LAUNCH - WELL

7 BEST PRACTICES
FOR TAKING OFF IN
YOUTH MINISTRY

BY WARREN MAINARD



LAUNCH WELL: 7 BEST PRACTICES FOR TAKING OFF IN YOUTH MINISTRY

COPYRIGHT © 2020 BY IMPACT PLAYERS AND WARREN MAINARD

THIS EBOOK IS FOR THE USE OF ANYONE ANYWHERE AT NO COST AND WITH ALMOST NO RESTRICTIONS WHATSOEVER. YOU MAY COPY IT, GIVE IT AWAY, OR RE-USE IT. THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN AS A FREE RESOURCES FOR THOSE WHO ARE INVOLVED IN MINISTRY.

COVER ARTWORK AND EBOOK LAYOUT BY KATIE COLE

IMPACT PLAYERS

Launch Well

7 Best Practices for Taking off in Youth Ministry

BY WARREN MAINARD

Foreword

In 2005, I was hired as the full-time Youth Pastor at a local church in Spokane, WA. I was fresh out of college, newly married, and completely unprepared. I came in knowing all of the "techniques" of running an effective youth ministry, i.e. how to run fun games, deliver an exciting message, and get kids to come to a big event. I had bought into the lie that THAT was what youth ministry was and if you could perfect the program, you'd become a big deal. I was wrong. On the outside, everything looked great and certainly got the approval of our Senior Pastor because kids were coming in the door, but it lacked any sort of depth and spiritual health. And worst of all, I wasn't growing in my faith at all. The spiritual disciplines of prayer and reading the Scriptures were non-existent in my life, my marriage was falling apart, and I was hanging on by a thread. Had it not been for God's divine intervention, I would not have made it as a youth pastor, nor would I still be involved in youth ministry to this day.

This is all too common in youth ministry and I would venture to say that a majority of youth pastors today can identify with my story. This is why Launch Well is such a significant resource and Warren Mainard a significant voice. Youth Ministries will only go as far as the spiritual maturity and wisdom of its leader. Warren has over 20 years of youth ministry experience and serves as a guide to those who are just now stepping into full-time ministry. He is driven by a passion to see youth pastors not only survive their role, but thrive for the glory of God. Instead of stumbling around for a few years before calling it quits, youth pastors can launch their ministries with a strong foundation rooted in God's word and equipped with wisdom that will guide their day-to-day life. I have been a firsthand recipient of Warren's wisdom and I wish I had had this book 15 years ago – it would have radically changed the way I approached ministry.

May this book serve you as you serve our King.

JJ Vancil CEO, Generation Alive

Contents

- ABOUT THIS BOOK	6
- PRACTICE ONE: FIND YOUR YODA	7
- PRACTICE TWO: KEEP YOUR YOUTH MINISTRY PG	9
- PRACTICE THREE: BOUNCE HOUSES & BRICK BUILDINGS	12
- PRACTICE FOUR: NO LONE RANGERS	15
- PRACTICE FIVE: BE, KNOW, DO	18
- PRACTICE SIX: WHAT'S THE PLAN?	2 1
- PRACTICE SEVEN: YOUTH GROUP OR YOUTH'S MINISTRY	2 4
— ABOUT THE AUTHOR	2 7
- ENDORSEMENTS	2 8

3, 2, 1...Blast Off!

In August 2003, the jubilation of launching into outer space was quickly replaced by the devastation of a tragic failure to launch. Brazil, it seemed, was perfectly primed to etch its name on the elite list of space-faring nations. Situated in an ideal location on the earth's equator, a launch from the Brazilian town of Alcantara comes with primed extra lifting power bestowed by the earth's spin. In spite of its natural advantages, this Brazilian rocket would never even leave the atmosphere, leaving only carnage, confusion and chaos.

The investigations that followed uncovered a litany of hazards, problems and ill-fated shortcuts which doomed the rocket before it would even lift off. In summary, the rocket failed to launch for four reasons:

- 1. Unchecked Volatile Gases: The rocket was leaking explosive gas and nobody seemed to pay attention to the inherent dangers it caused.
- 2. Overloaded Staff: The staff was stretched thin and overworked and as a result, many of the proactive safety steps were ignored as each staff person rushed to meet deadlines.
- 3. Lack of Formal Training In Risk Management: Many of the staff were grossly unqualified to identify potential catastrophic dangers due to a lack of formal training.
- 4. Woefully Small Budget: In the year of their launch, Brazil's space budget was less than \$20 million dollars. By comparison, India's space budget that same year was over \$300 million dollars.

