YOUTH GUIDANCE OPERATION MANUAL

Fifth edition - February 2003
Version 1.0

President:
Roger Cross

Senior Executive Vice-President:
Paul Leroue

Vice-President of YFC/USA Ministries:
Dr. Dave Rahn

National Youth Guidance Director, YFC/USA Ministries:
Tim Butler

Regional Youth Guidance Chairpeople:
Rod Berg, Pacific Northwest
Glenn Craig, Southern States
Gary Lee, Great Lakes
Paige McConkey, Central States
John Selph, Great Lakes
Bruce Stucky, Central States
Marty Villa, Southwest States

A ministry service of Youth for Christ. Copyright© 2003 by Youth for Christ/USA. All rights reserved.

This manual, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced, photocopied, translated, or otherwise multiplied in any form without permission from Youth for Christ/USA.
# Table of Contents

1. YFC Mission, Vision & Grand Goal .................................................. 5  
2. Discipleship Evangelism and YFC’s Ongoing Fruit-Bearing Conditions .... 7  
   2.1. Abiding .................................................................................. 11  
   2.2. Faithful Missionary ................................................................. 12 
   2.3. Unified Believers .................................................................... 14 
   2.4. Spirit-led Intentionality .......................................................... 16 
   2.5. Spirit-led Spontaneity .............................................................. 18 
3. YFC Community Ministry ................................................................. 20 
4. Youth Guidance in Perspective ....................................................... 26 
   4.1. A Common YFC History .......................................................... 26 
   4.2. Youth Guidance Defined ......................................................... 35 
   4.3. Youth Guidance Scope ............................................................ 40 
5. Youth Guidance Staff ..................................................................... 43 
6. Youth Guidance Context .................................................................. 46 
7. Youth Guidance Young People ....................................................... 55 
   7.1. Becoming Youth Culture Experts .............................................. 56  
      7.1.1. General Expertise ............................................................... 56  
      7.1.2. Specific Expertise .............................................................. 57  
   7.2. A General Profile of Youth Guidance Young People .................. 59 
8. Youth Guidance Relational Ministry Actions .................................... 64 
   8.1. RMA: Appointments ................................................................. 65 
   8.2. RMA: Small Groups ................................................................. 68 
   8.3. RMA: Large Groups ................................................................. 77 
   8.4. RMA: Mentoring ..................................................................... 85 
   8.5. RMA: Trips ............................................................................ 90 
   8.6. RMA: Strategic Relationships ................................................ 94 
   8.7. RMA: Support Teams .............................................................. 96 
   8.8. RMA: Ministry Teams ............................................................. 99 
9. Youth Guidance & The Relational Ministry Process ......................... 103 
   9.1. Three-Story Evangelism ........................................................... 104 
   9.2. Initiate .................................................................................. 107  
      9.2.1. Initiate: How It Works With Kids ....................................... 108  
      9.2.2. Initiate: A Prayer Focus ..................................................... 108  
      9.2.3. Initiate: The RMA Strategy ............................................... 109 
   9.3. Involve ................................................................................ 111  
      9.3.1. Involve: How It Works With Kids ...................................... 112  
      9.3.2. Involve: A Prayer Focus .................................................... 113  
      9.3.3. Involve: The RMA Strategy ............................................... 113 
   9.4. Inform .................................................................................. 115  
      9.4.1. Inform: How It Works With Kids ...................................... 115 
      9.4.2. Inform: A Prayer Focus .................................................... 116
FOREWORD

In his book, *At-Risk: Bringing Hope to Hurting Teenagers*, Dr. Scott Larson uses the story of Onesimus, the runaway slave who belonged to Philemon to illustrate the condition and plight of troubled young people today. Dr. Larson believes that, in four ways, the 110,000 young people who are incarcerated in over 1200 public and 1800 private juvenile facilities (according to statistics for the year 2000), bear a strong resemblance to Onesimus and how his life was impacted while he was confined.

First, he was probably in his late teens. Second, because he was a slave, Onesimus had no value or status in his society, much like troubled young people today. Third, he was on the run, and without hope or direction.

The last comparison between Onesimus and incarcerated young people deals with the matter of intervention. The Apostle Paul took an unpopular stand for his day, became an advocate for the young man, and introduced him to the Savior. Some fifty years later, Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch wrote a letter about a man who seems to fit the description of the runaway slave, and referred to him as the Onesimus, the Bishop to Ephesus! What a powerful example of a discipleship evangelism relationship!

Who are the “Onesimus’s” of today? Maybe it is the young man who literally stumbled into a church outside Baltimore, Maryland, looking for the YFC staff member who, according to the cop who sent him there, would take care of his needs.

And who are the “Paul’s” of today who will take the risk to pour their lives into what some have called “the bottomless black hole” of needs that typifies most Youth Guidance young people? Will it be you?

Paul took a risk on Onesimus, and through his relationship with the young man, became an instrument of God's redemption and restoration. As He did for Paul, God will honor your investment of knowledge, skills, and passion for Him and for lost young people. It is with that eternal investment and work in view that this material has been written.

--Tim Butler
National Youth Guidance Director, YFC/USA Ministries
Within the organizational genetic code of YFC is a sense of direction that defines who we are and what our particular niche is within the Kingdom of God. To clarify this foundational purpose we have expressed it as our **mission statement**. Youth for Christ’s mission is: **To participate in the Body of Christ in the responsible evangelism of youth, presenting them with the person, work & teachings of Christ and discipling them into the Church.**

For a mission statement to truly guide us it must be more than well-arranged words. It must be IN us, providing us with a stable source of direction. This works to guide our ministry together like the earth’s magnetic poles, supplying us with a fixed location from which we can determine where we are.

In addition to our mission statement, there is another core organizational statement that helps to supply us with direction, adding scope and boundaries to our purpose. This is YFC’s **vision statement**, and our hope is that it guides us by painting a clear picture of our ideal future. The vision of YFC is: **As part of the Body of Christ our vision is to see every young person in every people group in every nation have the opportunity to make an informed decision to be a follower of Jesus Christ and to become part of a local church.**

How do YFC’s mission and vision statements help to locate our organization and set it on a unique course amid the tremendous variety of ministry options that can be done in Jesus’ name? Three important features serve as rudders steering us through the waters of discipleship evangelism.

First, YFC is committed to the Church. Each statement offers a modest assertion that we want to participate in the Body of Christ. We want to do our part and serve a valuable role in the Body. As our task gets defined within each statement there is also a firm conviction expressed. The young people with whom we work must be guided into the Church if we are to consider our assignment complete. Taken together these elements make it clear that YFC’s relationship with and service to the Church must be a genuine value in how we operate.

It is also clear that YFC is a youth ministry concentrating on the discipleship evangelism agenda. Our focus is on lost young people, though we know that there are many others who need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. The scope of our vision statement makes it clear that there isn’t a young person on the planet excluded from our ministry potential. But we recognize in our work among teens the potential for manipulation and even abuse. By being responsible with our evangelism efforts we will help young people make informed decisions about
following Jesus for a lifetime. And, ultimately, there must be no mistaking the fact that our evangelism efforts must always synchronize with the larger purpose of making disciples among young people. That’s why in this operations manual we will frequently talk about discipleship evangelism in YFC. We have no intention of dividing God’s master plan for changing a life. We will more fully explore this rich term in chapter 2.

Finally, there must be no doubt that our ministry energies are dedicated to making Jesus known. This commitment aligns us with countless others throughout history who have sought to glorify God by revealing him accurately in the world. There are plenty of good social causes worthy of our efforts, but they can never be allowed to replace Jesus as the center of attention.

YFC’s mission and vision have us committed to the Church, focused on youth discipleship evangelism, and centered on the person of Jesus Christ. In addition, YFC’s commitment to being a diverse and worldwide movement is a deep organizational value that finds its home in these statements. These fixed points ought to come alive for us as they help us decide when to adopt some ministry strategies and discard others.

