



REACH!

Produced by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Commission on Youth Discipleship

Church Leadership Tomorrow Begins Today

by Dr. Joel A. Nelson, Administrator – WELS Youth Discipleship

While George Barna can be a lightning rod for those who challenge the value of a non-Lutheran perspective, a comment from his book, *Transforming Your Children into Spiritual Champions* (2003), speaks to the issue of developing leaders in the church: Barna wrote, “Research reveals that adult church leaders usually have serious involvement in church life and training when they are young. The statistics gathered among a national sample of pastors, church staff and lay leaders showed that more than four out of five of those leaders had consistently been involved in the ministry to children for an extended period of years prior to age 13. One implication is that the individuals who will become the church’s leaders two decades from now are probably active in church programs today.”

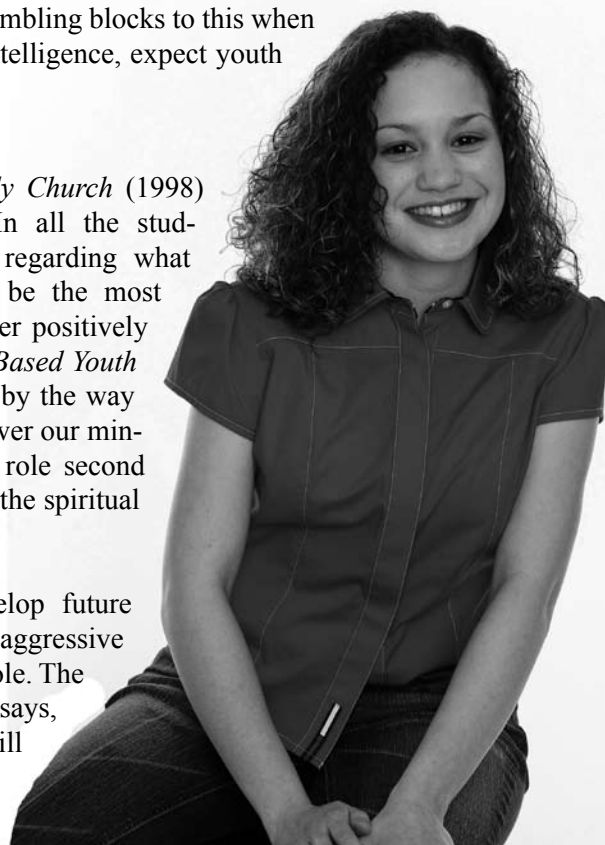
Developing the church’s leaders of tomorrow means getting the church’s youth engaged today. Keeping youth in contact with the Means of Grace is job one. Current church leaders can remove some of the stumbling blocks to this when they partner with parents, educate with intelligence, expect youth to stretch, and model the body of Christ.

Partner with Parents

Ben Freudenburg in *The Family Friendly Church* (1998) stressed how important parents are: “In all the studies we’ve accumulated over the years regarding what influences [youth], parents continue to be the most influential shapers of a person’s life—either positively or negatively.” Mark DeVries, in *Family Based Youth Ministry* (1994), added, “Parents, simply by the way they raise their children, will either empower our ministries or sabotage them. Parents play a role second only to that of the Holy Spirit in building the spiritual foundation of their children.”

If current church leaders want to develop future church leaders they need to become more aggressive in helping parents grasp their God-given role. The church can no longer have the attitude that says, “Parents, bring your children to us, we will

Continued on page 2



IN THIS ISSUE

Over 400 Teens
Take CYD Online
Survey.....3

WELS Youth
Rally Will Offer
“Open Space”.....4

Making Right
Choices.....5

Resource Review.....5

Comments about this

REACH!

and ideas for future issues
can be directed to . . .

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train them in God's ways, and we'll call you if we have a problem." The church must communicate that it's a willing partner, but that parents are primary and must do the heavy lifting. Even non-church leaders seem to be getting this message. Frank Pace (1987), chairman of the National Executive Service Corps and past chairman of the Corporation of Public Broadcasting and General Dynamics Corporation wrote, "I am convinced that much of what the potential leader brings to eventual leadership is learned from his or her family exposure. In the family environment are the values of leadership" (The Study and Practice of Leadership. Liberal Education. March/April, p. 3). When leadership values taught in the home are built upon God's Word taught and modeled in the home, the potential for awesome, spiritual leaders to emerge is huge!

