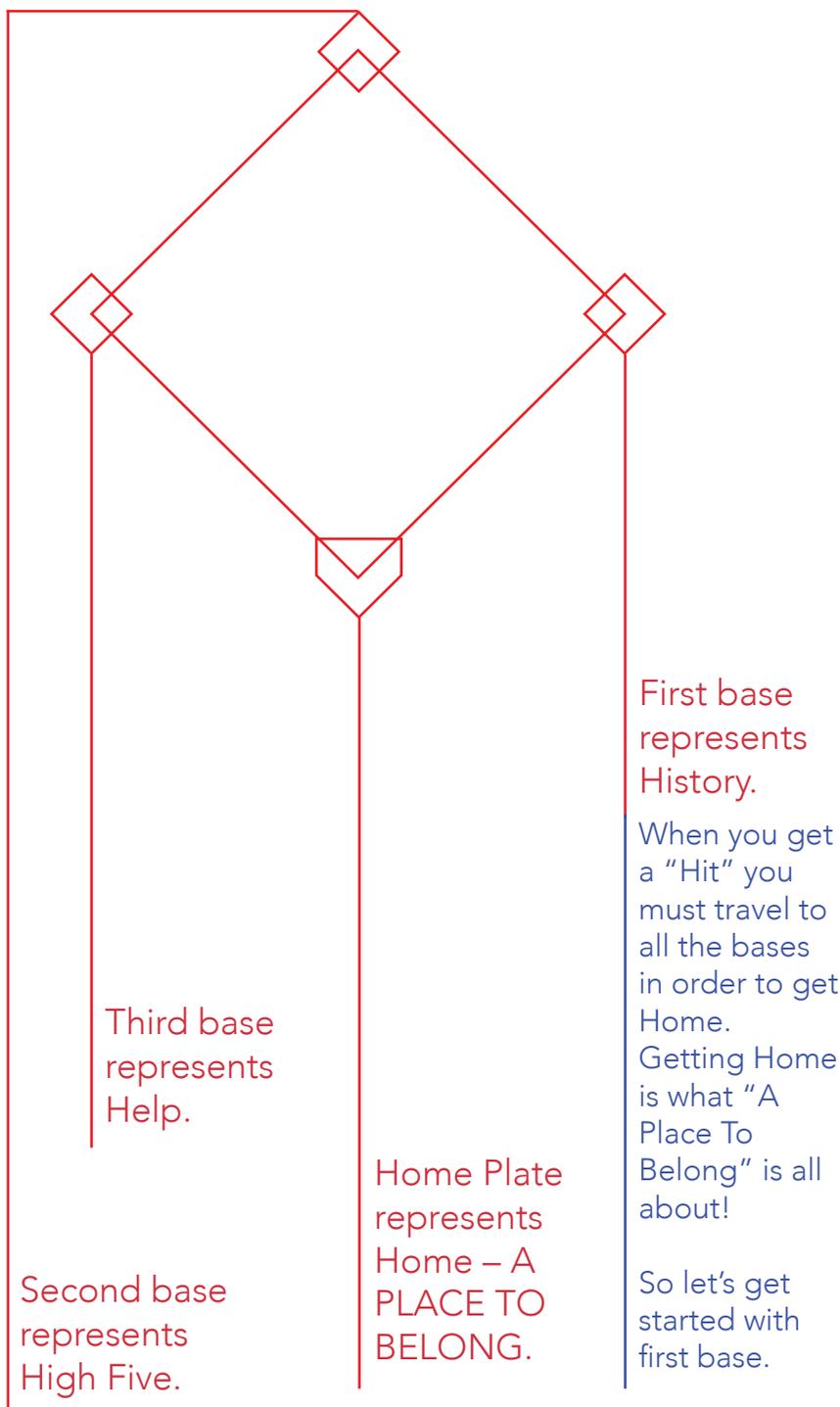
Relationships develop by progressing through different stages. Most stop at the first or second stage. A youth ministry can be proactive in moving people through more stages and towards greater intimacy, trust and fellowship. A baseball diamond can illustrate four stages for developing relationships.