A recent addition to these core direction-setting documents is YFC’s grand goal. Formally adopted at YFC’s Midwinter Conference in 2002, our grand goal is intended to energize us with some specific, measurable ministry targets that are so huge that they might be considered unreasonable. We acknowledge that if God doesn’t unleash his power in an unusual way we will not be able to accomplish this goal, and we have embraced it both as a long-range faith commitment and an articulation of what—in our wildest dreams—we hope to accomplish through our work. YFC’s grand goal is:

With God’s help and direction, we seek to engage 5,000,000 young people by 2010 in a lifelong journey of following Christ. To do this we will:

- Pursue young people everywhere, including the hard-to-reach.
- Reach young people through 5,000 school and community ministry sites.
- Grow ministry to 300 strategic towns and cities.
- Resource and connect staff, churches and community leaders.
- Multiply our efforts through strategic partnerships with churches, Kingdom organizations and the worldwide movement of YFC.
- Equip 600,000 young Christian leaders in evangelism and discipleship.

These documents have set our direction in YFC. They help us to know where we are going. The rest of this operations manual is intended to increase the detail of this direction and enrich our understanding of how we can be both faithful and fruitful in our work.
What do we mean when we use the term discipleship evangelism? We gain some insights about why this term is important to YFC by exploring alternative descriptions that are not quite adequate summaries of our mission’s focus.

For starters, discipleship evangelism is not decisional evangelism. We are very clear about what the end results of our evangelism efforts must be. We want young people to become disciples of Christ and not just make decisions for Christ. This clarity of vision is critical to our ministry practice. We’re confident that when we train our attention on making disciples we will consistently be freed up to encourage young people to make good decisions. Since there is less certainty we will be able to start teens on a lifelong path of following Jesus if we concentrate our efforts too narrowly on their initial decisions to start their journey, we choose the discipleship evangelism paradigm.

Adopting the term discipleship evangelism is also a way to bridge the modern divide between discipleship and evangelism. The separation of these two concepts is a recent invention and one that cannot be found in Scripture. Biblical discipleship begins in evangelism and seeks to establish mature followers of Jesus who will—in turn—become evangelistically faithful in their own lives. Biblical evangelism has no destination for its activity other than making disciples. By favoring one concept over another too many ministries have excused themselves from the obligation handed us by the Lord Jesus. If concentration on evangelism leads to the neglect of disciple-making, the Kingdom’s growth-by-multiplication plan (2 Timothy 2:2) will be frustrated. If focusing exclusively on growing Christians into mature disciples doesn’t include an evangelism agenda, our Lord’s grand reconciliation plan (Colossians 1:19-20) will be subverted. Either focus out of balance will keep us from experiencing the lasting fruit Jesus intended (John 15). We believe that incorporating the term discipleship evangelism into our ministry vocabulary can help us avoid errors of imbalance.

The concept of responsible evangelism is enriched by the concluding phrase in YFC’s mission statement, “discipling them into the church”. Without this clause, some might mistakenly conclude that responsible evangelism only describes an ethical standard for our missionary activity. We want to make it clear that we can’t be responsible in our evangelism efforts if they are not aligned with discipleship purposes.

Some assert that YFC is committed to a kind of evangelism style, perhaps best represented by the term relational evangelism, as opposed to something like
confrontational evangelism, or proclamational evangelism. In reality, however, as we move aggressively to cultivate life-long commitments to Jesus Christ among young people, YFC is free to consider relational, confrontational or proclamational evangelism methods as legitimate options for our outreach efforts. By choosing to align ourselves with the standards and criteria of discipleship evangelism rather than a single method as our only option, we are staking out an allegiance to biblical values above all else when pursuing our mission. It is to those biblical values we want to turn now to further unpack what we mean by discipleship evangelism in YFC.

The context and directive surrounding the Great Commission will adequately supply the biblical insights we need to understand discipleship evangelism. Here’s the text: “Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age’” (Matthew 28:16-20).

Notice the preconditions that set the disciples up to receive their clear instruction from the Lord Jesus. First, they proved they were ready for a new assignment by their previous obedience. They showed up on location as Jesus had told them. And, as a result of their obedience rather than as a condition by which they would trust him, they saw Jesus. The reward of seeing Jesus clearly always follows our faithfulness. The experience of following Jesus precedes the certainty of knowing Jesus. When they saw Jesus they offered him the only acceptable faith response: they worshiped him. Jesus then drew near to them, even to those who couldn’t purge the doubts from their faith. There is no substitute for bringing an honest heart humbly to the Lord, even when such a heart is deeply flawed. As Jesus came to them he reminded them of his supremacy in all things (see also Colossians 1:18). When the King of All Creation whispers such a truth into our spirits is there any doubt he is not also reasserting his claim on our unconditional allegiance?

We have not yet begun to consider the ministry directives that Jesus uttered. There is a reason for that. Discipleship evangelism is always done by people like us who have stories of victory and failure in our own following of Jesus. Some of us would have been late to the mountain in Galilee; others might even be no-shows. A lot of us would have been so overcome by our doubts that we would wonder if our feeble worship could even rise to an acceptable level for the Lord. Nonetheless, when we even stagger and stumble in the direction of obedience to the Lord Jesus, he meets us, strengthening our faith by reminding us that he has absolutely everything under control. The first step in our ministry among young persons is our step toward Jesus. We must trust him and abandon ourselves to completing the assignment (Acts
20:24) he gives us all: to make disciples of all nations.

The disciples must have had questions about the task, but Jesus had—through these words and his own example (John 20:21)—given them everything they need to understand what he was asking of them. This disciple-making assignment would be accomplished during the normal course of life, literally while they were going among all the nations. **Discipleship evangelism begins when those sent by Jesus get life-on-life with those who have yet to discover Jesus.** It would include incorporating these new believers into the family of Jesus-followers through a common baptism. **Discipleship evangelism necessitates that this new life is experienced in the community—or body—of Christians.** And the task requires that would-be disciples become students who adjust their lives according to Jesus’ teachings. **Discipleship evangelism expects that each life in submission to God’s word will be continuously changed so that Jesus is revealed through them.**

In YFC we’ve translated these three dimensions of discipleship evangelism—*life-on-life, Body life, truth-in-life*—into a strategy we call **THE RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS.** While the measurable ingredients of **THE RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS** will be discussed in chapter 9 of this operations manual, the foundational elements of this process must be introduced now. And they are imbedded in the mystical words of encouragement Jesus offered the disciples in Matthew 28:20.

When Jesus gave such a daunting assignment to the disciples, they must have wrestled with the tremendous uncertainties about how they, inadequate as they were, could possibly bring about a change in the lives of others that would be worthy of the Lord Jesus. Jesus must have anticipated such a response. He promised that he would be with the disciples every step of the way. Through Jesus’ ongoing presence the disciples would experience the power to accomplish all that he asked of them.

Experiencing the ongoing presence of Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives is a condition that is absolutely necessary to our ability to do discipleship evangelism among young people. That’s why we have identified five ongoing fruit-bearing conditions as the foundation of **THE RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS.** We are helpless to please God in our own strength (Hebrews 11:6).

It’s not that we don’t bring anything to the table. As we learned from seeing the disciples’ response in Matthew 28:16-18, we sometimes get credit for just showing up! Ministry that results in God-honoring fruit (John 15:8) is a combination of our best efforts and the release of God’s power. A purely practical approach to ministry would have us work hard, convinced that results are based entirely on what we do. A purely mystical approach to ministry would have us wait and watch, convinced that results are based entirely on what God does. Of course, ministry must never be such an either/or proposition.
The bulk of the pages in this operations manual are devoted to helping YFC staff carry out their work effectively. If you are a page-counter, you might mistakenly conclude that YFC is primarily dedicated to practical ministry strategies as measured by effective, measurable results. After all, this manual coaches us in the kind of hard work to which we must apply ourselves. Aren’t we just pragmatists who plan our work and then work our plan?

If that’s all that can be said of us, we’re in trouble. We want to state unequivocally that if the Lord is not in our work, everything is done in vain (Psalm 127:1). As committed as we are to working effectively, we are even more convinced that we must work faithfully. The former is what ensures that we are geared to the times. The latter reminds us that our hard work will be so much useless floating foam if we aren’t anchored to the Rock.

Consider the following parable of Jesus: This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come (Mark 4: 26-29).

What is our role in bringing about truly changed lives among young people? It’s clear that as “the man” in the parable we are to scatter seed and then reap the harvest once it’s ready. In between God is doing his thing, mysteriously growing his life in the previously yet-to-be-born spirit of a teen. We must attune ourselves to God’s activity so that we are ready to act when God says the soul-harvest of a young life is ready for our attention.