Educate with Intelligence

God's Word is living and active. It is the means through which the Holy Spirit changes hearts and lives. It is the tool God uses to sculpt leaders for his church. But God's Word doesn't do the young, potential leader much good if he/she is not there to hear it. Too many youth and their families are "not there" because poor teaching and preaching have created a stumbling block too big for their Old Adam to crawl over. Current leaders who want to pass on a spiritual, leadership legacy, must recognize that youth today (and many adults) learn differently. We must begin to teach youth in ways that engage all of their God-given learning styles: visual, auditory, kinesthetic. We must make the experience enjoyable and we must connect a real-life, "here and now" application to it. 1 John 1:1 reinforces these concepts when it tells how the disciples would proclaim the Word of life based on what they, "...have heard...have seen,...have looked at...have touched."

Expect Youth to Stretch

So many times, youth ministry is described as a way to reach youth, a "church-goes-to-them" kind of thing. Wouldn't it


be better if youth ministry, through the power of the Holy Spirit, helped youth "to reach Jesus" and reach out to others, getting off themselves personally and stretching them to do more for Christ and others? We must rethink the contain and entertain models of youth ministry past and develop ministry activity that takes youth out of the "it's all about me" attitude they naturally are in at this point in their lives, and plugs them into something bigger, more meaningful – interestingly enough, what they also want to do at this point in their lives. And the bigger stuff must go beyond leaf-raking, ushering, and baby-sitting. We need to let youth in on the decision-making, the real-life ministry, and the visioning for the future. We need to give them experiences that let them know faith matters, the Word can make a difference, and being a "sermon in shoes", side by side with older church members, is one of the most incredible things there is.

Model the Body Of Christ

Perhaps more youth would be seeking involvement and developing their leadership in the church if the older members of the church lived better the body of Christ concept we all say we believe. Congregations need to have a culture that says to youth, "You are so important to us! You really matter! We are not the same without you. We need you to complete us. We function so much better with you attached. We'll overlook your shortcomings and celebrate the daylights out of your strengths!" For teenagers in particular, when the physiological, psychological, and spiritual turmoil is bubbling in them big time, and their self-esteem is on the roller coaster, the church has tremendous potential to help them feel like they really matter. And people of any age stay connected to others who make them feel like they really matter.

Partnering with parents, educating with intelligence, expecting youth to stretch, and modeling the body of Christ can have a tremendous impact on youth. It will also have a tremendous impact on the church, for out of it will emerge people more connected to Christ, more concerned about each other, more involved in ministry, and more willing to assume leadership.





Over 400 Teens Take CYD Online Survey

From December 1, 2006 to March 30, 2007, WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship (CYD) conducted an online survey of WELS confirmed teens. 421 teens, from 32 states and Canada, participated. The survey was done to 1) communicate to WELS teens that their views are important, 2) obtain their insights on various youth ministry topics, 3) seek their reactions to some of the findings of the “Why Young People Leave WELS” national study, and 4) develop discussion starters for use at the 2007 WELS International Youth Rally.

You can find the study results at www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship. Look toward the bottom of the page for this link: “Survey of WELS Teens – Results”. Feel free to use the results however you wish. God-willing, they can serve as a catalyst for meaningful discussion with teens and adults in your ministry settings.

PLEASE NOTE: When you look at the results, you will see that 714 individuals entered the survey, but only 421 responded to all of the survey questions. The best explanations for the disparity are these:

- If you were not a confirmed WELS teen (question 1), you were prevented from taking the rest of the survey. This eliminated 72 respondents right away.
- Because we asked WELS pastors and youth leaders to tell their teens about the survey, we assume many of these adults “took a peak” at the survey. Once these adults realized each question required a response in order to move on and that their responses would skew the teen results, they stopped after the first questions. The survey however, logged their initial entry and added it to the count.