1st Base—History: sharing basic information about one's self (name, school, family, interests, even opinions and feelings).

2nd Base—High 5: giving affirmation based on the history that was shared. Practice communicating affirmation. Ask for more information so you can add more affirmation.

3rd Base—Help: this posture of vulnerability is possible only after plenty of affirmation has developed strong trust (or unless a person is desperate). It's risky, but it bonds people together and opens the door for mutual help.

Home Plate—Home: sometimes referred to as "fellowship" but it's only attained after going around the bases, building trust through sharing history, being affirmed about many things, risking with one another by asking for help. The result of intimacy can't be purchased or short-changed. It provides something all humans crave: A Place to Belong.



A Priceless Gift: What Anyone Can Give. . . But Most Don't

Most people don't listen. As a result, most of us don't feel listened to. One key way to give affirmation (2nd base) is to listen to a person. There are skills people can learn and practice to become better listeners. Perhaps the first step is to get off of one's own agenda and join another person's agenda.

Here are six listening skills to implement as you join another person's agenda. They form the acronym **L.I.S.T.E.N.**

Look—eye contact provides focus.

Interpret—put into your own words what you heard the person say; ask if that's what they were saying.

Say more—ask a creative question about the speaker's topic.

Tell your own feelings—sense and name your feelings as you listen.

Empathize—tentatively ask if what you're feeling is the same as the speaker's feelings.

Non-verbal communication—observe body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and posture.

DON'T DO THESE! Barriers to avoid in order to be a good listener include:

- Unfocused listening—allowing one's self to be distracted or multi-tasking.
- Counter stories—telling your own story that is better than the one you just heard.
- Changing the topic—moving to your agenda rather than staying on the talker's agenda.
- Rebuttals—correcting or giving unsolicited advice instead of listening.
- Put downs—might be funny to some, but it stops sharing because it makes the environment unsafe.

Active Listening



Barriers



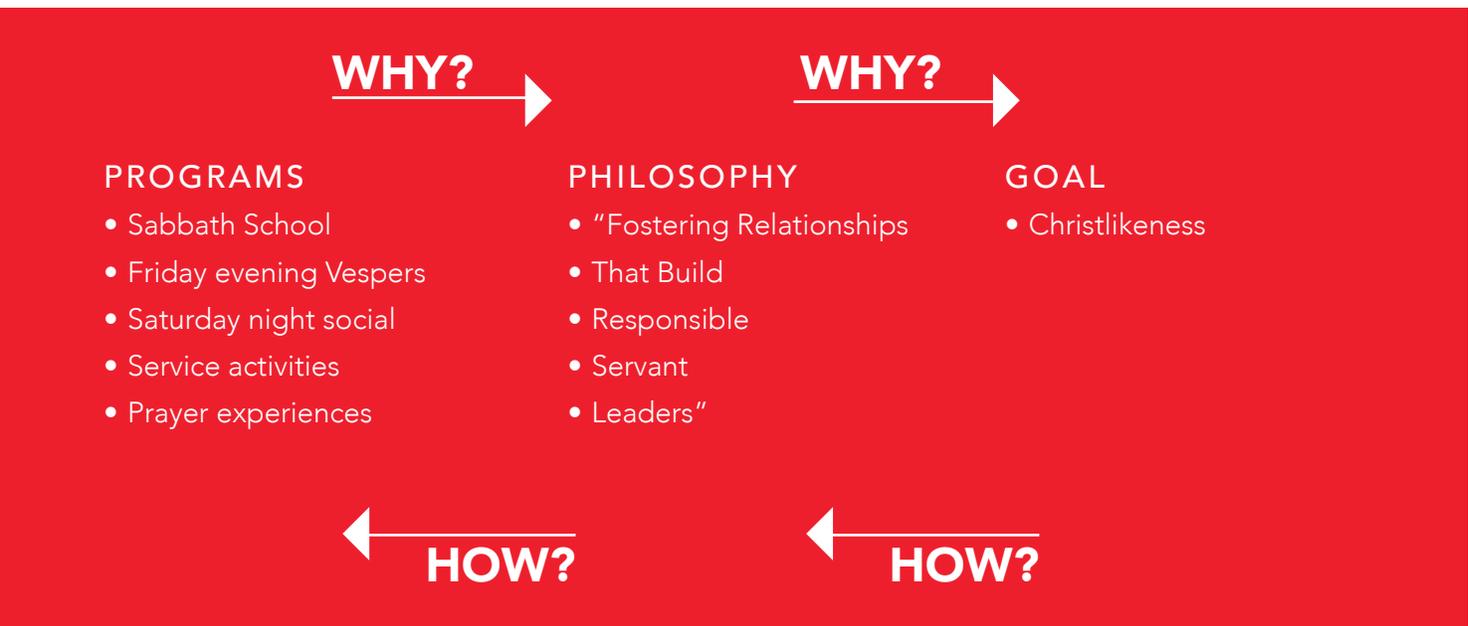
The Bridge from WHY? to HOW?: Programs that Really Matter