In the remainder of this chapter we identify five continuous conditions that we want to concentrate upon in order to be ready to act in the Holy Spirit’s timing, to experience the presence of Jesus promised at the end of the Great Commission. We confess that every lasting ministry result we seek is largely dependent upon how well we immerse ourselves in these ongoing fruit-bearing conditions.
2.1 Abiding

Everything about our discipleship evangelism efforts need to be Jesus-centered. The hope of glory—understood as the revealing of God in this world—is not even words about Jesus, but Jesus himself (Colossians 1:27)! He is our message. If the gospel we preached was merely a set of propositional truths that need to be understood and applied, it might be possible to segregate our ministry activity into convenient categories. First we do something fun to address the social needs of kids. Then we get them active because that helps people to learn. After which we share some of ourselves with them to build our credibility as communicators. That’s when we introduce Jesus...

If Jesus—the literal glue of all creation—is the message then our goal is to find ourselves communicating him every time we draw a breath. Is it important to have fun with teens? Do it in Jesus. Are activities strategic in our ministry? Figure out how to do them as Jesus would. Must we develop credibility? Let Jesus teach us how. We must abide in him constantly; we have no hope for any lasting fruit as a result of our good efforts unless his Spirit empowers us (John 15:1-17).

We need to operate with the confessed conviction that Jesus Christ is our only source of motivation and power. Without him we are thoroughly lost; that includes our well-intentioned ministry efforts.

When we genuinely abide in Jesus a constant prayer bond allows Jesus’ words to flow through our spiritual circulatory system. This illuminates Paul’s instruction that, no matter what we believers are doing, we are to do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus (Colossians 3:17) and to pray continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We are able to access a life that is not our own and must learn how to discard the helpless and hopeless way of living into which we were born (Galatians 2:20).

This learning curve is understandably steep. As brothers and sisters in Christ we who are a part of the YFC family can be encouragers and examples to one another in this great adventure. We understand that the fruit of our ministries are direct extensions of the fruitfulness of our lives. As an ongoing fruit-bearing condition, abiding plunges us deeply and consistently into Jesus’ life so that the glory of our fruit is as great as he deserves.
2.2 Faithful Missionary

Before we DO our missionary work among young people, we must realize that we ARE missionaries with whole lives that are intended to declare the glory of God. The first fruit with which we honor God is the good health of our own walk in him. Among other things this means that we pursue emotional wholeness, not because we can do our jobs better, but because we can live our lives better. And a life well lived is our priority.

Such a life is lived from the inside out. God knows the nooks and crannies of our hearts, from which our entire lives and ministries flow (Proverbs 4:23). Jesus’ declaration offers a simple checkpoint for our soul searching: If you love me, you will obey what I command (John 14:15). Concentrating on loving Jesus in this way will help us to be consistently faithful. That’s our target.

As followers of Jesus this on-going fruit-bearing condition calls us to an authenticity that a skeptical world needs to see. Our Lord asserted that while he was in the world he was the light of the world (John 9:5). The temporary nature of this designation is a little confusing until we recognize that he gave his disciples this very same assignment, making it clear that it is now our responsibility to live our lives as open testimonies to the goodness of God (Matthew 5:14-16).

This crucial focus of our life and ministry naturalizes the fruit-bearing process. Think about it. The opposite of something natural might be something mechanical or even technological. We can’t create automatic systems that crank out fruit. This is not an industrial strategy. Fruit is always organic and it will always be linked to the mysterious growth process that we may be able to understand but will never be able to control. That’s why an authentic life is never something we do (mechanical) so much as it is someone we are (natural).

Look at how it worked in the apostle Paul’s ministry. He initially established an example of Christ-likeness by living out his selfless faith among the Thessalonians and then commended them for the far-reaching impact of their example (1 Thessalonians 1:4-10; 2:1-12). To illuminate his instruction to another church about how to do all for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31), he invited them to, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). While he clearly made no claim to perfection, Paul was confident enough in the process of Jesus’ growth in his life that he could offer his own faithfulness as a concrete illustration of the character our heavenly Father wants to form in us all (Philippians 3: 12-17; 4:9).

This example-first priority is one that Peter also understood. He coached slaves as well as wives married to unbelieving husbands to follow such a strategy (1 Peter 2:
In fact, the evangelistic impact of this second example helps us to understand how being a **faithful missionary** must be an ongoing fruit-bearing condition for our ministry. It is an ongoing condition because faithful is not something we do so much as someone we are. Wives witnessing to their husbands through the integrity of their lives will fail unless they display a measure of consistency. Our entire lives are part of a collective evidence package that either points young people to the one true God or deflects attention from him. This becomes a fruit-bearing condition because when young people are satisfied that when we missionaries utter words consistent with our lives, they will be drawn to follow Jesus themselves.
2.3 Unified Believers

Jesus found it important in his last days to ask the Father to forge observable unity among believers. He prayed this with an evangelistic strategy in mind; this was how the world might learn of God’s love (John 17:23). Given the timing, purpose and Author of this priority we dare not ignore it in our lives.

This is no small ambition, like it might be if we were only talking about getting local church folks to join our YFC stuff. In fact, just cooperating around mutually beneficial ministry events is no guarantee that we will meet the standard of Jesus’ prayer. Neither do our program collaborations automatically meet his expectations that we display uncommon love to one another (John 13:34). Loving unity takes concentrated effort. There is certainly nothing in the Bible that suggests it will be attained as a side benefit to our ministry tasks.

Consider how much coaching Paul did among the churches on this very topic. He taught the believers in Rome how to navigate their differences so that they could preserve their love for one another at all costs (Romans 14). His beautiful exhortation to love and unity is smack in the middle of his instruction to the Corinthians about how to use their diverse gifts (1 Corinthians 12 – 14). While urging the Galatians to live freely in Christ he cautioned them to not neglect serving one another in love (Galatians 5:13). To the Ephesians he recited the basis of our unity (Ephesians 4: 1-6) and to the Philippians he appealed to the humility of Christ as an example for how we preserve unity (Philippians 2: 1-11). And he reveals to the Colossians that it’s when they are “encouraged in heart and united in love” that they have a chance to really know Christ (Colossians 2: 2-3). In praying for a dear friend he makes this same point, asserting that koinonia will make possible “a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ” (Philemon 6). And there is plenty more in the New Testament, from the pen of Paul and others.

In fact, unity is so often discussed in Scripture that we may have become dulled to both its potential and its demands for our lives and ministries. Or maybe we are just a product of our times.

The American entrepreneurial spirit that has contributed so many positive things to the cause of Christ in the latter half of the 20th century may keep us from seeing how essential this biblical value is to the cause of evangelism. It is not a pragmatic option to be practiced when we get a break from our real work. It is not someone else’s responsibility. It is part of God’s strategy for revealing himself in the world. That’s why our work to unify believers is one of our ongoing fruit-bearing conditions. YFC’s success in youth discipleship evangelism is inseparably linked to this biblical value.
In order to practice this value with clarity, YFC staff ought to cultivate servant partnerships with local churches. This strategy testifies to the reality of how we’ll build unity (as servants) and what the outcome looks like (ministry partnerships).
2.4 Spirit-led Intentionality

There is a deliberative, strategic side to the discipleship evangelism process that’s easy to see in the ministry patterns of Jesus. The dominant example of this is his work with the apostles. After our Lord had a chance to see how responsive his many followers were and spent considerable time in prayer he chose from among them twelve men through which he could multiply himself (Luke 6: 12-16).

What did he have in mind when he made his selections? In one gospel we learn that his purpose was that “they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (Mark 3: 14-15). His ultimate vision for them included deputizing them as disciple-makers (Matthew 28: 18-20) so that an endless stream of his followers would collect themselves in communities throughout history, “for the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1: 11-12). Against such groupings—known as churches—he promised that the gates of Hell would not prevail (Matthew 16:18). And, as Jesus’ revealed in one of his last recorded prayers, the salvation, preparation and commissioning of these twelve was the God glorifying work that he had been assigned to do while on earth. It was a job he stayed focused on until completion (see John 17, especially verse 4).

Sometimes we believe that in order to be led by the Holy Spirit we must have our original plans disrupted. That’s certainly true if the Lord had no part in helping us to establish those first intentions. But Jesus demonstrated a model of Spirit-led intentionality that we would do well to copy in our own ministries.