In over 25 years of serving in Youth Ministry, I have seen countless youth leaders flame out in their first few years of pursuing their calling. Many had incredible talent, charismatic personalities, deep passion and contagious enthusiasm, but somehow failed to launch well. Like the Brazilian space program, many are no longer in youth ministry today. The reasons for why these gifted youth leaders are no longer serving are wide and varied, but could be summed up in terms similar to the Brazilian space program:

- 1. Unchecked Volatile Habits: Talent and gifting can cover up a lot of character flaws and unhealthy habit for a while, but eventually will catch up with you.
- 2. Overloaded Staff: Most ministries are understaffed and over programmed. Without limiting your priorities and expanding your leadership team, you will crash and burn.
- 3. Lack of Formal Training in Risk Management: Many new youth leaders enter into youth ministry, completely unaware of how to protect themselves and their ministry from risk... and it costs them.
- 4. Woefully Small Budget: Lack of budget, lack of resources, lack of volunteers, lack of support... it can be tough doing youth ministry on a shoestring budget when you don't even have a shoestring to start with.

In this brief eBook, I will share with you 7 best practices that will help you launch well in Youth Ministry. This is likely not the first or last book you will ever read on Youth Ministry, but if you can apply and implement these simple practices into your Youth Ministry you will see incredible progress in your students and youth ministry.

Don't do this book alone. It's short and free, by design, so that you can share with your Pastor, volunteers, fellow youth leaders, and spouse. Read it together, and then think through how to implement these practices in your youth ministry. Want more guidance or clarity on a particular practice? How about this, email me at warrenmainard@gmail.com and I will gladly take some time to talk about your youth ministry with you. It would be my honor!

Magnify Christ, Multiply His Kingdom, Warren Mainard



PRACTICE ONE

Find Your Yoda

Mentorship



- PRACTICE ONE: FIND YOUR YODA

You are young, energetic and the students love you. You have an endless flow of ideas and you are ready to take this next generation for Christ. When I started in youth ministry at the age of 19 years old nearly 25 years ago, I knew that I was going to change the world, one youth at a time. The last

thing I needed was a crusty old fart telling me what wouldn't work and why I needed to slow down and not get ahead of myself.

With endless enthusiasm and zeal, I put together dynamic Bible studies, unforgettable games, hilarious skits and fantastic events. I even did lock-ins (did I mention I was 19?). Our youth ministry grew, kids caught fire for the Lord and every student in our youth ministry either professed faith in Christ or rededicated their lives to the Lord.

Yet, there was a lot that I didn't know. The more the ministry grew, the more plates started spinning and it was not long before my inexperience began to show itself in many different arenas of my life.

Who can you go to and ask for sage advice?

44

66

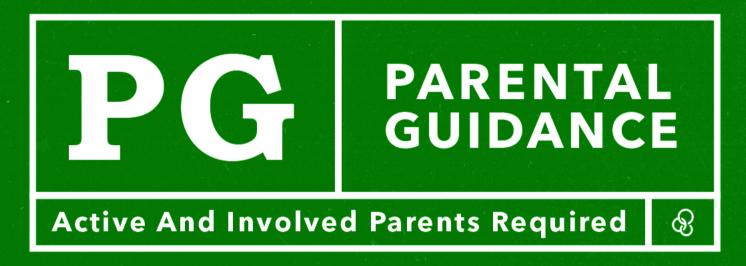
Thankfully, I was blessed to have two mentors who played the role of Yoda to my Luke. OK, they weren't old and green... they were actually more like the cool (Ewan McGregor) Obi-Wan Kenobi, but I would rather not think of myself as Anakin in this scenario! Recognizing that I needed to pair my energy with a mentor's wisdom, I turned to my former Youth Pastor and my lead Pastor for direction. Both were glad to help, but neither was going to impose their wisdom on me. I needed to ask them for wisdom and I needed to trust their feedback on my life and ministry, even when it wasn't easy to hear. As I met with my mentors, I learned to ask a few key questions -

- What am I doing well? (It's always nice to hear some positives before getting into improvement areas!)
- Where am I struggling to make progress?
- What do I need to learn? (This often meant asking about specific books I needed to read or leaders I needed to meet).
- What am I missing?

Have you found your Yoda? Who is mentoring you? Who can you go to and ask for sage advice? Who will tell you when your ministry models are flawed and your priorities are out of alignment? If you want to impact youth deeply for the long haul, you will not make it without a guide who has gone where you want to go. Don't wait for someone to offer to be your mentor, go out and find someone with some scars and some stories that will walk with you in your journey. Thankful you will be.

THE FOLLOWING **CHAPTER** HAS BEEN APPROVED FOR **ALL AUDIENCES**

BY SEATTLE AREA YOUTH FOR CHRIST



PRACTICE TWO

Keep Your Youth Ministry PG

Parental Guidance & Involvement is Essential



- PRACTICE TWO: KEEP YOUR YOUTH MINISTRY PG

"I'm just not sure that Monsters, Inc. is appropriate for my son."