It is common for youth leaders who conduct a program to lack a clear purpose for that program. It might be simply because someone asked them to do something or because there was a time slot that needed to be filled or maybe they had an idea they wanted to communicate. Ask the question WHY? regarding a youth ministry program, or the elements that go into a program.

Some youth leaders have a goal in mind, but they might not know how to get to that goal. Ask the question HOW? when it comes to a goal and then shape a program to move people to that goal. A goal could be a five-year goal or a one-year goal or the goal for the quarter or even the goal for one program.

Put your youth ministry programs in a column on the left side of a page. Put your goal(s) on the right side of the page. Sometimes the distance between them might be so long that you need a support in the middle. That is a philosophy—an attitude and process that moves the programs to the goals, and it also puts the goal into action through the programs.

When moving from left to right, ask “WHY?”
When moving from right to left, ask “HOW?”



The Secret of Breathing Life into Youth Group: Non-Neutral Environments

A **Neutral Environment** = no change is needed (comfort zone)

A **Non-Neutral Environment** = change is needed (feeling uncomfortable)

All living organisms seek a neutral environment (homeostasis). But all living organisms also need something to stimulate their neutral environment or they will die!

In general, small children and older people crave neutral environments. When something changes from their routine, they can easily get agitated until things get back to what is predictably “normal.”

In general, young people crave non-neutral environments (NNE's). If things aren't changing, they will create change. Therefore youth ministry operates in an environment in which young people are open to the transformation God desires, but the process often agitates those who are not young people.

ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER WHEN CREATING NNE's

1. Identify what is neutral.
2. Move gradually to make the neutral environment a NNE.
3. NNE's vary by age, individual, groups, settings.
4. Going over the top is too far.
5. In advance, identify potential responses.
6. Need to debrief afterwards.
7. It is risky, but definitely worth the risk.
8. Relationships form the foundation from which to engage in NNE's.

Group Dynamics: What's Really Going on in the Youth Group

Lots of things happen simultaneously when a youth group gathers. One person might be present out of a desire to connect with God. Another might be there to check out the opposite sex. Yet another might be there to get away from one's parents. And another might be there just out of habit. When the youth leader announces, "Let's share something deep that happened to us last year," what dynamics might be happening in addition to "sharing something deep?"

Here are some potential **D.Y.N.A.M.I.C.s** to keep in mind when young people are together:

Data vs. Feelings

—Which is more important to you?

Years of age and Gender

—One's age and gender might (or might not) make a difference!

Norms and Decision-making

—What is expected, even without saying it?
How are decisions determined?