Certainly Paul caught the pattern. He even coached Timothy to entrust the gospel to reliable men who could faithfully pass it on to others (2 Timothy 2:2). And Paul’s own missionary journeys were guided by a Spirit-led grand goal to preach the gospel in places where it had not been proclaimed (2 Corinthians 10:16).

We must be biblically faithful planners, setting in motion strategies that are in harmony with God’s master design of multiplying disciples and growing His Church. Our activity must be discipleship-oriented, even when it is focused on the evangelism of young people. Those are the instructions we have received from the Lord, and we’re not at liberty to disregard them. Why would we even be tempted to?

Here’s why: there are times that we have our hearts broken as we walk among the lost masses of young people. The urgency of their need overwhelms us and tempts us to find faster ways to do what cannot be hurried. But life change is a crock-pot experience even in a microwave age. The pain of millions of lost teens
does not give us license to shift our attention from what must be our single focus: **we should be urgent in being faithful to Jesus**. We get no bonus crowns for working ahead of the Holy Spirit’s perfect pace. When Jesus encountered such neediness, he, too, was moved. But he instructed the disciples to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers, and that’s a significantly different response than setting aside a disciple-making agenda in order to give direct attention to the multitudes (Matthew 9:35-38).

**Spirit-led intentionality** is based on the assumption that the Lord wants to give us overall guidance and supply us with the direction we must follow if we will be faithful to him. So much about the knowledge of his will—including his discipleship evangelism values—has been supplied in the Scriptures. We submit ourselves to the Lord when we study, pray, plan, decide, hire, write curriculum, and organize as if it matters to God. It does. And he wants to bless us with the fruit that comes from such ongoing faithfulness.
2.5 Spirit-led Spontaneity

Having considered the steady and consistent direction that the Lord supplies us, we also must acknowledge the flip side of the coin. The Holy Spirit doesn’t always move in predictable ways.

After Paul wrote that the Colossians should devote themselves to prayer, he asserted that they should be watchful; he then instructed them to “make the most of every opportunity” (Colossians 4:2, 5). As we move through our lives the Lord would like us to be alert to how he might want us to act in ways we had not anticipated.

Different from preparation in the Spirit, this is preparation for the Spirit. It is about listening and being ready. As an ongoing fruit-bearing condition we have labeled this Spirit-led spontaneity. It’s what we understand Paul to mean when he told his young ministerial protégé, Timothy, to “be prepared in season and out of season” to preach the word of God (2 Timothy 4:2). Likewise, it seems to be what Peter meant when he wrote to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15).

Discipleship evangelism is every bit as much a result of our vigilance in active listening and constant readiness as it is an outcome of our long range planning. The latter helps us to set a clear course. The former helps us to respond to each new moment faithfully. Perhaps that’s what Jesus intended when he attached the participle modifier “going” to the imperative command “make disciples” (Matthew 28:19-20). He certainly demonstrated how to pay attention to the Spirit while moving through life with his disciples.

The Lord can and does indeed speak when our ears or hearts are clogged up... it’s just more normal for Him to speak when His people are listening (Isaiah 6). For the YFC staff worker, volunteer or student leader, our posture must be a daily seeking of the Father instructions, “Lord, what do you want me to do; where do you want me to go; to whom will you send me during the hours you have given me this day?” Active listening implies that the listener is surrendered, humble and ready to change his or her plans to accommodate the Lord’s leading in a given conversation, meeting, event, or an entire day. The combination of active listening and confident readiness is much like what Paul refers to when he instructs us to pray without ceasing and to listen carefully to God’s Spirit (1Thessalonians 5:17-22).

Active listening leads to readiness in the sense that the Holy Spirit will move in
ways that we can only prepare for under His sometimes unpredictable, supernatural touch. The active listener maintains a posture of waiting on the Lord, trusting that when God is ready to speak, He will. At which point, but not before, the listener moves into a renewed action plan. For example, look at how Paul changed his intended course of action in order to live under the authority of the ongoing fruit-bearing condition of Spirit-led spontaneity: “Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had told them not to go into the province of Asia...they headed for the province of Bithynia, again the Spirit of Jesus did not let them go. So instead they went on through Mysia to the city of Troas...” (Acts 16:6-10).

Our work with young people must be opportunity-oriented, but it is always the Lord who opens the doors for real fruit (Colossians 4:3). When the Lord whispers an insight into our heart while we’re talking with a teen, we need to hear it. If he nudges us to be bold, we must respond courageously. And if he cautions us to be quiet, we ought to bite our tongues. If he prompts us to change our established plans, we should act in accordance with his leading. Because we are learning to constantly, actively listen in the midst of day-to-day ministry activity, we are able to submit to Him and adapt accordingly.

That’s why as we train staff and teens for ministry we must go beyond preparing people with tools for evangelistic dialogue. We need to help folks attune their lives to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The great adventure of Spirit-led spontaneity is to be surprised by the work God wants to do through us.

Taken together, YFC’s five ongoing fruit-bearing conditions are a reminder that our lives and ministries serve One Master. The Lord Jesus wants to indwell us and wants us to draw our life from Him. As we do so, we will become increasingly faithful in every area of life. Loving unity will be evident in our relationships with other Christ-followers. We will be hungry to locate our plans in God’s will and excited to be available to Him each moment of the day. Jesus will be allowed to truly function as the Lord of our lives and ministries.

And when Jesus is Lord, he brings forth lasting fruit.
3. YFC Community Ministries

There are currently five core ministry programs resourced by Youth for Christ/USA. They have been organized within two divisions: Campus Ministries and Community Ministries. This operations manual serves the Youth Guidance core ministry, one of three current national ministry core programs located in the Community Ministries division of YFC/USA Ministries. These operations manuals—provided for each one of our national core ministries—are intended to establish definitively what we mean by Youth Guidance so each one of YFC’s local chapters may be aligned with regional and national YFC service centers in their ministry expectations. By clarifying what Youth Guidance is—and is not—we hope that we can establish strategies for more effective ministry management, continued ministry improvement, and steady ministry expansion.

YFC/USA Community Ministries are those that meet the following definition:

Those YFC ministries that initiate relationships with lost young people found outside the secondary school environment through the local community and its agencies for the purpose of seeing them become life-long followers of Jesus Christ.

The other current core programs located in the Community Ministries division are City Life and Teen Parents. Each core program has been established as a strategic expression of our evangelistic mission in the world. Here’s how we define core programs: YFC/USA Ministries’ core programs are clearly defined models, resourced and endorsed for vision/mission effectiveness and proven to be transferable and viable to multiple chapters.

All core ministries in YFC share a commitment to youth discipleship evangelism through The Relational Ministry Process. The Relational Ministry Process includes common philosophy combined with distinctive methodologies. The foundational ongoing fruit-bearing conditions (see chapter 2) and the measurable relational ministry ingredients (see chapter 9) combine to create our common YFC ministry strategy. Each core ministry has also defined their own combination of relational ministry actions (see chapters 8 & 9) that fit the particular niche of YFC’s mission in which they are engaged. A comparison of the relational ministry actions that help to distinguish our core ministries from one another is found in the table at the end of this chapter.
The Community Ministries division of YFC/USA Ministries is also responsible for the development of new programs that fit under the scope of its ministry. We want to both encourage innovation and test new programs, ensuring that they fit our mission and vision, are exportable & transferable to other chapters, and have clearly established relational ministry actions. We call this stage of program development incubation and it is officially defined as follows: A program in incubation is a clearly defined test model with reliable measurement criteria that could ultimately result in a refined, resourced and endorsed core program. The Community Ministries division is currently considering how to best incubate foster care programs and drop-in centers for the future.

The earliest stage of program development is called ideation. It is characterized by our discovery—whether by accident or intention—of what the Lord seems to be doing in his kingdom and dreaming about what that would look like in YFC. Its official definition follows: An ideation program is a yet-to-be-defined model that emerges from Spirit-led innovation efforts in the Kingdom of God.