When you get into youth ministry, you probably weren't thinking about how you would respond to over-protective parents who are questioning whether or not the youth group should be watching a Rated G movie. It is easy in those moments to see parents as an obstacle to what you are trying to accomplish in the lives of your students. They don't get you and your methods and they don't always seem to understand why student ministry is so important for their child. Perhaps you have had parents tell you that they are trying to teach their kids to honor their commitments, and that is why they will be doing something else on Sunday mornings or Wednesday nights. Or, maybe a parent has grounded their kids from youth group. They don't understand how video games are a tool for relationship, how messy games build camaraderie or how retreats can provide the necessary break from daily pressures to be able to hear God's voice.

While parents can be a hassle at times, they are absolutely necessary for the health of your students and your ministry. Parents are not a problem to be avoided, they are a key part of your ministry to

be invested in. Every healthy youth ministry will have an active involvement from parents of students. Here are four simple steps for involving parents in your student ministry:

Don't Communicate... Over-Communicate

Never assume that students are filling their parents in on all of the details and dates within the ministry. Use every means possible - text, email, letter, Facebook group, announcements, bulletin, etc. to make sure that parents are fully aware of every detail needed within the youth ministry. Nothing will get parents more frustrated with their teens youth leader than lack of communication.

your ministry.

Invite and Include

Student ministry has often been a drop-off ministry. Invite parents to volunteer in your weekly ministry and scheduled trips. Designate at least 2-3 youth nights per year for parents to come, participate, hear the vision and learn about upcoming events in the youth ministry. Consider inviting parents out to lunch or for a cup of coffee just to hear their struggles and pray for them. You will learn that parents often have unique insights that will inform your preaching and teaching to their teens.

44

see parents as an obstacle to

It's easy to get

frustrated and



2 Equip and Encourage

Offer books and other resources to parents who want to grow in a particular area. Ask a parent of an active Junior or Senior to share a testimony of how their student has benefited from involvement in the student ministry. Send notes to parents reminding them of how important and influential they are in the lives of their teens and how you are praying for them.

Ask for Help

As you build relationships with the parents, you will find that they are your greatest resource for help. Don't position yourself as an all-knowing, all-sufficient expert, but rather, admit that you are trying to figure this out with them. Ask them to partner with you and to bring their experiences to the table as a resource. Seek their input when planning the youth calendar or the next teaching series.

Parents can be a mixed bag... but let's be honest, so can we. The stronger the relationship, the greater the trust, the deeper the grace for one another will be.



PRACTICE THREE

Bounce Houses & Brick Buildings

Finding the Balance Between Relevance and Fun & Spiritual Depth and Theology



- PRACTICE THREE: BOUNCE HOUSES & BRICK BUILDINGS

"All you need are rubber chickens."

A few years back, I was getting to know another Youth Pastor in town who was new to his church. Excitedly, he told me about how he had bought a box full of rubber chickens and how they would be his secret weapon for generating excitement, fun and a crowd for his youth ministry. It struck me as an interesting approach to youth ministry, but I appreciated his enthusiasm. A few months later, I was with this same youth pastor and he was a little more somber. He said, "Hey, can I ask you a question... how do come up with things to teach about in youth group?" I asked him what he meant and he replied, "Well, I've already talked about dating, sex, friendship and getting along with your parents. I am not really sure where to go from here." Trying not to sound judgmental or condescending, I humbly encouraged him to consider going through a book of the Bible, studying a series of Bible characters, or teaching on a series of key doctrines. He seemed to appreciate the guidance and began to implement a few of those suggestions.

On another occasion, I was speaking with a brand new Youth Pastor who could not wait to take his small youth group through a rigorous study of the 5 points of Calvinism. I probably should have told him that was probably not the best subject for 7th grade boys, but again, I didn't have the heart to curb his enthusiasm. I couldn't help but wonder if he was preparing his lesson for the kids or for his seminary professor.

We are all wired differently and certainly, we all have different passions, convictions and giftings in ministry. When it comes to finding a balance between fun/relevance and spiritual depth/theology in our Youth Ministries, it would be wise to find a middle ground. There should definitely be a place in your youth ministry for silliness, laughter, lightheartedness and fun. If you can find a way to make your lesson memorable with a funny meme, a reference to the Avengers, or a rubber chicken, by all means go for it! Similarly, students should have plenty of opportunities to wrestle with deep truth, be inspired toward greater obedience, and express their struggles in an authentic community.

44

Find the middle ground between fun & relevance and spiritual depth & theology.

66

As you strive to find the right balance, consider the following suggestions:

Alternate Sermon/Lesson Series Between Topical and Exegetical

For every "Love, Sex & Dating" series you offer, consider doing a series through a portion of scripture. A few years ago, we did a series through Psalm 80-89 entitled - "Remember the 80's." Each week, we had different games, activities and challenges based on pop culture from the 1980's, all the while challenging students to go deeper in relationship with God through the Bible study.

