

Starting Out

“Welcome to our youth group” the pastor says as he shows you around the youth facility. Maybe you felt a strong call to be a part of the youth ministry, or maybe you are trying to discover your calling. Whatever the case is, we are thrilled you have decided to join us! You may be super excited about your new adventure, or wondering “what do I do now?”

Starting out as a new youth leader can be intimidating. Any new endeavor usually comes with a learning curve and some emotion in the beginning. Youth ministry is no different. It also comes with some unique challenges. Most people who serve in youth ministry are at least a few years and sometimes decades removed from their high school graduation. Teenage culture can be very different from what we experienced when we were in school. Teenagers are in a very transitional period of their lives, so personalities and attitudes can vary widely – even within the same student from year-to-year. Students are also under a lot of pressure - some self-imposed, some not. These pressures come from a variety of things such as school, sports, work, home, etc. Students are learning to drive, learning to date, and learning who they are. It can be a challenge to connect to youth, and a lot of people struggle with it. If it were easy, everyone would do it. The good news is that it does not need to be a struggle. There are a few basic things you can do to get yourself started on the right path.

The youth pastor may have a specific position in mind that fits your talents and personality. For example, if you are

outgoing, upbeat, and can repeat the word “hello”, the pastor may want you to be a greeter or welcome person. If you have experience in food service, maybe you will be needed in the snack bar or coffee shop. There are multiple positions within youth ministry and definitely one that will suit you.

But what should you do if nobody tells you a specific position to fill? Ask! Ask the pastor or another leader what positions are available or lacking help. Youth leaders and pastors might be busy and may need you to just ask how you can help.

Also, ask about expectations and rules. What basic expectations does the pastor have for youth leaders? Does he expect you to be there every week or every other week? What time do the leaders need to show up? What sort of “rules” and guidelines are there? Most ministries don’t allow a student to be alone with a leader of the opposite sex. Are there rules like that which you will be expected to comply with? What rules are there for the students? Things such as dress code, cursing, and public displays of affection are most likely addressed in student rules. It’s to your advantage to understand these rules fully.

To summarize, some good questions to ask are:

- Where do you need me?
- What do you need me to do?
- What are your expectations of me?
- What are the rules for students and leaders?

**“The human body has many parts,
but the many parts make up one**

whole body. So, it is with the body of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 12:12 (NLT)

Once you've gotten the lay of the land, the next step is to start learning and growing in your position. The goal of anyone in ministry should be to make an impact for Jesus, no matter what position you fill. 1 Corinthians 12:12 describes the church as a body made up of many parts, each one fulfilling a purpose. Applied to youth ministry, this means that everybody is needed and every position is vital. From security teams and ushers to running games and greeting, every position has a purpose and is necessary to the growth of the youth group. As such, we cannot look at any position as any more important than another. No matter what position you are in, you need to view it as critical to the success of the ministry.

As an example, consider the impact that a greeter can have. An effective greeter can put a smile on someone's face. Someone greeting you with a smile makes you happy to be in that place at that time. You never see a Disney World employee with a frown as they greet guests. With that warm feeling, right as the student walks through the door, they are more likely to be open to whatever else is going on inside, including the message from the pastor. This student will be more open to receiving Christ as their Lord, which is the ultimate goal in ministry. Conversely, without an effective greeter at the door, students will walk in and instead of a warm feeling, they may automatically feel distant and unwelcomed. If this is the case, the student may be closed off during the message and decide not to come back. Therefore, it is entirely possible that an effective greeter

could directly cause someone to be open to deciding to accept Christ.

“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.” Proverbs 17:22 (NIV)

“A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit.” Proverbs 15:13 (NIV)

So, when you are learning your position, keep in mind that you can be the reason a student, or many students, come to know Christ. Or you can be the reason students don't come back. The more effective and open you are, the greater impact you will have. And the way you start in a ministry can have a huge effect on how much of an impact you have.

What do you need to do to start serving in the ministry well?

1.) *Have good energy. Be upbeat and willing to work hard.*

We won't lie to you. Youth ministry can be hard work at first. Just like beginning a new career or moving to a new city and trying to make new friends, it takes work and dedication. Sometimes you have to roll up your sleeves and dive in, prepared or not.