To summarize, the Community Ministries division in YFC/USA Ministries includes the three core ministries of City Life, Teen Parents and Youth Guidance as well as any incubation or ideation programs that fit under the Community Ministries definition. The other branch in the YFC/USA Ministries family tree is occupied by Campus Ministries. Current core programs of Campus Life, and Campus Life MS, as well as any appropriately targeted incubation or ideation programs, gather under the following definition of Campus Ministries: **Those YFC ministries that initiate relationships with lost students through the secondary school environment for the purpose of seeing them become life-long followers of Jesus Christ.**

The following FAQs may be useful in clarifying how Community Ministries ministry programs move through the designations of core, incubation and ideation:

1. **What are the key criteria for something becoming a core program?**
   Positive answers to the following: Can every chapter conceivably do it? What is the viability for the entire movement? For example, what is the viability of a Surfer-targeted program for the entire movement? By the time something becomes core we want it to be clearly defined, well resourced, and easily multiplied.
2. **What if you have a model that is really strong in a particular region, but not strong anywhere else? Can it ever become a core program for the entire organization? How many chapters have to be doing a program in order for it to become core?**

There’s no firm answer on that, but the decision will be made by the YFC/USA Ministries leadership team with substantial field input. Their role is to go through the process of evaluating a program’s viability.

3. **Is it the goal that we would always have something move towards core?**

We think it would be very healthy if there are always some programs in core, some in incubation, and some in ideation.

4. **Once core, always core?**

No. There can be programs that fall out of core. Everything has a life cycle.

5. **Can local chapters designate something as core, or incubation, etc.?**

Not really. The core designation is a National Service Center function. YFC/USA Ministries will serve the entire movement by assigning programs a status that helps us to focus our limited resources. But it needs to be clear that we’re not saying that just because the NSC doesn’t recognize something as core, chapters can’t try something new. Some local chapters do ministries that are critical to their effectiveness but are designated as incubation or ideation right now. Foster Care programs may be good examples of this.

6. **When something is in incubation, is it definitely going to core?**

No. You might find out in incubation that you’ve created more problems than you solved. Or, it might be too expensive to make it core. For instance, a program can’t go to core if it’s not affordable. It’s also got to be sustainable and transferable. Or, in some cases, a program may need to go through several incubation stages before it goes to core.

7. **Is there a place where we can include non-YFC people and organizations in ideation?**

Absolutely. One of the main things in ideation is trying to discover what God’s already doing in a particular mission-related arena, and exploring how we can grow something from this. This taps into the free, entrepreneurial spirit for which YFC has historically been known. Practically speaking, we’ll look into undefined ideas that
are bubbling up from the YFC movement and the general world of youth evangelism. Research and regular sharing of ideation-stage information may also stimulate ideation development. This forces us to be on the cutting-edge of what we do, and makes us people with a prophetic vision. Some YFC people are really good at thinking like this and their vision and creativity are welcomed and needed within this structure.

8. So what’s the benefit of being an official core program of YFC/USA?
In a word: resources. We can afford to train mainly core programs. We’ll develop fairly standardized job descriptions so that it’s easy to start a core program. Ministry program components will be cleanly defined, resource and operations manuals available, visibility tools developed, and curriculum can be found. And there will be enough different folks doing the program well that we’ll continually update a best practices list so field staff can get help from one another. In making something a core program, we “wrap a fence around it.” We bring some cohesiveness to the program, but not so much structure that people can’t be creative.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>R M A</strong></th>
<th><strong>Campus Ministries</strong></th>
<th><strong>Community Ministries</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contacting</strong></td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(going into the world of young people in order to initiate new relationships)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building Times</strong></td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(spending time in shared activities with young people in order to build new relationships and model Christ-like behavior)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appointments</strong></td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(meeting one on one to provide individual attention and focus on a young person’s specific need)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Small Groups</strong></td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a structured interactive meeting with 2-12 young people)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Large Groups</strong></td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a structured meeting with more than 12 young people)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clubs</strong></td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a weekly large group meeting of more than 25 students that’s high energy, safe, and non-Christian friendly)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentoring</strong></td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a holistic, covenantal relationship between a Christian adult and young person)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Leadership</strong></td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Christian students who are committed to influencing their friends for Christ through YFC-related ministries)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trips</strong></td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(taking young people out of their environment for a shared experience)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Events</strong></td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a YFC sponsored youth activity that enhances the ministry program’s image)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Relationships</strong></td>
<td>✔ ✔</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Team</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(mobilizing Christian adults for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prayer, counsel, and financial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support of a ministry site)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry Team</th>
<th>✔️</th>
<th>✔️</th>
<th>✔️</th>
<th>✔️</th>
<th>✔️</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(mobilizing Christian adults for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discipleship evangelism with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>young people)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Youth Guidance in Perspective

4.1 A Common YFC History

Before we can understand and fully embrace the Youth Guidance concept, it is important to first review our roots and beginnings in Youth For Christ. In the late 1930’s and early 1940’s, during World War II, many young men, mostly ministers and evangelists, were holding large rallies in Canada, England, and the United States. They were called by various names, including “Singspiration” (Kansas City), “Victory Rally” (San Diego), “Voice of Christian Youth” (Detroit), “Word of Life” (New York), “Jubilee” (Los Angeles), “Victorious Christian Youth” (Tacoma), and “Youth for Christ” (Indianapolis), to name only a few.

In its early days, Youth for Christ was not the specialized youth ministry it is today. The crowds were a mixture of young people, adults, middle-aged parents and some older adults. The Youth for Christ rally was the place to be on Saturday night if you were a Christian. Because of large attendance at the rallies, the media coverage was overwhelming and very effective for the Kingdom. The Youth for Christ story was shared in such a way that a stampede descended on YFC, hungry for information on how to start more rallies in more cities around the world.

In 1944, at the Winona Lake Bible Conference in Winona Lake, Indiana, a group of leaders including Roger Malsbury, Dr. J. Palmer Muntz and Arthur McKee, met to discuss how to handle the requests for new rallies. Later that same year in Detroit, a temporary organization was established, electing Torrey Johnson, a Chicago pastor, as the chairman. At this meeting, a summer convention was planned for 1945.

In his new role, Torrey Johnson was flooded with more requests for help. He opened a one-room office on North Wells Street in Chicago and hired a young evangelist by the name of Billy Graham to be the first full-time YFC staff person. Graham began to preach and develop Youth for Christ rallies around the country.

At the summer convention in 1945, Dr. Raymond V. Edman, then president of Wheaton College, led the sessions. Youth for Christ International was formed and Torrey Johnson was elected as the first
President of the YFC movement. A seven-point statement of faith was adopted that remains to this day to serve as our doctrinal platform.

Youth for Christ’s development can be divided into six historical periods. The growth of our ministry philosophy over the years overlaps to some extent, causing the time periods to be approximate. Throughout YFC’s history two common threads endure: an unwavering, passionate commitment to reach “lost young people,” kids outside the scope and impact of the organized Church and secondly a desire to build the Kingdom by exerting focused energy and attention to bridge those same kids into the Church.

**THE FIRST PERIOD: The YFC “Rally”**
From the first rally in 1945 through the early 1950’s, our ministry was essentially large Saturday night evangelistic rallies. In large cities, auditoriums and stadiums seating 2,000 to 10,000 people were filled to capacity on a regular basis. One meeting in Soldier’s Field in Chicago drew over 70,000 people! As a result of God’s Spirit moving through nationally known evangelists and personalities, converted movie stars, songwriters, musicians and gospel teams, many received Jesus Christ into their lives. Youth for Christ rallies were formed all over America and in many other nations.

From its birth through the mid fifties, YFC experienced phenomenal growth and many new ministries became “spin-off’s” of Youth for Christ. The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, World Vision, Greater European Missions, Overseas Crusades and Gospel Films were just a few examples of the new ministries birthed by Youth for Christ.

**THE SECOND PERIOD: The YFC “Bible Club”**
During the second era, Youth for Christ focused our ministry efforts on adolescents. The forerunner of the current Campus Life ministry was born in 1949, through the vision and burden of Jack Hamilton. Jack pioneered the “Bible Club” concept in Kansas City and called it YOB Clubs, “Youth on the Beam Clubs.” Using buses equipped with pianos, the portable clubhouse moved from school to school, and the club ministry was born.