Provide Different Opportunities for Middle School and High School

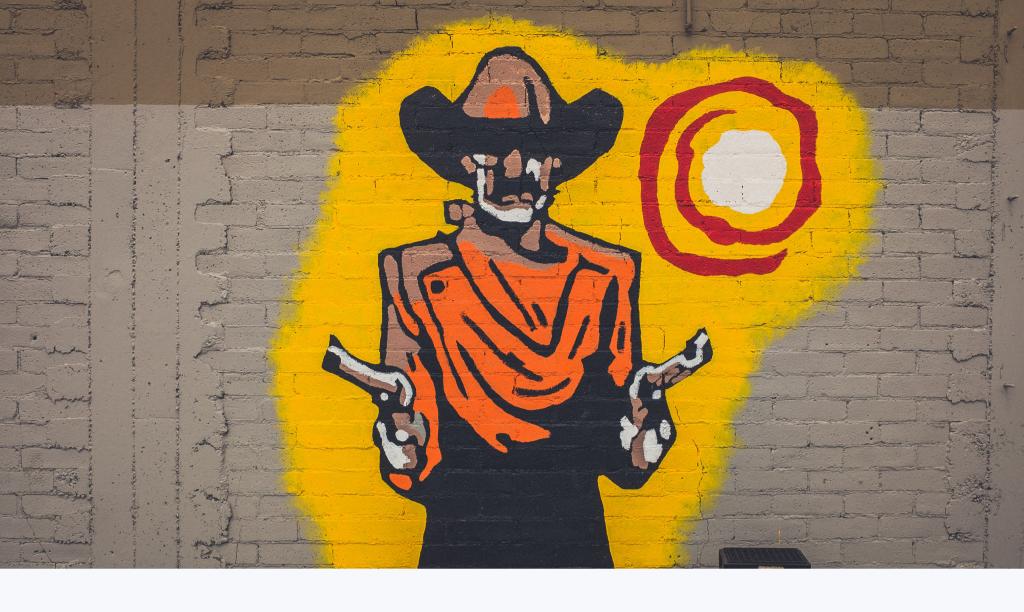
Even if you do not have separate ministries, it's still a good idea to offer some events and opportunities that are more specific to their level of maturity. For instance, you may want to do a Mario Kart night for Middle School boys, and a discover your SHAPE leadership retreat for your Junior and Seniors. Unique opportunities allow you to cater the depth and the fun more to the maturity level of the students in that age group.

3 Ask Your Students and Parents To Weigh In On Your Event and Teaching Calendar

Give your students the freedom to tell you what they really think about your teaching... and the games and activities you do each week. You can't please everyone all the time, but you may discover that your students are more ready to go deeper than you anticipated. Or, you may learn that they need to come up for air and engage in some subjects that are more relatable to their current issues. As you reach out to parents, express to them the importance of both theological and scriptural teaching as well as allowing the students to build relationships through fun and camaraderie. Be sure to listen to them as they express what they are seeing in the lives of their own teens.

Whether you have rubber chickens or Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary in the back of your Subaru, remember that you have been called into the life of young people who are no longer children, yet not fully adults. Embrace the fun and frivolity of working with teens without neglecting the call to disciple them into the maturity and fullness of Christ.





PRACTICE FOUR

No Lone Rangers

Build Your Volunteer Team by Building Value into Service



- PRACTICE FOUR: NO LONE RANGERS

"Who are your drivers?"

I was a brand new youth pastor. Full of energy, enthusiasm, driving my Camaro with long hair and a beautiful girlfriend. At 19 years old, I was ready to take this youth ministry by storm and there is no better way to grow a youth ministry than playing laser tag, right? So, I told our youth group of 3 kids all about it, gave them fliers to invite their friends, looked through the church directory and called every student, parent, and grandparent of students in the church and sold them on bringing their teens to the church on Friday night to play laser tag. Friday night rolled around and when I showed up a few minutes late, there were nearly 20 students waiting to go on their first youth group activity with me as the new youth pastor! The Senior Pastor had a big smile on his face and said, "This is great! Who are your drivers?" Immediately, my euphoria evaporated and was flooded with feelings of terror, panic and humiliation. I had not even once considered how we would get these students to and from the event! Embarrassed, I confessed that I had no idea who my drivers were, and thankfully and graciously, my Pastor came to my rescue and rallied a few adults to cancel their evening plans to join me. This would be the first, but not the last time that I found myself caught with my pants down (metaphorically, of course) because of my "lone ranger" approach to youth ministry.

Over time, I began to gain a new perspective about my role as the Youth Pastor. One key insight was that my job was not to "do it all," but to make sure that it all "gets done." Youth ministry is a team sport and I could not be the Coach, Quarterback, Punter and Waterboy if I wanted to see the ministry grow and thrive. Here are 3 Key Principles for building your Student Ministry Leadership team.

