

Maintain the Message, Modify the Method Terry English

We live in a spiritually dark continent. Churches are museums, the young generation seems to be seeking everything but God. At the same time, we know that Christ is always calling his lost sheep, and he knows how to get their attention. And today, in our current environment, there are ways of doing evangelism that are surprisingly effective. Find out how your youth ministry can increase evangelistic fruit, and hear inspiring examples from places much like yours.

I. Review of “Life of Christ Principles”

A. In a world of post-modern relativism, what is the message we must maintain?

B. Great Commission Mandate (Matt 28:18-20)

C. Summary - What is evangelistic fruit

II. Who are we trying to reach? – Know Your Audience

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

1 Corinthians 9: 19-23 NIV

A. Changes in youth culture

1. New definition of adolescence – enter younger, stay longer

2. Experience/emotional vs. information-based decision making
 - Becoming immune to previous impulses to change

3. Shorter attention span – here and now economy

4. Relational

5. Searching for identity/meaning

6. Influences
 - i. Social Media

 - ii. Other Media

 - iii. Family

 - iv. Friends

 - v. School and other institutions

 - vi. Other

7. What are they missing? (felt and unfelt needs)

8. In spite of the “global youth culture”, your teens are still
Czech/Bulgarian/Estonian/Farmers/Small town/City teens

9. Lessons from Invisible Children, Jedi knights and other “campaigns”

B. Responding to these changes

1. Facebook is your friend

2. Attracting is easy – keeping is the challenge
 - i. Community, Self-fulfillment, Fun – 3 keys to creating a long term program

 - ii. Fusion – a look at a program which attracts, keeps and creates a life-changing experience for teens, EVEN moving them into the local church

 - iii. Sports ministries in the former Soviet Union

3. Developing a program which meets teenagers at their different faith stages
 - i. Pre-contact

 - ii. Contact

 - iii. “Just Looking” (Alpha for youth etc.)

 - iv. Discipleship for new believers

- v. Ongoing discipleship and full membership of the local church community
3. Creating talks, activities and bridges that teenagers respond to
- i. Teach as Jesus did – using short stories and illustrations

 - ii. Experience-based decision making tools
 - a. Labrynth

 - b. Game of Life

 - c. Other
3. Moving teens into a multi-generational community

III. Man of Peace Principle

Using key resources in your society/community to reach teens

- 1. Schools – using their obligations to your advantage
 - i. EXIT tour

 - ii. Young Life

 - iii. Other

- 2. City Halls

- 3. Music clubs, tea rooms and other “hubs”

IV Getting your church community into reaching teens, and the teens into your church community

1. Overcoming barriers to the church community reaching out
2. Overcoming barriers to church members reaching out
3. Reaching the parents – how a mono-generational outreach can become a multi-generational outreach

V Common mistakes in reaching out to teens

1. Moralistic therapeutic deism
2. One size does not fit all
3. Program vs. relationship
4. Other

VI Putting it all together

1. Immediate tactical changes
2. Long term strategic changes

Recommended resources

Nancy Pearcey, *Saving Leonardo – A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals and Meaning* (Yates & Yates, 2010).

Chap Clarke, *Hurt 2.0 – Inside the World of Today’s Teenagers* (Baker Academic, 2011)

Drew Dyke *Generation Ex-Christian – Why Young Adults are Leaving the Faith, and How to Bring them Back* (Moody Publishers, 2011)

Walt Mueller, *Youth Culture 101* (Zondervan, 2007)

John W. Santrock – *Adolescence* (McGraw-Hill, 2008)

www.cpyu.org – good resource for tracking US trends in youth culture

<http://www.paulrobertson.ca/in-the-news.html> - a collection of current new stories involving youth

www.youthspecialties.com - good resource for games, programs and talks

<http://www.barna.org> - features research on social trends in and outside the church

www.postsecret.com - current “hot” site for teens

www.invisiblechildren.com – current “hot” site for teens

Youthworker Journal – Salem Publishing