2.) *Have consistency. It matters to students and the youth ministry leadership.*

Young people notice things about you that you wouldn't expect them to. We have had students notice when we get a slight haircut or even new clothes. So, you can bet they are going to notice if you are not there one day or off schedule at all. If you are trying to build those relationships, not being present will be your biggest hindrance. Other leaders are also counting on you to be there – to contribute and have their back if something unexpected happens.

3.) *Good attitude. Have a positive attitude, even when you don't want to.*

Teenagers are not the only ones with a contagious attitude, but they catch attitudes of authority figures easier than they transmit their own. It is vital that you walk in – and remain – with a good spirit, even if you are having a rough day. You don't have to pretend everything in your life is perfect. None of our lives are! Certain circumstances are understandable to bring someone down. But, if you are having that kind of day, it may be better to call in sick than try to fake it. Students can read those emotions well because they experience such highs and lows every day.

4.) *A willingness to try new things. This goes a long way in youth ministry and encourages students to do the same.*

Even if you feel silly, it is good to get out of your comfort zone. The more you get out of your bubble and attempt to do what you normally wouldn't, the more your mind will be trained to do so, and the easier it will get. You can't grow unless you stretch yourself.

Interacting with students

The next step to take when starting out in youth ministry is interacting with students. You have to be the one to approach students and interact; the students themselves will rarely approach you.

Your attitude towards the students matters also. You cannot come across like a school security guard and be successful; you have to have an open, caring, loving attitude towards them. To borrow a quote from John Maxwell, "students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." If they don't know that you care about their lives and have their best interests at heart, they won't listen to what you have to say. Even if what you say is the best, most enlightened and Godly wisdom they have ever heard, it will not matter unless the students know you care about them.

Another tip when connecting with students is to see them as young adults, not children. Most youth group ministries are targeted at ages 12-18, an age when students are transitioning from children to adults. If we approach them as children, we will struggle to create genuine connections with them. As an example, think about how you talk and communicate with a young grade school student. What is your tone of voice? What do you say? What do you talk about? Now, think about how you talk to your adult friends. Again, what is your tone of voice, what do you say, and what are the topics of conversation? We hope you can feel the difference in those two styles of communication. Your communication style with teenage students needs to be closer to the style with your adult friends. Communicating

with students in a more adult-like tone will demonstrate that you value them as people and you value what they have to say. This creates a more genuine connection with students, and makes them more open to teaching, correction, and ultimately a relationship with Jesus.

Initial Conversation

So, how do you start connecting and communicating? Begin by asking questions to get to know the students. Here are some good questions to get you started:

- What's your name?

You may think this is obvious, but even we have forgotten to ask this one. Speaking of forgetting, do your best to remember as many names as possible. It is also acceptable to give the students nicknames to help you remember. (We have come up with some rough ones that have stuck, so don't be afraid to do this. The students actually like it because they feel noticed.)

- What school do you go to?
- Are you in any sports/activities?
- Do you play any instruments?

A good thing to note here is that when you show an interest in a student's school activities, some may invite you to their sporting events or recitals. It is OK to attend these. It shows the students you really care, and if their parents notice, it will make them more comfortable with their kids attending youth group. This doesn't mean you have to attend every event students invite you to but attending even a few will mean the world to them and help build that relationship. For example, we had a middle school student in the youth group that played soccer. She expressed that her family

“never made it to her games.” The fact that we would go to some and support her meant so much to her. She went on to become one of the most dedicated students in the youth group and is now a youth leader.

Following Up

Once you have asked the questions and learned a little bit about the students, then comes the most important part - following up. Ask them how school is going, how their practices/games are going, how things are with mom and dad, etc. The fact that you remembered something about them and are showing some interest will begin to form a connection with them and is the basis of the relationship. This relationship will eventually create the platform from which you will begin to minister to them.

Have Fun!

We must allow students to have fun in our ministries. Many students won't want to come to youth group if it's not fun and if they do show up, they will get bored very quickly and stop coming. So, we need to create an atmosphere that allows students to have fun. Our youth group is blessed with a pretty large building. We have it split into two halves. One side is called the “game room” and the other is the sanctuary. We understand if you do not have the resources to have a designated area for play, but you can still make it fun. Don't be a stick in the mud – it's OK to joke and laugh (in a God honoring manner of course). And please, please, please smile!