Recruit For Where You Are Going, Not Where You Are

Somewhere along the way, a wiser, older youth ministry leader taught me this truth. Do not recruit the leaders you need for today, recruit the leaders you need for tomorrow. If you have 10 kids in your student ministry, you may only "need" one or two additional adult leaders. However, if you recruit enough leaders for 20 students, you will be amazed at how often the group will grow to that size. Always recruit enough leaders to get you to where you are going.

44

Youth Ministry
is a team sport
- you can't be
the Coach,
Quarterback,
Punter, and
Waterboy and
expect the
ministry to
thrive.

44



Investing In Leaders Is Investing In Students

Early on, I thought I was too busy investing in youth to be able to invest in adult leaders. However, as I began to invest in growing, developing and caring for leaders, I was increasingly impressed with how well my students were being cared for. Over time, instead of lining up after the youth group service to talk to me, I saw students grabbing other leaders to pray and process together. I also found that the leaders I put around me were often much more skilled and aware in my areas of weakness. It became fairly routine for me to have a flashback to my parking lot panic, only to discover that one of my adult leaders had taken care of the situation for me!

Create a Leader Community

Volunteer burnout is very common in Youth Ministry and I have definitely experienced my fair share of youth leaders "tapping out" for a variety of reasons. While turnover is normal and inevitable, what I have learned is that what keeps leaders engaged for the long haul is a sense of belonging in a community. When I began to love my leaders and create a community for them to belong to, I found that they were far more likely to lean in, not step out when life or ministry became challenging. We developed great friendships and supported each far beyond the immediate ministry of working with students. At Youth For Christ, we called this a 3 Story Community - a place where we can Share our struggles and how God is moving in our lives and students, Pray for each other and God's direction and Discover how God would lead us to follow Him more closely in real and practical ways. This process of Share, Pray and Discover cultivates a deep sense of Spirit-filled community.

Cast a vision for potential volunteer leaders to not only "fill a need," but to join a community that cares for one another and serves students together. This simple change of mindset will dramatically increase your leadership team growth and retention. Grow your leaders and the students will follow.



PRACTICE FIVE

Be, Know, Do

Start with the End in Mind



- PRACTICE FIVE: BE, KNOW, DO

"I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free." - Michaelangelo

There is a legend attributed to the iconic Italian artist Michaelangelo that recounts how he came every day to his studio and would stare at a block of marble. For months, all he would do is gaze intently at the block of marble, without ever lifting a chisel or a hammer. During this time, someone stopped in and asked him what he was doing, to which he responded, "working." Finally, he picked up the chisel and the hammer and soon, Michaelangelo's David was completed.

Typically, youth leaders are known much more for their frenetic energy than their deep, intentional thought life. There is always another message to be prepared, event to be planned, student to be counseled, meeting to be run and mess to be cleaned up. Without intentional, concentrated, long-term focus, it is unlikely that your energy will result in a beautiful masterpiece.

When it comes to sculpting students into lifelong disciples of Jesus, it is important to take time to truly think with the end in mind before picking up the tools of the trade and chipping away. Imagine a 12 year-old entering into your ministry. What kind of disciple do you want to see him become by the time he graduates from High School and out of your youth ministry? Several years ago, I took some time to look intently at my student ministry. I asked the question - "What kind of disciples is my student ministry producing?" Not content with the answer to that question, I wrote down the words, Be, Know, Do. I asked the question(s), "If a student enters into my student ministry in middle school and stays with us for 6-7 years, what do I want them to be, what do I want them to know, and what do I want them to do?"

66

What kind of disciple do you want to see graduate from your Youth Ministry?

66

If you were to reflect on that question, how would you answer it? While I encourage you to drill down and compile your own list, here are a few examples that might help you begin:

BE:

- Confident in their Gospel Identity in Christ.
- Demonstrate evidence of salvation through the fruit of the Spirit.
- A person of character and integrity.
- Deeply passionate about an abiding relationship with Christ.



KNOW:

- · How to read, study and lead others with God's Word.
- Share their personal testimony and the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others.
- The meta-narrative of Scripture and the centrality of Christ in God's Word.
- · Their spiritual gifts and how to use them.