- Some teens were maybe younger than the response categories given and stopped when they realized this.
- Some teens maybe began the 51 item survey, but did not finish it.
- Because the survey was publicized on various WELS and CYD Web sites, others may have attempted the survey, but then found out it did not apply to them.

No matter the explanation for the 714 count, 421 teens did actually complete the entire survey, and that is a meaningful sample.

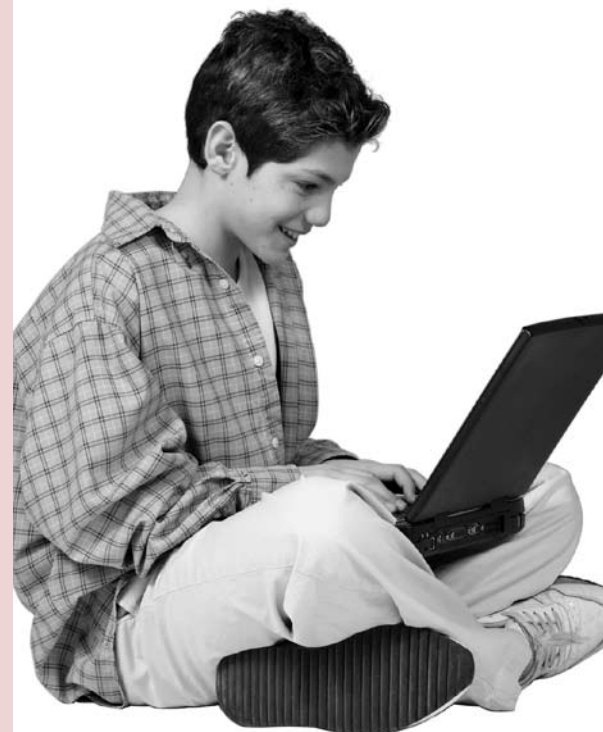
After you and/or others in your church have reviewed the results, we’d love to get your reactions about the survey and your thoughts for how you might use the data in your setting. E-mail them to us at cyd@sab.wels.net. You can

also find all the information about the national study, “Why Young People Leave WELS” at www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship.

One Reaction to the Online Survey

*Dear CYD Folks,
After reviewing the results of the survey, it is great to see such optimism, enthusiasm, and honesty with our teens. This also shows in their generally positive relationships with parents, pastors, and WELS in general, as well as their attitudes toward worship and service. I imagine there were some expecting gloom and doom from this survey, but what a joy to see the opposite. Thanks for the survey and for sharing the results.*

Pastor Duane Rodewald
Abiding Peace Lutheran Church,
Simpsonville, SC



WELS Youth Rally Will Offer “Open Space”

As part of the program for this summer’s International Youth Rally in Dallas, TX, an “Open Space” process will be created. During the two scheduled Open Space times, teens and adults will be able to attend over 30 different topics/presentations in a more informal/open format. Special Open Space “rules” will guide the process. What follows are a few of the topics to be discussed:

Does going to college mean spiritual suicide?

Talk with WELS college students and WELS Campus Ministry representatives about the spiritual oppression and opportunities that exist on a public university campus.

What did you learn from/feel about your Dallas service opportunity?

Join other rally participants to debrief and reflect on the service activities done in the Dallas area as part of this rally.

What kind of worship do you prefer?

The results from the 2007 Survey of WELS Teens found 72% of the 421 respondents preferring public/group worship that was described in these two ways: a) creative worship using the hymnal along with a variety of other resources, led often by an organ but also regularly involving other instruments-51%, and b) contemporary worship, informal, with nothing from the hymnal, with praise choruses and a praise band of various instruments-21%. Only 12% preferred historic worship using only the orders of service and hymns from the hymnal, led by an organ. 16% were unsure. Come and share your reactions to this data and your opinions on this important topic.

Are MySpace and similar Web “communities” appropriate for Christian youth?

Weigh in on one of the most debated questions in WELS-Web-world today.

What can teens really do in their churches?

One of the findings from the national study, “Why Young People Leave WELS” was that youth would like to be given more meaningful roles in their congregations. What’s your take on this and what kinds of roles/activities for youth would you suggest congregations offer?

