



GREAT COMMISSION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

GCLI “GOING DEEPER” - Fall 2004 **“BIBLICAL VALUES FOR TEEN MINISTRY”**

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In the past 10 years Great Commission churches have increasingly focused on building their ministry to teens. During this time, a variety of teen ministry models have been used in the churches.

As a movement that has been devoted to multiplying Great Commission churches, we have historically been committed to multiplying young leaders for Jesus Christ. In addition, we have had a strong core value of encouraging fathers to be strong in raising godly families in our churches. How are these values to be practically lived out in the local church’s teen ministry? Although there are a variety of ways in which churches might do teen ministry, we believe that it is important that every church practice certain Biblical values in ministering to teens. Those values are the subject of this GCLI paper.

I. General Values—The Great Commission Church

In general, we believe that the Great Commission is our mission (Matt. 28:19,20) and that the local church is God’s primary vehicle for fulfilling that mission (1 Tim. 3:15). Therefore, any teen ministry based in a local church that is winning people to Christ, building them in the faith, and raising up leaders is good.

At the same time we believe that the more we live out Biblical values, the more God-honoring and more fruitful that teen ministry will be.

II. The Value of Strong Parents (Particularly Strong Fathers)

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4

The clear command and emphasis in the Scriptures is that parents—and particularly fathers-- play the primary role in disciplining their children. Therefore, in establishing a teen ministry, we urge that every church consider the following:

- A. In order to build Great Commission teens, it is vital that each parent (particularly the father) be a good model of a Great Commission Christian.

(Remember: A fire is caught, not taught!)

- B. It is a tendency of every man since Adam to be passive in his leadership role within the family. This has been particularly so in America in recent years. Therefore, fathers must be strongly encouraged and equipped to be following Christ and teaching his teen to follow Christ.
- C. We recommend that each parent in the church model and teach their teen three essentials:
 - 1. Have a daily quiet time and journal
 - 2. Serve in the church
 - 3. Pray and reach out in the gospel to lost friends.
- D. Dads and moms should be actively involved (at some level) in the corporate teen ministry of the church. This would include:
 - 1. Serving the youth group (through teaching or physical service)
 - 2. Participating in conferences (Faithwalkers, HSLT, regional teen conferences, and mission trips)
 - 3. Giving guidance and counsel to the pastors as to the corporate teen ministry.
- E. A father (or mother) should avoid abdicating the parental responsibility to disciple his teen to the pastors or a youth worker in the church.
- F. While maintaining his/her parental responsibility, a father/mother should utilize others in the local church (pastors, other members, youth workers) to reinforce the parent's discipleship and to more greatly equip that teen to be more like Christ.
- G. A parent should always recognize (like Hannah in 1 Samuel 1) that God is the owner of each child, that parents are merely stewards, and that God is the One who will transform the heart of each teen.

III. The Value of Strong Youth Workers

“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” Matthew 9:37,38

We know that Jesus Christ wants to multiply workers for His harvest. We also have seen that teens can be especially receptive to the gospel. For this reason, multiplying workers to affect teens for Christ is strategic for the fulfilling of the Great Commission. Therefore, in establishing a teen ministry, we urge that every church consider the following:

- A. It is vital that we encourage and respect mature, obedient youth workers—volunteers and those on staff—who have a heart to reach teens for Christ.

“Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.” 1 Timothy 4:12

“I understand more than the aged because I have observed Your precepts.” Ps. 119:100

God has many times in the past raised up spiritual leaders when they were young. The Twelve chosen by Jesus were very likely young men. And most of those who began the Great Commission Church movement were in their twenties. Our hope and prayer is that God will raise up an army of young leaders today who will carry the gospel message into the future.

- B. Young youth workers can be greatly effective in evangelism and discipleship because they can relate to other teens.
- C. For teens whose parents are in the church, youth workers are to be a support to the parent’s discipleship of his teen, not a substitute to the parent. We all have many teachers. But for a teen who is brought up by Christian parents, that young person is to look to his/her father as the primary discipler:

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other.” Matt. 6:24

Assuming that the teen has a father in the church, here are some practical ways that a youth worker can be a support (rather than a substitute) to that father:

1. The worker will communicate straightforwardly to the fathers and the teens that he is a support not a substitute to the parents.
2. Wherever possible, the worker will develop an open relationship with the fathers before having a deep involvement with their teens.
3. The worker will avoid enabling the passivity of fathers by taking on discipling that should be done by the fathers.
4. The worker will cooperate with the pastors to motivate the fathers to be more active in discipling their teens.
5. The worker will ask the fathers about their discipleship goals for their teens and how he can help the fathers achieve them.

6. The worker will have as his goal that each teen be more confidential with his father and mother than any other person.
7. In general, the worker will use his greater time availability to encourage each teen to be closer, not more distant, from his father and mother.

IV. The Value of Strong Elders

“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.” Ephesians 4:11,12

“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you....” 1 Peter 5:1,2

We believe that God has entrusted to the elders of the church the responsibility to pastor the flock and to advance the kingdom through evangelism. This includes overseeing the ministry to teens in the church and the ministry to unsaved teens in the community. Therefore, in establishing a teen ministry, we urge that every church consider the following:

- A. The elders should make it their first priority in teen ministry to minister to the teens in the church rather than teens outside of the church.

“So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are in the household of the faith.” Galatians 6:10

- B. For teens who have parents in the church, the elders should make it their first priority to equip the men to be strong fathers.
- C. Elders should be working to multiply young godly gospel workers that reach teens in their community.
- D. In general, elders should be overseeing a corporate teen ministry that both builds strong parents, as well as strong young leaders.
- E. Finally, elders should be instructing parents and youth workers to live according to the Biblical values that are outlined in this paper.

V. CONCLUSION

As a movement, we desire churches that are having a powerful effect for the gospel. And we desire that the teens in our churches and our communities be passionate for Jesus Christ. To accomplish this, we need strong elders, strong parents (and strong fathers in particular) and strong young workers, serving Christ together in a way where each respects and supports the other. As this is done, God will continue to raise up Great Commission churches and families that are truly exhibiting “New Testament Christianity in Action Today.”