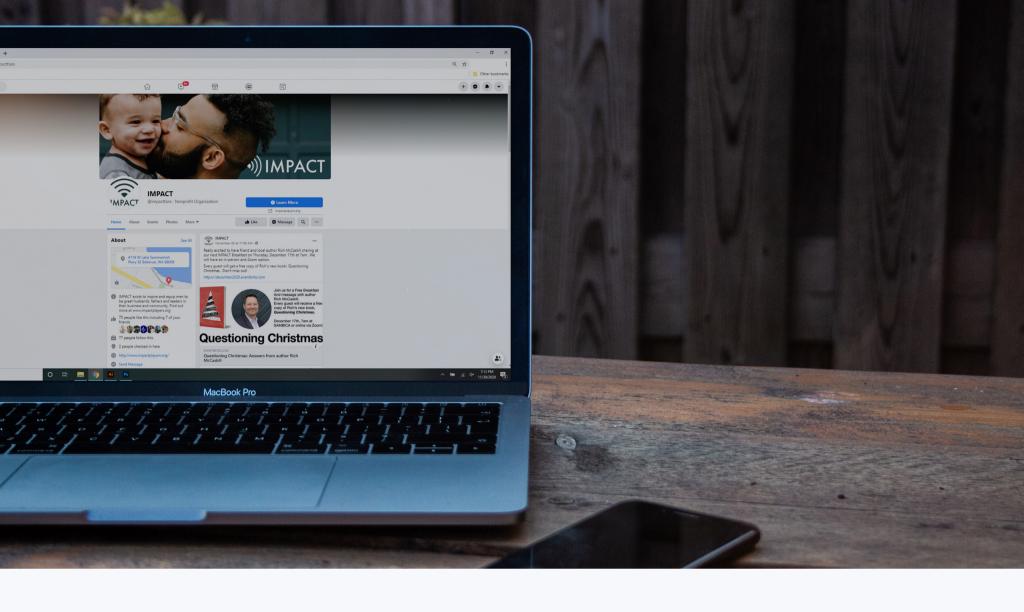
DO:

- Engaged in spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible reading, and listening to God.
- Actively involved with the local church (not only the youth ministry).
- · Giving and serving regularly.
- · Living with Kingdom first priorities.

What would you add or subtract from this list? As you compile this list, I would encourage you to not add more than 8 items in each category. Once you have completed the list, here comes the fun (and painful) part - evaluate your current youth ministry teaching and events calendar to the items on this list. Remove every lesson, meeting, program or event that does not clearly and directly promote and support at least one item on your Be, Know, and Do (BKD) list. Be fierce in this process. You may decide later that you need to re-work an event or lesson, but for now, take it off. Everything left on your events and teaching calendar should have at least one BKD item attached to it.

Now, examine and see what is missing? What changes need to be made in order to ensure that every item on this list is addressed intentionally at least once every 24 months? What new message series, Bible studies, weekend retreats, programs or events need to implemented in order to address these desired outcomes? How do parents, volunteers, leaders, Senior Pastor and outside speakers/guests need to be incorporated more effectively into your student ministry?

As you take time to stare at the marble, to truly take time to think and reflect and examine without pride or prejudice, you will discover that there is a masterpiece waiting to be set free in your students and student ministry. Finally, remember this quote from Michaelangelo too, "Genius is eternal patience." You can't microwave or mass produce disciples. It takes time, it takes patience, it takes an eternal perspective.



PRACTICE SIX

What's the Plan?

Communicate the Plan & Plan the Communication



- PRACTICE SIX: WHAT'S THE PLAN?

"That was an awesome night! I just wish more people had come..."

How often have you heard that? If you have been in youth ministry for a little while, probably more than once. As youth leaders, we put great effort and pride into preparing relevant, life-changing messages, creating intentional opportunities for spiritual growth, planning memorable outreach events and programs and leading spectacular trips, camps and retreats. Youth leaders are creative,

fun, funny, relational, deep, insightful, caring, and compassionate people who have incredible gifting to put together amazing experiences for students on a consistent, regular basis.

Unfortunately, it seems that students forget to sign up, parents don't know what's going on, and your leaders and volunteers have something else come up far too often. Most students never get around to inviting friends to outreach events and things just remain status quo.

One of the keys to effective growth in youth ministry is learning to Communicate the Plan and Plan the Communication. To be honest, as a youth leader, I got tired of students forgetting, parents stopping me a minute before church to ask me to give them all the details for the winter retreat and leaders showing up unprepared for the night's activity. I will let you in on a little secret - there is no Silver Bullet. There is no single thing that will effectively reach and inform every person in your ministry. So, here are some keys to remember when communicating the plan and planning the communication.

Communicate Early

The more important the event or activity, the earlier you need to communicate. Summer Camp should be planned

11 months out. Your Winter Retreat details should be available by the fall and your Spring Break trip by December. Ideally, plan your calendar a year in advance with all of your teaching series, major events and activities, and basic details. Don't forget to consult the church calendar and the school district calendar in advance for potential conflicts.

44

There is no silver bullet when it comes to communicating with students, leaders, and parents in Youth Ministry.

66

Mnow and Include the Details

Parents need to know - When, Where, Who, What, Why and How Much for every event you plan. Do not count on your students to remember the details, bring home the info or even mention it to their parents. Post all of your important details in one static online location that everyone can see and access. The ideal place is on the student ministry page of the church website. Posting to social media is temporary and easily missed, so keep it somewhere easy to find and access. In addition, keep PDFs or links to all of the details on your phone. When stopped to request details, you will have it quickly available.