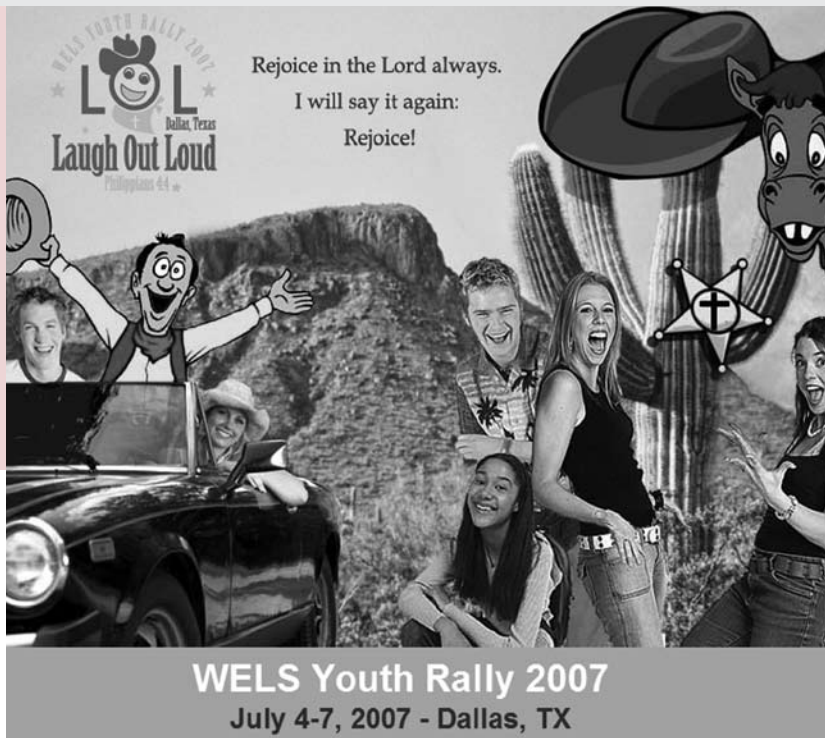
How can we help those struggling with addictions?

Almost everyone today has contact with people who are struggling with an addiction: cutting, huffing, drinking, smoking, anorexia, bulimia, etc. Join this discussion and share loving ways to respond and reach out.

Why don’t we practice what we preach?

The results from the 2007 Survey of WELS Teens found that 93% of the 421 participants considered God’s Word to be entirely true, and 97% felt their relationship with God was important or very important. Yet 71% read their Bibles less than 15 minutes a day if at all, 74% either did not pray or prayed less than 15 minutes a day, and 60% said they “lived for Jesus” only some of the time, hardly any of the time, or never. Join this discussion to explore why there is such a difference in what we say and what we do.

The full list of Open Space topics and presentations can be found at www.welsyouthrally.net. Look in the “About the Laugh Out Loud Rally” collection and then in the “Program/Activities” folder. Almost 2,100 participants (about 1,600 teens) will be attending the WELS International Youth Rally in Dallas, TX July 4-7.



Making Right Choices

Begun a few years ago, under the leadership of the late Gerry Kastens (CYD Administrator, 1991-2000) a special video-assisted Bible study has finally been completed and is ready for your use. It's called Making the Right Choices and uses the "R-I-G-H-T Model" to assist youth with making decisions about music, fashion, dating, and careers.

R-I-G-H-T stands for...

RIGHT

Is your decision in agreement with what God wants for you? What does the Bible say about the matter? If something is sinful, the choice is clear: Don't do it.

IDEAL

Is it the best possible choice to make? Have you done careful research, tested, and considered all your options? Will making this choice bring good results for you and others?

GOD-PLEASING

Will your decision give glory to God? Is it done in love? Does your choice consider others? Is it motivated by your love and appreciation for all God has done for you?

HARMONY

Is it consistent with who you are (a redeemed child of God), or are you making your choice because you want to be like someone else? Is it in sync with the plans and future goals you have set for yourself, or that people like your parents would like to see?

