

Why Youth Group Is Important & Why We Do What We Do

I have been serving as a volunteer youth leader for Utica Church of Christ for 7 years and I still need to be reminded why youth group is important. I need to be reminded because the truth is that youth group can be difficult. Many times it's just easier to let teens do what they want and think they don't desire or need adults in their lives.

It may be easy to ignore them but the truth is that they are desperate for adults to actually show up and invest in their life on a consistent basis. Consistency is big because so much of life today is inconsistent. The typical American dream is fading. Family life is always changing. Teens are being forced to make choices about their future (college and career) at a time when they are just figuring out who they are. Teens need consistency and they need it from the church more than ever.

We named our youth group IMPACT because we really believe in a culture that is continually changing. Jesus is the one thing that will always be unchanging. Jesus is relevant today and forever. Youth groups all across the country have the chance to partner with the church and with families to lead teens to Jesus. That's why what we do in youth group is important.

Here are three factors that make what we do in youth ministry significant for the future of the church...

- **Youth group is discipleship not just gathering a crowd:** Our goal is to help teens follow Christ with all of their heart. We are not just trying to reach teens, we are also trying to shape them to look more like Jesus. We see this happen by leading teens to engage in worship, study God's Word through relevant teaching, and process faith through small groups led by adult mentors. Our hope is to lead teens to be followers of Jesus with all their heart.
- **Youth group can reach teens in a city for the Church not just a church:** Many teens don't go to their church because it's unhealthy and they know it is not working. Youth group gives us a chance to reach teens in Utica and lead them to Christ. Youth group is not just about a single church it is about advancing the mission of the Church that God is advancing. We have reached teens in our community who will then plug into church with their family either here at UCC or at a different church. We strive to serve our community not just our church.
- **Youth group can connect teens to the mission of the church:** Teens need a bridge to encounter the larger mission of the church and we can be that bridge. Teens can serve with other adults in the church. Teens can worship and grow together with the church. We believe that if you connect a teen to the church today that they will connect with the church in college!

A verse that really goes with why we do what we do is: Hebrews 12:2

“We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.”

When I played baseball, I always remember my coach (my dad) telling me to keep my eye on the ball. My dad knew that for me to be successful at playing baseball, I had to watch the ball. I couldn’t catch a ball if I wasn’t watching it. I couldn’t hit a ball if I didn’t have my eyes on it (even though sometimes that didn’t work as planned).

That’s a lot like what we are encouraged to do in this Bible verse. We’re encouraged to keep our eyes on Jesus. To be a success in baseball, it’s all about keeping your eye on the ball, and to be a success in life, it’s all about keeping your eyes on Jesus.

You see Jesus should always be a part of your focus. In each decision you make, you should be keeping your eye on Jesus and wanting to make a decision with Him in mind. So today in the craziness of life, be sure to take some time to keep your eyes on Jesus. Spend some time thinking about Him and all He’s done for you. You may feel alone; but you aren’t. You are surrounded by a group of witnesses (our youth group and parents). Those before you have run the race of faith and finished well. It is now your turn!

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