Understand The Generations

Every generation communicates differently. Therefore, they all need different communication strategies. Parents will be on email and Facebook, students are on Insta and Snap, and some only use text. Consider a service like GroupMe, WhatsApp or Remind as an additional tool.

Remember the Power of a Personal Invitation

When it came to important events like Summer Camp or Winter Retreat, I always carved out time to call every single student and/or parent in my student ministry to personally invite them and answer any questions they might have. As my youth ministries grew from 4 to 40 to over 100+, this became more of a group effort involving staff, adult leaders, and student leaders. Sometimes, we would even have a "calling party" to blitz call every single student connected to our student ministry.

Develop a Communication Plan

Determine how you keep consistent, ongoing communication going to your students, parents, and leaders. For instance:

- Parent Information Packet with full Youth Calendar Every August
- · Monthly Email to Parents
- Weekly Texts to Students and Leaders Monday.
- Social Media Posts (FB, Insta, Twitter and Snap) every Wednesday and Sunday.

Don't Forget the Follow Up

Sometimes the best communication is that which takes place after the event or service is over. Take time to thank those who participated, ask for feedback, and listen/share stories of how God worked through the students.

If you are an enthusiastic, creative, motivated youth leader, you are doing some incredible things! Make sure every student has every opportunity to be a part of your awesome ministry. Communicate the Plan and Plan the Communication!





PRACTICE SEVEN

Youth Group or Youth's Ministry

Empowering Students to Serve, Grow, & Lead



- PRACTICE SEVEN: YOUTH GROUP OR YOUTH'S MINISTRY

Most people who enter into a career in youth ministry, do so because they are really, really good at doing youth ministry. You may be creative, funny, engaging, relational and able to lead, plan and speak at an exceptional level. These gifts have been affirmed and students are drawn to you and want to be discipled by you. While your giftings are a great asset to your ministry effectiveness, they may also be the very thing limiting your long-term impact. Being great at ministry may unintentionally be creating a youth group of fans and consumers instead of a youth's ministry of disciples and leaders. Here is a simple formula to help you understand the impact of empowering students in youth ministry: "A student who can do it half as well will be twice as effective."

While this may not be universally true, it is a helpful reminder that getting students involved in serving and leading will have a much greater impact than simply being the "best in the biz." When

students have the opportunity to serve and lead, it has a cumulative effect in the youth ministry. First, the student gets the benefits of opportunity and experience that can often be formative in their spiritual growth and the ownership of their faith. Moving from a passive to active faith and involvement in the youth ministry increases ownership, stokes enthusiasm, and infuses energy into the life of the student. As other students observe one of their peers engaging, serving, and leading, it will often create a longing for spiritual growth and leadership in other students who in turn bring greater excitement to the youth ministry.

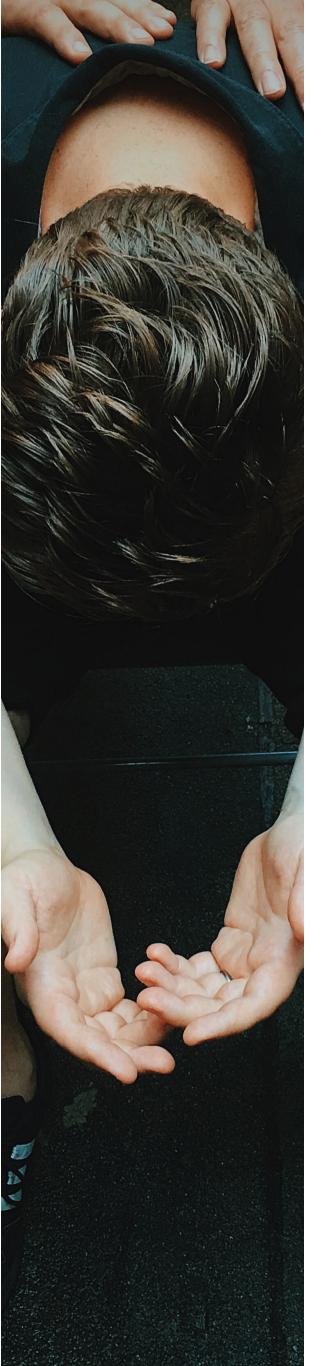
When I was very early in my second youth ministry, we had a group of 9 students. It would have been easy to think that we were far too small to have a student leadership team or for me to delegate leadership responsibilities to students. In spite of our size, I selected 3 students who had the interest and availability to be a part of a leadership team that met on Sunday afternoons. Each week, I would do a lesson on leadership (often times distilled from

66

A student who can do it half as well will be twice as effective.