**“So, I commend the enjoyment of life,
because there is nothing better for a**

person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun.” Ecclesiastes 8:15 (NIV)

Place yourself in your student’s shoes for a minute. Imagine you show up to a youth group meeting/service for the first time. You’re a little uncomfortable, nervous, maybe excited. But then you walk in and realize you don’t know or recognize any students. You also notice all the adults are standing around frowning, and talking to each other, ignoring the students. None of them greet you, talk to you, or smile. How do you feel about that experience? Will you want to come back and engage with that youth group? Instead, what if you walk in and don’t know or recognize any students. A student notices you and greets you then shows you around the building, introducing you to a few students and adults along the way. You see adults walking around and interacting with students - joking, laughing, and smiling. Now what do you feel?

There are tons of ways to have good, clean, God-honoring fun at your youth group. On any given Wednesday or Sunday, we may have everything from board games, card games, table games like pool or ping-pong, video games, etc. going on. We also have a small basketball court and volleyball area. There is something for every student to do. Leaders are encouraged to jump in or start a game. And, it is important to involve the students with you in whatever game you happen to be playing. It is OK to enjoy the game, laugh, and have fun! In fact, we have created surprising

relationships between unexpected types of students by including anyone and everyone in the fun.

Funny side note: Meagan created a game at a youth conference one time that has stuck for years in our youth group. It’s called “nose tag” and is basically regular tag, but you have to ‘tag’ with your nose. It was a silly, spur-of-the-moment, fun creation that pops up from time to time. Sometimes the youth pastor is the one to start it!

Here is the point – are we limiting God because we are boring, no-fun youth leaders? It’s a challenging thought. A fun atmosphere can also go further than getting a welcoming feeling. Fun can help you build relationships with people. If you’ve ever played games with your family or friends, you know this is true. Games, fun, and healthy competition all bring people together and the same can help build relationships with students.

Don’t Be the Bad Guy

You are not there to be the enforcer of the rules all the time. We like to think of the “80/20” rule. Generally, at least 80% of your interactions with students should be positive, fun, and encouraging. Only 20% or less should be addressing students with rules or corrective action. We truly believe that this guide can make the difference between an effective youth leader and an ineffective one. A youth leader that is having positive interactions with students will generally draw students into the youth ministry and get them involved. This enables students to grow in their walk with Jesus and mature in their faith. An ineffective youth leader can do just the opposite. Negativity will tend to result in students leaving the youth group, and maybe their faith altogether.

So, if you want to be an effective youth leader, and make dynamic impact in the next generation, remember that it is OK to have fun!

Opportunities to Connect

Connecting with students takes time and effort. Oftentimes the trust is built through consistency and the relationship is built outside of the normal service time. The interaction that occurs during regular meetings is the foundation, but the structure of the relationship comes when we spend quality time with students. This can be a one-on-one basis such as mentoring or even in a small group setting. Our youth group hosts or attends a camp every year where students grow in their faith and build friendships that have potential to last outside of the church building. We also do yearly mission trips and have gatherings at the youth pastor's home from time to time. All these events are perfect opportunities to build on the foundation created during the weekly meeting times. These events are where relationships are molded. Where the "light bulb" moment can occur. Students get to see how leaders act, react, lead, communicate, and serve. Attending these events can help new leaders connect with students initially or build on an already created foundation.

Engage and Invite Students to Jesus

Once you've built a fun atmosphere and connected with students, the next step is to engage them on a deeper level. The objective in all of this is to be able to make your relationship with the students a conduit that Jesus can move through to impact their lives. You want to be able to speak into students' lives and make a positive impact. You want students to fulfil the calling that God has placed on their

lives. God even has a plan for the goofy looking, buck-toothed kid that follows you around the entire youth service. The awesome thing is that we get to be a part of the process of the students reaching their potential.

One thing to keep in mind when working with youth is that being "preachy" usually doesn't work. Youth usually feel preached at by teachers and parents; we need our message to students to reach them at a much deeper level than an algebra lesson. We need our message to go past the mind and get into the heart. So, if "preaching" doesn't work, what will? We need to develop a solid personal relationship with students and then use that relationship to give them advice and point them to Jesus. Also, don't be afraid to tell students your testimony and story. Telling students about your own struggles when you were their age can have a huge impact. Your struggles and failures, victories and successes can inspire and teach students more than hours of lecturing. Jesus used stories to teach and we can do the same, especially if we can use our stories to demonstrate biblical truth at work in our lives.