Action vs. Talk

—Are you a do-er or a talker?

Maintenance-type people vs. Task-type people

—Keep the peace or get stuff done?

Influence and Leadership style

—Who makes things happen, and how?

Core Group vs. Individual

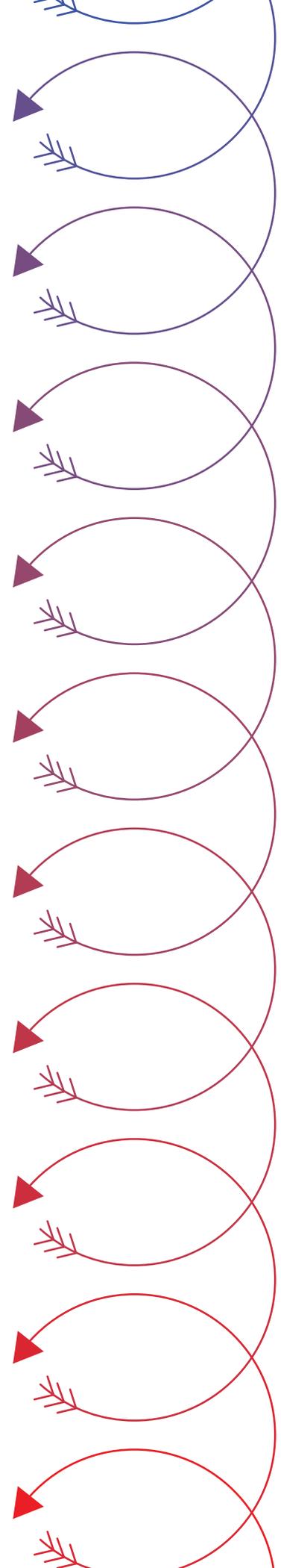
—A youth group is a group, but composed of individuals.

Debriefing following a NNE includes three broad types of questions:

What? (what physically happened?)

So what? (what does this mean, on a deeper level than the physical?)

Now what? (how do we apply this to the rest of life?)



Now We're Talking: Creating Your Own Discussions

Most people appreciate and enjoy a good discussion. It helps us express ourselves while it also sharpens and broadens our understanding. We get shaped by the input and tested by sharing ideas with others.

If you lead a discussion, here are six concepts to use:

1. **Key Questions**—have a few key questions rather than hundreds of them.
2. **Advance**—move the group forward towards a goal.
3. **Time**—give participants time to think before responding.
4. **Clear**—questions must be clear to participants, not just the leader.
5. **Adapt**—be flexible with your plan; discussions are unpredictable.
6. **Trail**—capitalize by following up with valuable elements that emerge.

In order to start a discussion, a leader needs two key elements:

1. A small commitment from the participants to indeed participate.
2. Variety so there's a spread of responses rather than being identical.

You can create your own ways to start a discussion. Here are eight examples of different methods to get things started by aiming for a small commitment and variety in responses.

Voting—in response to a statement, participants vote, such as strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, or strongly disagree.

Continuum—take two opposites and draw a horizontal line between them and ask a question. Participants place themselves somewhere on the line.

Ranking—in response to a statement, participants number in order of preference their response, starting with their first choice, then second. . .

Goal Setting—state a goal, but let it be flexible as the group adjusts it to better fit them for reasons that they state.

Listening/Watching—after listening or watching something (skit, YouTube clip, etc.), participants respond.