66

books I was reading), and then we would talk about upcoming youth meetings, events and activities. I would ask for feedback on ideas, give them tasks and responsibilities that fit their desires and gifts, and then let them do it! It wasn't very long until another 2-3 (of our 9) students observed their peers leading with enthusiasm and they asked to join the leadership team as well. As this happened, students began to invite their friends and our little student ministry began to grow. We made lots of mistakes and messes during these years, but God was working in our students, expanding their vision and increasing their capacity to live outside of their comfort zones.



In a different youth ministry, our group had grown to about 80 students and I had a student leadership team of about 18 high school students. I thought it was time for a shake up, so I told the students that they were going to plan the next 4 week youth series on Sunday nights (we were about 6 weeks out). I said, "It's all on you guys to come up with a theme, plan the service, promotion, leadership, and the small group sessions." Then, I gave them 90 minutes and walked out of the room. After about 30 minutes, two of the girls came storming out of the room, furiously approaching me. Students were angry, frustrated and ready to quit. I came back into the room and reminded the students of the importance of humility, love, support and unity and then walked back out again after a 2 minute pep-talk. When the 90-minute youth planning session was done, they presented what they had come up with. Everyone had a role and a responsibility and the students were excited about the next series God had led them to put together. Was it the best series we ever did? No, not by a long shot. There were lots of gaffes, miscues and muffed assignments, but the students owned it, encouraged each other through it and ultimately grew closer to God and one another.

I recently heard Youth Ministry veteran Tim Eldred put it this way, "We need to move from youth groups to youths' ministry." Our job is not to entertain students, but to equip saints. As Paul explains to the church in Ephesus, God has called us as youth pastors into ministry "for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. (Ephesians 4:12-13)". When we equip and empower students to serve and lead in the church, we set them on a path of maturity, Christlikeness, and love for the local church.

If you are just getting started in youth ministry, it is very tempting to try to produce the most professional youth ministry experience. However, it is actually when you allow students to serve and lead, even when you could do it better, that you will see real growth. Pray and ask the Lord to lead you as you invite a select group of students into deeper leadership and responsibility. Be secure enough in yourself and your calling to allow students to step into roles that you enjoy and thrive in. Sometimes, going from great to good is not so bad.

- ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Warren Mainard



At 16 years old, a lost and confused kid who was new to town, showed up at a local church youth ministry. What he found there, changed the trajectory of his life and launched him on a path to passionately give his life to Jesus and impacting young people with the Good News.

For the past 25 years, Warren has served in youth ministry, leading countless students and adults into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Now serving with Seattle Youth For Christ, Warren gets the joy of sharing his experience with other Youth Leaders, while still engaging first hand with students every week.

Warren and his wife Leah have been married for over 23 years and have a daughter in High School and a son in Middle School. He loves meeting new friends for coffee, snowboarding, writing and playing tennis. If you would like to chat about youth ministry or share your story, contact him at warrenmainard@gmail.com.

Launch Well **Endorsements**

"In my humble opinion, leadership is best defined not in what we accomplish, but in how God may use us to help others soar. This book it clearly written to that end. That you might make use of these thoughts and ideas Warren has shared and that God may use them to help you soar in your ministry context. It has been my honor to know and to serve and to be a part of Warren's life as his youth pastor, mentor, and friend for over 30 years. I am overjoyed in how God has worked in and through his life and ministry and I am confident that as you read through this book you will be gently challenged and greatly encouraged."

> **Mark Haug Crossroads Community Church** (30+ Year Ministry Veteran)

"This is a simple, powerful tool that will aid anyone in student ministry! Good advice, recommendations, and wisdom from a seasoned veteran of ministry! Working along side Warren for years, I know his heart and the book comes from a 'sold out to Jesus' guy whom God called and gifted to practice what he preaches. You would be well served to follow his lead."

> Julie B. Fullerton **Cornerstone Baptist Church** (30+ Year Ministry Veteran)

"Longevity in youth ministry is rare, whether it be from burn out, fall out, or tap out, very few youth leaders and pastors stand the test of time. In his book, Launch Well, Warren Mainard gives powerful, applicable, mustknow practices for starting and staying healthy in youth ministry. Launch Well reflects both the wit and wisdom of 25 years experience ministering to students. I was a student in Warren's youth ministry, and being in ministry 6 years now myself, can attest to how effective and necessary these practices are for both the health of students and leaders in youth ministry. This is not a read you want to skip!"

Israel Markle

Church at Sandhurst (Former Student and 5+ year Ministry Veteran)



Thank you!

I hope you enjoyed this free youth ministry resource! It is our desire at Impact Players to invest in raising the waterline for EVERY youth ministry in our community. We love partnership and collaboration. Contact us to find out how we can serve you as we fight for the future of today's youth!

WWW.IMPACTPLAYERS.ORG

