

Programming for miracles

By Ken Moser

Excerpt from *Changing the World Through Effective Youth Ministry*.

I am not a person who is comfortable talking about miracles. I don't say that to alienate those who are, but I must tell you a simple truth: the youth leader who wants to do effective ministry must indeed "program for miracles".

Example

A few years back my wife and I were standing in front of a group of four young teens. We had successfully taken this youth group from 12 rowdy kids all the way to ... four rowdy kids. So far I was a church death expert, not one who brought growth. On this particular Sunday we were trying to make the best of difficult circumstances when all of sudden three new kids walked in – James, Kara and Rachel. They looked at me casually and said, "Can we join in?" I was sure that it was a mirage, a sick joke played on me by evil cosmic forces designed to wreck the youth ministry. Actually it wasn't. They joined in the program, loved it and said, "Can we come back next week?" Suddenly the flowers bloomed, the birds sang and all the people across the world reached out and held each other's hand. I said, "Sure, that would be great." (Understatement of the year.)

What I found out later is that James and Kara (brother and sister) had been thinking about God, the Bible, and the typical truth of the universe stuff. One day James said to Kara, "Do you believe in God?" She said, "Yeah." He then told her that they should talk to the local minister and get baptized. When he rang our minister, Trevor told them that they had to go to youth group for three weeks before they could get baptized. They showed up the next Sunday.

They started coming to the group, were baptized, brought along a couple of friends, joined a weekly Bible study and *completely transformed the group!* The group grew to over 12 kids and the atmosphere was great. It was God honoring, loving and a lot of fun.

I learned a huge lesson from that. We must build programs in which God can work. What he did with James, Kara and Rachel was a full-blown miracle, nothing less. It changed their lives, my life and the life of the youth group. We must make sure our groups are built on things that promote God's work. We need groups where the regulars, as well as newcomers like James, Kara and Rachel, can come and clearly hear about Christ and grow in their knowledge and love of him. Our programs must be built on things like Bible study, prayer and good fellowship among God's people. All of us must try our best to cultivate the real and greatest miracle – young people who are spiritually dead coming alive through hearing about Jesus' death and resurrection. We must also strive for miracles such as developing a group that loves each other and does not put each other down. Go for it!