

Is it time to ‘knock down the building and start again’?

By Ken Moser

This is an excerpt from the new edition of *Creative Christian Ideas for Youth Groups*.

Some youth programs are so riddled with straw¹ that it may be time to stop, take a break, and start afresh. If you are limping along with a small number of uncommitted kids and leaders who are getting tired- it is time for a sea change. Unless you can confidently say that things are likely to improve, or that you can see real fruit in this meeting, it may be time to recreate.

Steps you must take if you wish to ‘tear down and rebuild’

There are a number of key things that you need to do. Please don’t announce one night that ‘things aren’t working and that this is the last night of youth group. Take notes on why there needs to be change. Include in this examples and observations. You then must explain the situation to your minister. You must gain his support (key elders as well). Help them to see the situation- that the group just isn’t working and that it is time to try something new. In addition to this talk with any young people that you know are committed to the program, try your best to earn their support for a group that is more focused on building with gold. You will also need to meet with some key parents and talk through the issue. You may even need to call a group of parents together and chat through the issue. If you do this be prepared, quite often parents have come to love the straw and will put up a fight (‘youth group is a safe place for my kids’, ‘why would you change youth group- its been like this ever since I can remember’ etc.)

The youth group then needs to stop meeting for a few weeks (give everyone plenty of warning). During this time, visit any key kids and tell them about the new group that will be up and running in a few weeks. Send out an invitation to any young people that you think would enjoy the new group. Tell them that this will be a group that will be a great time of Christian fellowship, Bible study and prayer. When you start- start with a program that was in the previous chapter. You must make sure you are prepared- as you want to hit the ground running. On the first night you may want to have a bit of a party to celebrate the new group. Have some party food and cake to usher in this new program. In addition to this have a mixer, a Bible study and a time of prayer. You will also want to start up your weekly Bible study groups. Be prepared, each week you may need to fight your temptation to add straw to your program. Keep with the gold!

In a month or so have a social (ice skating, bowling etc.) This is not for newcomers nor is it a ‘bring a friend’ activity, it is a time for the group to go out together. In addition to this you should try to have a weekend camp (or at least an overnight) sometime in the near future. This will help to cement the changes and bond the group.²

Finally, make sure you pray, pray, pray- for these changes to succeed you need God’s blessing.

¹ See 1Cor. 3:10-15

² You may want to read ‘Changing the World through Effective Youth Ministry’. This will help you to set up the basics of a good youth program.

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