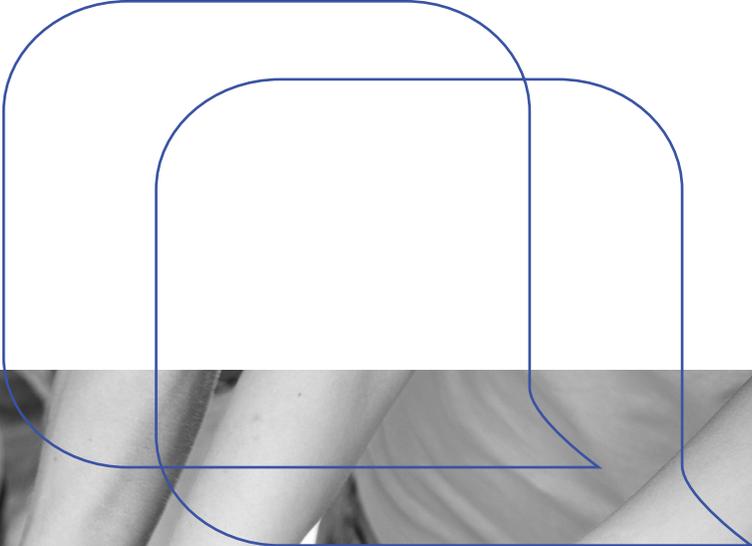
Interview—Q & A with a person or a group, then the rest respond.

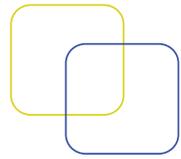
Dilemma—presented with a situation in which there is no easy next step, what do people suggest be done, and why?

Either/Or—based on a question followed by two very different options, individuals choose one or the other, then group with others who chose similarly and then share their reasons before reporting back.



**Want to know
how to build a
great team? It all
begins with you...**





CHAPTER 1

FIRST TEAM MEMBER: Why Be a Leader?



How did you become the youth leader?

What makes a person a great youth leader?

What are the steps that can be taken to become a great youth leader?

Are you willing to improve your leadership skills?

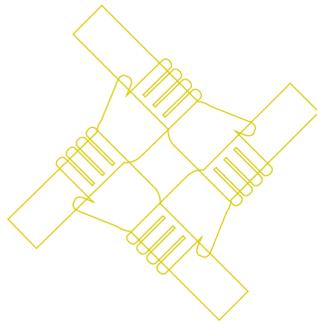
Are you ready to jump in?

LESSON PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to present the qualifications of a great youth leader.

WHY?

Too often this is assumed rather than clearly presented.



As the first member of your team, ask yourself, “Why would someone be a youth leader?”

- “Somebody asked me to do it.”
- “I want to help young people today, just like I was helped when I was young.”
- “God called me to this.”
- “I like kids.”
- “I don’t know.”
- “Nobody else would do it, so that left me.”
- “I had a few ideas, so I thought I’d try them.”

Now get personal. “Why are you a youth leader?”



PERSONAL EXERCISE:

List five reasons why you are a youth leader: (You may want to close your eyes or jot down a few notes, or possibly even walk around to do your reflecting).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

REFLECTION:

How easy or difficult was it for you to come up with a reason(s)?

How many reasons came to mind?

Are these “good” reasons to lead young people?

Sometimes people change their reasons over time or because of experience.

Most youth leaders have more than one reason why they serve as youth leaders.

PERSONAL EXERCISE:

Below are unhealthy, neutral, and healthy reasons people become youth leaders.

Score each reason for yourself based on the following criteria:

- 0 = Not a reason for me
- 1 = Maybe a reason for me
- 2 = Probably a reason for me
- 3 = Definitely a reason for me

Some **unhealthy reasons** people become youth leaders:

___ **A. Mr. Fixit**

I can fix these young people so they become great.

___ **B. Joe Cool**

I haven't grown up myself and I want young people to like me.

___ **C. Superhero**

Young people follow me (and that feeds my ego).

___ **D. Savior Complex**

I see the young people drowning, and I can save them.

___ **E. Mama Morganstern**

I'll straighten out these kids, "Children, sit down and be quiet, RIGHT NOW!"

___ **F. Broken Record**

You can count on me to push my one topic/hobby horse.

___ **G. Papa Parasite**

I feed off the energy of young people.