Being open and honest with students encourages them to be open and honest with you. Note, however, that you usually need to be the one to initiate the conversations. Usually students won't be instantly vulnerable with youth leaders. But don't get discouraged; it just takes time.

Don't get discouraged if students seem to blow you off at first and not listen to what you say. Often this is just a "front" and the student is actually listening. It may take hours or weeks (or even longer) for what you said to sink in and the student to really "get it". Do not give up. Sometimes we get to be the laborers planting seeds that lead to a huge harvest later in students' lives.

“And this confirms the saying ‘One sows the seed and another reaps the harvest.’ I have sent you out to harvest a field that you haven’t planted, where many others have labored long and hard before you. And now you are privileged to profit from their labors and reap the harvest.” John 4:37-38 (TPT)

Once you have built this type of relationship with a student, don’t be surprised when you occasionally get a crazy story from them. We have heard all sorts of stories from students over the years; things from typical teenage drama to eating disorders, cutting themselves, and even claims of abuse. So, what do you do when a student volunteers some crazy personal struggle or situation to you? Here are a few tips:

- Know the law. Most states have requirements to report abuse. So, if a student makes this type of claim to you, bring it to your youth pastor as soon as possible. We recommend that the youth pastor be the one to do the reporting – don’t do it yourself unless it’s an emergency. Also, we recommend you follow up with the youth pastor after a few days and simply ask if it was reported. Pastors are typically very busy people, and we don’t want something like this to fall through the cracks or get forgotten.

- If it’s not abuse, but still a significant issue, ask the student for more information.

Ask why.

Ask for details.

Ask about context of the situation.

Ask how it made them feel.

Asking these questions serves a couple different purposes:

1. It helps you learn context about the situation. Sometimes after asking these questions you will realize the student is overreacting to a minor issue. Remember the teenage years can be a very emotional time for students and they can occasionally overreact. Learning the context of the issue also helps you as a leader to give the right feedback to the student. Telling the student a story about a time you struggled with the same issue is a perfect way to give feedback.
2. Asking questions communicates to the student that you genuinely care about them and you want to know more about the situation. Students will feel valued, important, and cared for. Take care to not come off like a police interrogator. You need to ask questions in a caring, loving way. This is a little bit of a learned skill, so don’t get discouraged if it’s awkward at first.

- You can give advice, but only after you have listened. Listening first helps the student understand that you care.

Offer scripture verses to point the student back to the bible. Don't make it complicated.

- Commit to pray with/for the student. Pray right then and there if possible. Pray for them, their situation, and the future of the situation. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we get a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge from God while praying and it is important to pay attention when we get these words.

- Talk to your youth pastor about it. This is crucial not only for the student, but to keep the pastor in the loop and to help keep you accountable. Your pastor may ask you to follow up with the student, but even if it is not asked of you, do it.

Replicate Yourself

The concept of replication is one of the most powerful concepts that you can utilize in youth ministry. We've all heard the saying "like father, like son" or "like mother, like daughter." The same is true in youth ministry. We could change the saying to be "like youth leader, like student." Even though it does not have a nice ring to it, it's true. We have seen this principle to be true many times in youth ministry. At one point in my youth ministry journey, I had a team of a couple students that ran the audio-visual equipment for the youth services. Over time, my personality began to rub off on the students. The more I pursued excellence in the services we ran, the more they did the same. The more I worked to be organized and prepared, the more they followed that thinking. The more I worked to unify the team, the more unified they wanted to be. Over time, the team had become so much like a family that the students wanted to do any special events as a team. We went to summer camp as a team, did scavenger hunts as a team,

and even went out to eat together just to have a meal as a team. It was an awesome experience. The team became so effective that we were allowed to run some special events for the entire church. What could you accomplish with an entire youth group like that? The good news is that if I can build a team like that, then anybody can. The way I built that kind of a team was by replicating myself. I demonstrated the qualities I wanted the students to have and then gave them opportunities to use those qualities. When you are a youth leader, the students will emulate you in several areas: attitudes, habits, character, and even how you interact with God.