Jack challenged YFC to take on the ministry of the high school campus; he was hired by YFC as the first full-time club staff member. He moved to various cities through the United States establishing ministries. In a few short years, 3,600 clubs were in operation. These clubs eventually led to the birth of “YFC Clubs” which in later years became Campus Life.
With the emphasis on personal evangelism, several thrusts resulted from the club ministry. The development of local, regional and national Teen Talent and Bible Quiz programs opening many new doors of opportunity for the development of high school Christians. High Adventure trips and other special ministries attracted hundreds of new students. An overseas ministry was developed as we sent teen teams from the USA to countries around the world. In the early 50's YFC staff began to work with boys in juvenile institutions. The courts were faced with a backlog of cases and they began to refer kids to YFC to work with during the summer months.

In 1958, Bill Eakin, a Youth for Christ director from Akron, Ohio, became Jack Hamilton's Field Director for the high school ministry of YFC. That same year, Bill, Jack and others wrote the first club manuals. The first Capital Teen Convention was held in Washington, D.C. in December of 1959 with 10,000 in attendance. In 1961, in Salt Lake City, Bill, Jack, Willie Foote, Bob Kraning, Ken Overstreet, and Bruce Washburn met for one of the most important, defining meetings in the history of club ministry. After two days of prayer and seeking the Lord, this team of YFC ministers, received from the Lord the “teen to teen balanced life concept” that became the backbone of our ministry philosophy. Based in Luke 2:52, “Youth for Christ’s balanced life concept is committed to developing in the Christian teenager a physical, mental, social and spiritual balance that will enable him to properly and successfully communicate in action and in word his personal faith in Jesus Christ to his friends, his campus and his world.”

In December 1963 in Washington, D.C. the Second Capital Teen Convention drew over 12,000 teenagers. During the early sixties, a new kind of staff member emerged. They differed from the leaders of the early days who were called upon to promote, plan, and execute large rallies, booking speakers, and orchestrating huge events. Now men and women were needed who could relate to teenagers in personal ministry. This “new breed” was like coaches, encouraging students to do ministry alongside the adult leaders.

Clubs were “teen centered.” The effective staff person was the one who enabled his students to produce the total club meeting. The purpose of the “bible clubs” was threefold: responsible evangelism, student leader development and fellowship for students.

**THE THIRD PERIOD: The Beginning of “Campus Life” & “Youth Guidance”**
During the mid 1960’s and the early 1970’s, major changes took place in our club ministry. To understand what caused the club transformation and the beginning stages of Campus Life, three trends need to be examined. First, we were living in a climate of change in the world. The advent of a technological era brought with it the rapid acceleration of learning, the constant pressure of change as well as a generation of young people who were aggressively seeking answers to the “why’s” of life.

Secondly, there were major changes in the Youth for Christ structure. In 1962 major changes in the constitution of Youth for Christ were made, involving more ministry people in the decision making process. An authentically worldwide Youth for Christ International movement was born in 1968 in Jamaica. YFC/USA became one of a growing number of member nations, which made up the world organization of YFCI.

The third trend that needs to be examined is that America began to have a new grasp on the religious make-up of teenagers. Christian teens made up 5% of the nation, religious teens made up 35% and the unchurched teens of America made up 60% of our nation’s youth.

It was apparent, after an honest evaluation, that YFC’s ministry was almost exclusively with White Christian and religiously oriented teens. The large percentage of students who had either dropped out of churches, or had never attended, and could be best described as “pagan,” were not in any noticeable way a part of our evangelistic outreach efforts. We were also lacking in ministry to ethnic teens, kids who, at that time were described as inner city. Recognizing this glaring weakness in the club ministry, the leadership of YFC, including Ken Overstreet, Jim Green and Mike Yaconelli in San Diego, along with Larry Ballenger in Fresno and Clayton Baumann in North Area YFC of Chicago, took on the challenge of making some significant changes:

- YFC Bible Clubs became Campus Life. This less threatening name enabled us to move into new ministry opportunities.
- Youth for Christ magazine was changed to Campus Life magazine. The content of the magazine was built around the “balanced life” philosophy that outlined the four areas of a balanced life – mental, social, physical, spiritual.
- “Teen to Teen” and our “Balanced Life Philosophy” became the biblical and philosophical framework for all of YFC ministry.

In 1966, Bill Eakin wrote and produced the first “2 plus 2” format also known as the “Insight/Impact” plan. This simple plan used “Insight”
meetings twice a month targeted at teaching and equipping the Christian teenagers to share their faith. “Impact” meetings happened twice a month and were designed to do evangelism outreach.

In 1967, Sam Wolgemuth, the president of YFC/USA, appointed the first Campus Division of Field Staff. This provided for a tremendous step in the development of manuals and materials that were needed to develop the “Insight/Impact” plan. These new formats took the pressure off of planning better meetings each week and allowed the staff to concentrate on more significant times of ministry with teenagers. Staff became less program-centered and more person-centered in their approach to ministry, learning to listen and engage students effectively. We began to understand the concept of “earning the right to be heard.”

At the same time changes were happening with YFC’s ministry to at-risk youth. Initially, the main emphasis was summer camping. In 1963 the state of Indiana and then Governor Matthew Welsh donated Camp Muscata tuck to YFC/Lifeline. Lifeline summer camps became an exciting trend in YFC.

During the mid-60s, a small group of staff began to realize that a summer ministry with delinquents was good but the long-term effectiveness of such a ministry was questionable. As a result, full-time Youth Guidance/Lifeline directors initiated involvement with the summer camp young people during the school year in one-to-one, year-round relationships. Incentive programs for the young people were developed, encouraging them to improve their behavior at home and at school. Some Youth Guidance ministries even incorporated minibikes, donated through the National Youth Project Using Minibikes (NYPUM) as part of their program.

In 1966, Michigan Teen Ranch was founded as a response to the growing number of troubled male teens whose needs were more profound than we could be addressed through the summer camping program. Even though services have expanded through the years to include adoption and foster care, it is best known for its residential programs for both boys and girls who are referred by various state and county agencies in Michigan. In later years, other Youth for Christ-sponsored “teen ranches” were developed, including O’Connell Youth Ranch (Kansas, 1976) and Valley Teen Ranch (California, 1987).

Youth Guidance continued to grow and define its specialized ministry with troubled youth. In 1968, several cities began experimenting with
group home ministries and a number of staff began ministering to court referrals through small groups. The first Youth Guidance Operations Manual, containing a thorough explanation of philosophy and program emphasis, was published in the summer of 1972.

THE FOURTH PERIOD: The Expansion of “Campus Life” & “Youth Guidance”

Beginning in the early 1970’s and moving through the 1980’s, Campus Life built upon its new name and the strong base of ministry ideas that were developing across the nation. A boom in attendance marked this period in club. Many large clubs were developed and the emergence of multiple staff teams took place. The “teen to teen” and balanced life philosophies were solidified. It was not rare to see 200 kids sitting in living rooms all over the nation on weekday evenings completely enthralled in their school’s Campus Life Club. And it was not unusual to find staff men and women around the nation directing 2-4 clubs every week.

Midway through this “heyday” period, apathy hit our nation and it was especially reflected in the faces of our nation’s teenagers. The Vietnam War, Watergate and the unraveling of the Presidency affected Campus Life ministry. In many cities attendance began to drop as the nation’s youth became overwhelmingly preoccupied with self, and the desire to discuss important issues was diminishing.

In response, Campus Life staff continued to minister one-on-one, but also developed special activities to attract students: ski trips, “stress” camping (to push them beyond their self absorption, Project Serve (to provide cross cultural ministry experience), and family counseling programs (to minister to the whole family). A new thrust of small group ministry strategies brought caring, support and a much-needed sense of community.

In the early 80’s Youth For Christ also launched a new program called Junior Varsity, which in some areas was called Campus Life / JV. There were chapters around the country that had pioneered middle school ministry for years, but in 1983 YFC consolidated its grass roots experience into a manual called Junior Varsity. Dick Wynn, then YFC’s President led the campaign to develop the national ministry division of JV. Youth For Christ recognized that middle school and middle school young people were facing increasing pressures that had once been reserved for high school and college-aged young people. Because early adolescents were rapidly losing their childlike innocence, YFC moved aggressively to develop a national program to effectively reach them.
As a result, many chapters around the country began to expand their outreach to include middle school students. There were increasing requests for training, meetings, ideas, and manuals geared toward middle school evangelism. Youth For Christ published three manuals filled with meetings for a three-year cycle. A seven-part video series was also produced which contained comprehensive training for reaching middle school students for Christ. The end of the 80’s established middle school ministry established as a prominent program of Youth For Christ. Training for middle school ministry was offered on a regular basis nationally.