___ **Add up the total for your scores for A-G**

Some **neutral reasons** people become youth leaders:

___ **H. On the Run**

I don't like the adult church programs, so I go to the youth to have some fun.

___ **I. In a Rut**

I've been the youth leader for ___ years.

___ **J. Guilty Gilbert**

They told me that if I didn't do this, there would be no youth ministry.

___ **K. Flo Flash-in-the-Pan**

I had one great idea, but now what?

___ **L. Melvin or Margaret Milquetoast**

I couldn't say "No" when asked to lead the youth.

___ **M. Numero Uno**

I go where the most important ministry is, and that's young people.

___ **N. Wandering Wally**

I wanted to help somewhere; I happened to end up here.

___ **Add up the total for your scores for H-N**

Some **positive reasons** people become youth leaders:

___ **O. Involved Ingrid**

I want to be sure my kids get what they need.

___ **P. Harvey Heart**

I love young people.

___ **Q. Positive Payback Pam**

I want to give back what others gave me.

___ **R. Called Carl**

I feel called by God, or have some type of inner urge.

___ **S. Niche Nicole**

The talents/gifts God has given me match youth ministry.

___ **T. Fill 'er Up Phil**

I want the young people to have what I never had.

___ **U. Servant Sally**

I want to help.

___ **Add up the total for your scores for O-U**

EVALUATION

What were your totals for each of the three sections?

Negative Reasons _____
Neutral Reasons _____
Positive Reasons _____

Did you score higher with negative reasons, neutral reasons, or positive reasons?

On which items did you score a three?

Which ones did you score a two?

How about a one?

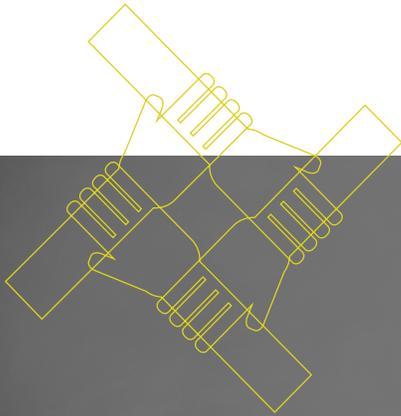
Did you put a zero for any items?

TIME FOR SOME FEEDBACK

GROUP EXERCISE:

Get into groups of three. Have each person take one minute to share their favorite answers in each category (negative, neutral, and positive reasons) for being a youth leader.

Follow with two minutes of feedback.



GREAT EXPECTATIONS

What do people look for in a leader?

Extensive research* with tens of thousands of individuals over many decades and cultures reveal that there are four qualities that people expect from their leaders.

For people to follow someone willingly, the majority of constituents believe the leader must be:

- #1 HONEST
- #2 FORWARD-LOOKING
- #3 INSPIRING
- #4 COMPETENT

**The Leadership Challenge, by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, pages 28-29*

ZEROING IN

Let us take a closer look at each expectation.



HONEST:

INTEGRITY, TRUST

People expect you to tell the complete truth. This is the “single most important factor in the leader-constituent relationship.”

A study of the life of Jacob reveals that he struggled with this point early in his life by telling “half-truths.” By the end of his life we read how he overcame that inclination. Determine to be a person who always tells the truth.

People need to know that you are a person of integrity. People expect you to be honest to the group and about the group. That includes the condition of the group. The group cannot improve unless they have a true assessment of its condition.

An important way to know the true condition of the group is from the group itself. The leader must receive honest feedback from the group in order to have an accurate picture.

A good question to ask yourself is, “Do people speak the truth when you ask them? Is it safe to speak and hear the truth?”

People expect you to build an atmosphere of trust. The way you build an atmosphere of trust is by telling the truth. And it is in an atmosphere of trust that people produce their best work.

Another way to know the true condition of the group is by what is or is not happening.

For example: Do group members bring their friends to the group? Is the group involved in serving others? Are group members involved?

FORWARD-LOOKING:

VISION

People need to know where the group is going. You must have a clear vision for the future of the group and be able to articulate it.