Attitudes:

I was asked once by a camp counselor at a youth camp what our church "culture" was. Given the context in which the question was asked (during a couple mile hike up a mountain), my response was that we work hard but we also play hard, which is a true statement. I've seen our students work hard for hours non-stop, and we definitely play hard whether it's contests, games, or prank wars. But, the students don't act that way by accident. The pastors work hard, meaning the leaders work hard, which leads to the students working hard. The pastors play hard, so the leaders play hard, and that results in students playing hard. The same is true with any attitude. If we as leaders approach praise and worship enthusiastically and energetically, then so will the students. If, however, we stand around disengaged during worship songs, the students will do the same thing. We as youth leaders are the example for the students and they will subconsciously begin to show the same attitudes we show. This is true in nearly every area including worship, prayer, bible reading, learning, serving,

leadership, etc. If we have a bad attitude towards something holy and good, we can't expect the students to be any different. I hear a lot of people say negative things about teenagers and students, but rarely do people want to admit that they might be part of the problem. One of the simplest and effective ways to change your students' attitude is to change yours first. I have a t-shirt with a slogan that says, "be the change." This is very true in youth ministry. Be the change you want to see in your students – live out what you wish for them to become.

Habits:

Whatever habits you demonstrate in front of students will be replicated by them. Of course, students that you don't spend much time with may have more learned habits from parents and friends, but students that you spend a lot of time with will learn more habits, good or bad, from you. For example, if your habit is to say "praise God" anytime a student tells you something good that happened to them, eventually you will hear students saying the same thing. If you have a habit of not looking people in the eyes when you talk to them, don't be surprised when they stop looking others in the eyes when speaking with them. So, it is important to be aware of the habits you have and to think about whether or not you want students to mimic those habits. And if you want them to develop certain habits, make sure you are modeling those habits in front of them consistently.

“A student is not superior to his teacher; but everyone, after he has

been completely trained, will be like his teacher.” Luke 6:40 (AMP)

Keep on Growing

In youth ministry, you are either growing or dying – there is no middle ground. Just like stagnant water will eventually go bad and hurt anyone that drinks it, a stagnant youth group will eventually start to hurt students and drive them away. So, it's critical that we work to always grow and improve the ministries that God has given us. Never let yourself be satisfied with the size of the youth group you serve in. As a youth pastor I know says, "Satan has a bigger youth group than we do." We should keep working and improving until we reach every student we possibly can. We shouldn't be satisfied with writing any student off or saying that our group is big enough. If we don't pursue the students in our community, who will? Satan. Are there students in your community you don't want to take to Heaven with you? Are there any that you can say, "I wouldn't mind if they didn't get to know Jesus"? Are there any students you have written off? I'm not writing this to condemn you, I'm hoping to motivate you. Let's keep working and advancing the Kingdom in our youth ministries!

So what do we need to do in order to keep growing?

- Remember creativity is good.
- Constantly ask what can be improved.
- Don't get offended at new ideas, and don't be afraid to change.

Creativity is good. We have to remember to encourage creativity in our youth ministries. Creativity allows

new ideas to come out, new ministries to begin, and forms new ways to connect to youth. Here are some of the creative ways we've ministered or connected with youths. We hosted a couple seasons of a bible trivia game to encourage students to read their Bible. We did not make this cheesy. We played it out like a game show with upbeat background music, relevant to the students. For example, we used Super Mario Brothers trap beat music one time. Another creative thing we've done is an event for girls from 6th to 12th grade, called the Crowned Party. We have it once a year and it's a nice evening we dedicate to showing the young ladies their worth and how precious they are to God and His Kingdom. We usually do a fancy dinner and have a speaker, play games, give out gifts and prizes, and sometimes we have young men (of the same age group) that serve the girls like waiters. One time, we even made it a relaxed theme and hosted it in a barn with dancing and barbecue food. Over the years we have also done creative things like having services in the park or at a pool, had special nights where we brought in hip-hop artists, and even blacklight nights.

A lot of these ministries and events were not proposed by church staff or pastors. They were proposed and organized by volunteer leaders such as yourself. Some of these ministries have become staples of our youth group and are very effective. So, how do you encourage creativity?