Youth Guidance was expanding as well. By the early 70’s, a significant number of Youth for Christ chapters were developing ministry programs that targeted “troubled youth” – predominantly those who were in jail, or those who lived in high crime, low-income neighborhoods. In many juvenile detention centers, Youth Guidance staff served alongside state and/or county funded Chaplains, and in other situations, Youth Guidance staffs were the Chaplains.

Beginning in the mid-70’s, those incarcerated juveniles who worked hard to improve their behavior while confined, earned special privileges and “temporary release status.” Consequently, Youth Guidance programs, which had either access to, or the equipment and training to incorporate some aspect of “wilderness camping” (backpacking or residential), were able to take advantage of the “system’s” willingness to try new methods of rehabilitation. For several years, Youth Guidance offered a Junior Leadership School, which included various outdoor “stress activities.” “Troubled” young people from various YG ministries across the country attended the multi-week event. The program was designed to develop leadership, communication skills, and other personal skills so that the Christian Youth Guidance teen would become a leader among his or her peers and in the community.

During this same period, Youth Guidance staff that worked with female offenders and inner city young women found themselves in the midst of another ministry opportunity – an outreach to teenaged mothers. This ministry soon became known as Teen MoMs, and in August of 1995 Laura Taylor, Lissa Qualls, Brenda Collard, and Michelle Shewen met in Indianapolis to write the first Teen MoMs operational manual.

As the ministry of Youth Guidance grew, national and regional leaders recognized the urgent need to multiply ministry effectiveness.
throughout Youth for Christ by utilizing volunteers. In 1981, under the leadership of Ron Nikkel, who was at that time the National Youth Guidance Director, YFC produced the Volunteer Mobilization, Motivation, and Management Manual.

In response to the need for ministry to “urban teens”, Russ Knight joined the staff of Metro Chicago YFC. He conceptualized the new shape of the neighborhood ministry in terms of “reaching urban teens.” Over the next sixteen years, under Russ’ leadership, a multiple ministry format for the urban community emerged: club meetings for outreach, sports programs, discipleship programs for Christian growth, music programs, after school programs, tutoring programs, mentoring programs and gang ministry. Notable contributors to the urban format were Dr. Bill Pannell, Cleveland YFC’s Pat Hunt, Calumet Region’s Bennie Simmons, and Pete Sjoblom.

In 1977, Dr. Jay Kessler, then president of Youth for Christ, appointed Glandion Camey as the first National Urban Division Field Staff Director. This was a monumental step in the development of multi-ethnic staff and increased urban ministry. The new ministry emphasis allowed us to start spending significant amounts of time with urban students. We became neighborhood centered, using multiple ministry models.

**THE FIFTH PERIOD: The Development of the “Relational Ministry Actions”**

The early 1980’s reintroduced the terms like “recession” and “depression” into our nation’s vocabulary. Our values and priorities were being reexamined. The “Me Generation” began to evaluate themselves; soul searching produced some tangible changes. News issues were being discussed like abortion, the AIDS epidemic, abused children, the plight of the homeless, toxic waste and terrorism to name a few.

Faced with the reality of limited financial resources and the staggering number of unreached junior and senior high school students, YFC launched the “Evangelism Strategy for the Eighties.” This “battle” plan emphasized volunteer mobilization and the return to the basics of ministry. For Campus Life these basics were contacting, building time, appointments, the Campus Life Club meeting and community based ministry. For Youth Guidance the basics were contacting, building time, appointments, small groups, and mentoring.

Returning to the basics in order to reach a generation for Jesus Christ meant that YFC was in need of focus. The National Ministries Division, facilitated by Bill Muir and driven by the Campus Life Task Forces of the
1990's, led the charge to redefine what was non-negotiable about YFC ministry. Mick Baker and later Kevin Flannagan served as the Campus Life National Director, while Bob Kraft and later Louis Chaney served as the National Director of Campus Life JV. The work that came out of this era allowed us to direct our attention back to pure relational ministry through reexamining some timeless ministry principles. These became known as the “Relational Ministry Actions.” The RMA’s were later adopted by and adapted to most of the other YFC ministries including Teen Moms, Youth Guidance, Urban Ministry and Campus Life JV.

In 1997 Lissa Qualls was hired as National Teen MoMs (now called “Teen Parents”) Director. 1999 Luther Whitfield was hired as National Urban Ministries (now called City Life) Director. These ministry departments were now equal with Campus Life, Campus Life JV and Youth Guidance. This was done in order to better resource those local programs that were developing unique ministries to pregnant and urban teens, apart from Youth Guidance.

THE SIXTH PERIOD: YFC’S “Core Ministries”

YFC’s history is being written daily all across the world. The current expression of our five core ministries—as well as a consideration of those that may be incubation or ideation—is a reflection of the Lord’s leading in 2003. As the needs of a constantly changing youth culture become clear to us we trust God will show us how we can respond faithfully and effectively.
4.2 Youth Guidance Defined

The following official definition of Youth Guidance is contained in four parts, each of which tells some—but not all—of what Youth Guidance intends to be. The advantage of each of these parts is that we may find it useful to employ only part of a definition when speaking to a particular audience and another portion of our definition if we are talking with a different person.

Youth Guidance is a core community-based ministry of Youth for Christ.

The YFC Youth Guidance ministry—through institutional, juvenile justice, or social service agency contacts—connects trained adults with young people to help them make good choices and establish a solid foundation in life.

Like every ministry of YFC, Youth Guidance seeks to engage these young people wherever they are found as life-long followers of Jesus Christ.

Here in Mid-City we........

The final portion of the definition is intended to provide local YFC chapters the opportunity to describe specific ways that Youth Guidance operates in their communities. Some of what follows may assist you to as you complete the definition with your own local description of the Teen Parents program.

Historically, Youth Guidance has been the core ministry program of Youth for Christ/USA that as a result of a "referral," connects trained adults with young people to help them make good choices and establish a solid foundation in life. These referrals typically come from an official of an institutional, juvenile justice, or social service agency.

1. What is meant by the words "institutional," "juvenile justice," and "social service agency"?

The term "institutional" refers to those agencies (including schools) that provide in- and/or outpatient care to young people who may have a variety of behavioral problems due to alcohol and drug abuse, or some type of an emotional or mental health disorder. The term "juvenile justice" refers to any representative associated with the juvenile court, juvenile
confinement and/or detention, law enforcement, parole, or probation. “Social service agency” includes city, county, and state adoption, foster care, and Human Service departments like “Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.”

2. **Why is the purpose statement of Youth Guidance so broad? Why not just focus on young people who are involved in the juvenile justice system?**

It is accurate to say that juvenile violence is a major problem in our country today. According to US Department of Justice figures, juveniles aged 12 to 17 accounted for 24.1% of all crimes committed in 1999. But for all the attention that juvenile delinquents receive, they comprise a relatively small percentage – about 7.4% of the youth population. (That figure is based on the latest census reports showing a population of 39.6 million youth between the ages of 10 and 17 as compared to 2.4 million juveniles between the ages of 10 and 17 who were arrested in 1999.)

On the other hand, it is estimated that 25% of our young people today are “at-risk youth,” according to the National Research Council Panel on High-Risk Youth (1995). Redefining Youth Guidance as the ministry department of YFC that works only with youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system may be appropriate on a local level. But on a national level, it potentially creates a ministry “no man’s land” and keeps us from reaching the “every young person.”

3. **Most youth experts agree that the vast majority of young people today are “at-risk.” How does Youth Guidance define “at-risk”?**

The National Youth Guidance Department has defined an at-risk young person as “a young person who has experienced significant damage and is likely to damage the lives of others.”

4. **What is meant by “significant damage” and “likely to damage the lives of others”?**

A “significantly damaged life” is defined as the presence of negative influences (or the absence of positive influences) that increase the likelihood of destructive life choices. These negative influences come from any or all of these arenas: (1) the community – availability of drugs and firearms, media portrayals of violence, extreme economic deprivation, low neighborhood attachment, etc.; (2) the family – abandonment, abuse in the home, repeated incidences of conflict, divorce, poor role models, etc.; (3) the school – academic struggles, early and persistent antisocial behavior, etc.; and (4) the individual and his/her
peers - rebelliousness, friends who engage in problem behaviors, gangs, mental health issues, lack of concern for others, etc.