That is why we have recommended the overall goal of, “Christlikeness,” and the philosophy of, “Fostering Relationships That Build Responsible Servant Leaders,” to help give you direction.

This quality is so important that we dedicated the next chapter to it: “TEAM PURPOSE: What Winning Looks Like.”



INSPIRING:

ENTHUSIASM, MOTIVATION

The youth group needs to be inspired.

They need to want to go forward toward that clear vision of the future. There are two ways you can bring inspiration into the group:

- #1 ENTHUSIASM
- #2 MOTIVATION

ENTHUSIASM

The group is looking to you to create a fire of enthusiasm. How do you create enthusiasm?

The word “enthusiasm” comes from the words: “en” “theos” – in God. The way you create inspiration is by emphasizing that “God” is “in” what you are doing. You are tapping into God. This is different than positive/happy talk.

If you can show people how God is in what you are doing – people will follow you willingly.

You must be able to articulate that vision in such a way that it will motivate the group.

God will use your own personality and style as you communicate to the group.

Remember the text, “and they shall call his name Emmanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.”
Matthew 1:23

MOTIVATION

Q: How do you motivate people?

A: You motivate people by making promises.

When you make a promise, you are creating an atmosphere of hope. Hope builds an expectation of joy. The group must have something to look forward to that brings them enjoyment.

WHY?

If you don't make any promises, the youth group will be boring and lifeless. So be sure to make promises. The Bible says we are saved by hope. (Romans 8:24)

TO MAKE A PROMISE OR TO NOT MAKE A PROMISE

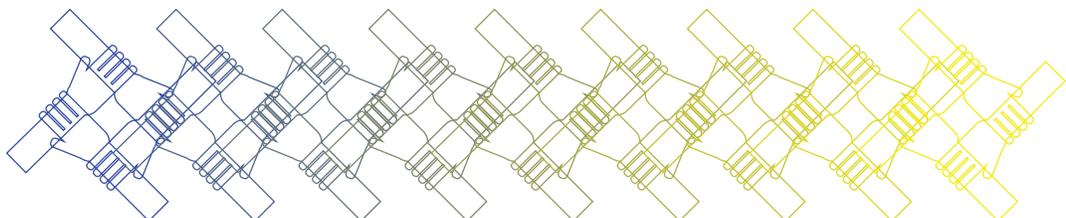
But when you make a promise, you must follow through and keep your promise. Don't make a promise if you can't keep it. Don't make a promise for immediate gratification to get the group to like you.

However, do not allow the possibility of breaking a promise keep you from making a promise.

But if, for some reason, you break a promise do the following...

WHEN YOU BREAK A PROMISE

- If you break a promise, be sure to say, “I am sorry.” You're not perfect.
- Ask the group to forgive you.
- Tell them you will try to do better in the future. They will respect you for it. They will see that you are striving to do your best.



PERSONAL EXERCISE:

Write down three promises you wish you could make to your youth group. Here are a few examples of promises you could make to your youth group:

1. "We are going on a mission trip to Trinidad, Mexico. While there we will run a Vacation Bible School at the church, help with building homes at the Oasis Orphanage, and take one day to shop in the tourist town of San Felipe."

2. "We are going to put on a full Easter drama production at our church and invite the neighborhood."

3. "We are going to visit the youth group in a neighboring church and put on the church service for their congregation. Later they are coming to our church and will do the same. We will have outreach activities in the afternoon and have a party that night."

4. "We are going ice skating Saturday night."

5. "We are going to sing at the nursing home next Sabbath afternoon and take greeting cards we make today in class."

YOUR TURN: Write three promises you'd like to make to your youth group.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

MAKE PROMISES TOGETHER

In Chapter Two, "TEAM PURPOSE: What Winning Looks Like," you will learn how to make promises together. The chapter is dedicated to helping the entire group develop inspiring activities.