TRUTHFUL

Are you being honest in making your choice? Can you look at yourself in the mirror and ask, "Is this really what I want? Are my motivations correct? Will my choice show how thankful I am to Jesus for all he's done for me?"

The five episode video and a CD with all the lessons and a leader's guide is being made available from the CYD office for the cost of shipping and handling (\$5.95) as our way of saying, "Thanks for being our partners in ministry to teens!"

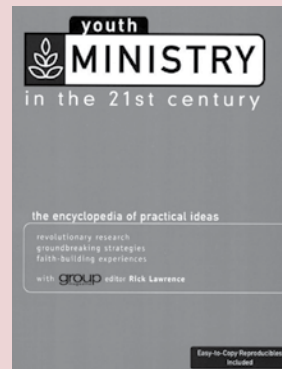
To obtain your copy of Making Right Choices call 414-256-3274 or e-mail: cyd@sab.wels.net. An invoice will be included with the study.

Resource Review

Youth Ministry in the 21st Century

Published by Group Publishing, Inc. © 2006 (221 pages)
Contributing authors: Steve Argue, Rick Lawrence,
Dave Livermore, Danette Maty, James W. Miller

Review by: Jeremy S. Bakken – CYD Administrative Assistant



An ongoing REACH! goal is to review the usefulness, practicality, and, most importantly, the Biblical foundation of teen ministry resources and materials available from various sources. In the following review, we consider the book *Youth Ministry in the 21st Century*

from Group Publishing. This book, based on research findings, is designed to present practical ideas, strategies, and faith-building experiences for teen ministries.

Youth Ministry in the 21st Century was written in response to a national study on youth and religion lead by Dr. Christian Smith, Jr., Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for the Sociology of Religion at the University of Notre Dame. Entitled "The National Study on Youth and Religion" (NSYR), this multi-wave project began in 2001 and has already undergone two waves of data collection. A third wave is scheduled to begin very soon. More on this study and its findings can be found at www.youthandreligion.org.

Youth Ministry in the 21st Century addresses some of the results from the first two phases of the NSYR. Divided into eight chapters, this book addresses everything from faith basics, to living faith, growing faith, and sharing faith. Each chapter contains an essay on the topic of the chapter, followed by practical and applicable activities, worship experiences, Bible studies, discussions, art projects, and more for that topic. The essays expound on the conclusions of the NSYR based on Biblical principals. The application helps range in their scope from providing a simple list of questions to generate discussion, to laying out the details of more elaborate projects and activities.

Continued on page 6

REACH!

Resource Review . . . continued from page 1.

Some of the helps include reproducibles, designed to ease the youth leaders' activity preparation time.

As with any review of material, the content must be sifted through the filter of Scripture, and its motivations and goals must be considered. The focus of the material is on right living and emotional growth. Many of the activities include follow up questions that ask for participants to share how they felt or what they thought about while doing the activity. A great deal of time is spent on developing temporal relationships – with family, friends, strangers, ministry leaders, and fellow youth group members. This reviewer feels that the topics and activities presented in this book are worth examining and considering. Leaders can always use activity ideas, and the perspectives based on the findings of the survey are thought-provoking. The lack of a) “heavenly/eternal” thought and b) a Christ and cross-centered presentation in the materials is cause for concern.

It is always difficult to achieve a perfect balance between the temporal and the eternal, between the reason for our

faith and the practice of our faith. Many of the activities do not include any Scripture references. And there is a noticeable lack of mention of Christ and his redemptive work – the *center* of Christian faith and the source of our ability to live as he calls us to. Any discussion on how to live for Christ must begin with what he has done for us and how he now works in us and through us.

With a proper Biblical analysis of this resource and the readiness to tweak and balance the perspective of the activities for the reasons listed above, Youth Ministry in the 21st Century would be a useful tool for generating new teen ministry ideas, as well as making the reader better aware and informed of the religious mentality of youth and leaders in our greater world. Visit www.group.com for more information on this resource or for ordering information.

Youth Ministry in the 21st Century is not endorsed by WELS, nor is Group Publishing, Inc., Group.com, or any of their other subsidiaries.

Please contact us with any questions or for further information.

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