If you have a thought for a new ministry opportunity, speak up. A fresh set of eyes and ears can very often spot holes or areas of potential growth. If you see something like that, bring it up. Your idea may have been tried before and failed or there may be some other reason it can't be done, but if you don't bring it up, there may be ministry opportunities that get missed. Don't get offended when your

ideas get challenged or modified, especially if you are new at youth ministry. There are likely more experienced people around you that can help refine your idea into a good achievable plan. Don't be so prideful that you think your ideas are always the best and no one else can improve them. Constantly ask the youth pastor what can be improved.

A key question you can ask yourself to initiate the creative process is "what can we do better?" No ministry does everything perfectly. No ministry reaches 100% of the people that walk through the doors. The best organizations are constantly adjusting and changing in order to improve. The youth pastor we serve under has a saying that speaks to this. He says, "The only thing that won't change around here is the Bible. Everything else is negotiable." And this is how we should think about our ministries. The Bible and biblical truth is always and will always be constant, but anything else should be adaptable and improved on.

Also remember the next time someone else proposes a new idea, don't shoot it down right away. No matter how weird the idea, weigh out how effective it would be in your particular youth setting. If it is not something that would work for your students, counteract it with a different idea or a way to better it. Use statements such as "what about _____ instead?" or "what if we did it this way?" Saying things like this starts the creative process and encourages dialogue. Don't be a Debbie Downer that shoots down any new idea. Obviously, if a proposal violates a biblical principle or church doctrine, don't go along with it. But we must allow new ideas to be developed. Our Bible Blitz, the trivia game we did, only lasted two seasons because the first season was a hit, but after trying to improve the second time around to engage

more students, we decided it was finished. It's OK to discontinue recurring events. That leaves time for new and better ones to be planned and organized.

It's easy to fall into the trap of "the way things have always been done." It's easy to get comfortable with the status quo and quit trying. To get so comfortable that you start reacting to change by getting defensive and angry. Acting this way is a quick way to shut down any creativity around you. In any ministry, it is important to be willing to change, but it is especially important in youth ministry. These days, youth expect to be constantly entertained. It's how they are wired from the time they are born. Parents give them phones and iPads to keep them occupied while at the doctor. Teens switch classes every 40 to 90 minutes because they "can't focus longer than that." Most are involved in one or more social media platforms which are constantly updating to keep them interested and engaged, because they get bored so easily. If we, in the church, do the same thing, the same way, every time we meet, year after year, we will lose students.

Throughout the Bible, God uses different people to do different things. In the same way, we should be willing to change and do different things to reach the next generation.

Our Role in Praise & Worship

Praise and Worship is a significant part of any ministry. And the most effective and dynamic P&W experiences occur when the students are full participants. This is an area where students will not participate at a higher level than the leaders. Students are typically very adverse to being seen as different – to sing out loud during worship or raise their hands or even get on their knees. So, it is

imperative that leaders make it OK to do those things. A huge part of that is demonstrating what you want them to do. If you want your students to sing out loud and raise their voice to God in worship, do it yourself. If you want them to dance or jump during an upbeat song, do it yourself. You have to set the example, in the crowd with them, so they know what to do. A child doesn't automatically learn how to drive a car well. Someone has to teach them, lead them, guide them. Same with worshipping God. If you want your students to stand in the back of the room with their arms crossed and a scowl on their face, a sure-fire way to achieve that is by you doing it yourself.

Have you ever been to a concert of a band you don't know, but had a lot of fun? Maybe you were invited to play a sport you didn't know how to play, but you saw how they were playing and jumped in and picked it up quickly. How about watching a cooking show and thinking, "They are really into this. That must be fun. I am going to try it." All of these things have one thing in common – atmosphere. If you set the tone of worship by engaging in it yourself, you are not only setting the example, but you are allowing the students to watch and learn how to do it. If they only see the worship leader going all out on stage, but none of the other adults or students are, how likely is it that they will be the ones to initiate that engagement. Also, how selfish is it for a leader to know God and know how to worship Him and get to know Him without ever passing that on to the younger generation?

Go and Make Disciples

Youth ministry can be a fun and exciting ministry to be involved with. Connecting with students and helping them connect with Jesus is one of the most rewarding experiences you can have. You will build many relationships along this journey. It may seem difficult at first – don't give up. It is well worth the struggle. You will find that as you take this on, your relationship with God will become increasingly better as you seek to help the lost and hurting youth. We pray that God blesses your journey.