The phrase “will likely damage the lives of others” is defined as the strong likelihood that the young person will react to others in such a way as to cause emotional or physical pain through violent means, with no thought given to consequences, either to himself/herself or to others.

5. What three or four models or programs work well with this population?

While there are a number of models and programs that your program might consider (depending on the findings of a Community Needs Assessment), it is absolutely critical that your local ministry commit itself to a long-term strategy, involving some form of mentoring. Given the nature of troubled youth, it may take months before any measurable change is seen in either the young person or the relationship. (Keep in mind that many young people have few healthy relationships with adults, and that is even truer with at-risk youth.)

Models that work well with this population of youth include both a spiritual and life-issue component. Examples of a “life-issue component” include the following: (1) anger management; (2) decision making skills based on biblical values; (3) educational and job training; (4) conflict resolution; and (5) healthy relationships with peers, especially the opposite sex.

Examples of models and programs that include both components include after-school tutoring, Chaplaincy ministries to youths who are incarcerated, drop-in centers, and neighborhood small groups that meet in a variety of settings like churches and recreation centers.

6. We have a juvenile center in our city. How can I get a ministry started there?

Assuming that the findings of a Community Needs Assessment indicate that a Chaplaincy ministry is a strategic move for your chapter to take, you have already taken some critical steps. The face-to-face interviews you have conducted with key juvenile court services and corrections officials will help you build relationships with people who must be “on your team” if you want to develop a ministry to incarcerated youth. The National Youth Guidance Department can also send you the Juvenile Institution Ministry Manual, and it will guide you through some other key steps including working with volunteers. And, you should also visit other YFC ministry centers that have a strong institutional ministry.
7. I am working on a school campus and want to find a way to reach more of the “hard to reach” that is mentioned in YFC’s Grand Goal. How do I begin to do that?

First and foremost, pray. Ask God to direct you to other adults and students who already have that sensitivity to young people who are “on the fringe.” Meet with other campus ministries (e.g., Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Young Life, and where possible, youth group leaders from area churches) to get a better perspective of the teens that are already involved in other programs, and then strategize how to reach different groups. You should also ask teachers at your school to give you names of students that would benefit from a different ministry approach than what you might be taking with your current clubs.

There are a couple other things to keep in mind, too. First, “hard to reach” young people are not typically responsive to a large group format, especially one where they are clearly in the minority. You will be more effective with a small group approach, and only then as you develop one-to-one relationships with them. And second, pick up a copy of an excellent book called Risk in Our Midst: Empowering Teenagers to Love the Unlovable, Dr. Scott Larson, published by Group Publishing. Dr. Larson’s book includes some very critical information and six small group meetings designed to facilitate learning experiences for your current club members.

8. Where can I go to find out information about “at-risk youth?” Are there some good websites out there?

The National Youth Guidance website, www.youthguidance.org, has a number of religious and secular organizations posted on its “links” page.

9. How can I create opportunities for churches in my community to be involved in this type of an outreach?

Depending on what ministry program you want to develop, it is important that you first find out what churches in your area are doing to reach the “unchurched.” Some churches are working as part of a network to create “alternative worship experiences” so that Christian teens can invite their unsaved friends. That may be one step you can take, but it still may not get you to young people are not on the “spiritual radar screen” of most Christian teens.

If you are working in an urban area, it is even more important that you invest time to build a relationship with the youth workers at particular churches to find out what they are already doing, and how you can possibly come alongside them to learn from them and assist them in their
efforts. (Several years ago, a well-known Christian ministry offended national urban church leaders by statements made in one of its publications. The ministry was guilty of the same mistake we might make from time to time – assuming that God is not at work until we get there!)

One other note about this question: Many of the Youth Guidance programs that operate some sort of an institutional ministry have done a great job in this area, since their role as Chaplains or religious program coordinators gives them the ability to act as “gate-keepers” to the juvenile facility. Churches that have an active role within an institution have a better chance of having an impact with youth once they are released.

10. What can the National Service Center do to help me get a Youth Guidance ministry program up and running?

The National Youth Guidance Department can assist you in completing a Community Needs Assessment which will help you identify the areas your program might initially target. Once the needs assessment is done, regional and national staff can assist you in the development of the program(s) that meet those critical needs.
4.3. Youth Guidance Scope

He is 17, and according to his mom, has been abusing pot for at least two years. His parents have tried a number of things to help him, including counseling, restricting the time he has with his friends, and home-schooling. But despite their efforts, their son still makes poor choices, and was recently charged with a number of offenses, including under-age drinking and arson.

Because of a friend’s influence, this 15-year old gal has been involved in the local YFC program for three years. Her divorced mom spends all of her free time on the Internet, so she spends a lot of time with her grandparents. She knows her faith in Christ and her involvement in the local ministry have kept her from making the wrong choices often made by her peers.

Different stories and situations, yet the two youths have at least one issue in common: They fit the classic profile of an adolescent who is “at risk,” and as such, they represent the type of young person who is the focus of the Youth for Christ/USA (YFC/USA) National Youth Guidance ministry. This national department has defined an at-risk youth as a...

a young person who has a significantly damaged life and will likely damage the lives of others.

Note the following:
• Young person: defined as someone between the ages of 10 and 21.
• Significantly damaged life: defined as the presence of negative influences (or the absence of positive influences) that increase the likelihood of destructive life choices. These negative influences come from any or all of these arenas: (1) the community – availability of drugs and firearms, media portrayals of violence, extreme economic deprivation, low neighborhood attachment, etc.; (2) the family – abandonment, abuse in the home, repeated incidences of conflict, divorce, poor role models, etc.; (3) the school – academic struggles, early and persistent antisocial behavior, etc.; and (4) the individual and his/her peers – rebelliousness, friends who engage in problem behaviors, gangs, mental health issues, lack of concern for others, etc.
• Will likely damage the lives of others: defined as the strong likelihood that the young person will react to others in such a way as to cause emotional or physical pain through violent means, with no thought given to consequences, either to himself/herself or to others.
To accomplish its mission of cooperating with the Holy Spirit in the transformation of at-risk youth into life-long followers of Jesus Christ, Youth Guidance ministries utilize a variety of models and programs, including:

- Chaplaincy programs and services at juvenile boot camps, detention centers, and institutions across the country
- Counseling services for youth and their families
- Educational programs that assist young people with their schooling, and in some cases, prepare them for the job market
- Mentoring programs that match Christian adults with at-risk young people who have been referred to them by police and social service agencies.
- Neighborhood clubs that meet in churches and recreation centers

As is the case with every core ministry of YFC, the National Youth Guidance Department strongly affirms the power of the “Three Story Evangelism” approach of sharing the gospel with troubled youth. Every Relational Ministry Action (RMA) will have its place in some YG programs, especially those that have a strong neighborhood (versus institutional) component. But it is recommended that Youth Guidance staff invest a significant portion of their ministry energies in building relationships of change (i.e., mentoring) with individual youths, and with youths in a small group setting.

In order to position Youth Guidance as a significant national force in the field of ministry to at-risk youth, this department must accomplish the following:

1. Design and implement a national funding and marketing strategy.
2. Design and develop tools that will enable every YFC chapter, as its first ministry priority, reach at-risk youth in its community. Components include: (a) a communication and funding strategy that tells the “Youth Guidance story” to adults and clearly models the value of partnership with appropriate agencies. The “audience” for this strategy includes YFC local leadership, church leaders, potential donors, and adults from the private (businesses and foundations) and public sector (court system, educational system, police, social service agencies, and other youth organizations). (b) Assessment tools that identify the critical needs of a local community that a YFC ministry can address from its mission perspective; and (c) a network of other YFC programs and staff to come alongside new and existing Youth Guidance ministries.
3. Design, develop, and distribute age- and setting-appropriate curriculum for at-risk youth that address the needs of the whole person - emotional, mental, social, and most importantly, spiritual.
(This also includes material and training that targets critical areas like education and independent living skills.)

4. Design and develop training materials to motivate, equip, and mobilize Christian adults (YFC ministry staff and church adults) to reach at-risk youth wherever they are, including these type of settings: juvenile detention centers and institutions, neighborhoods, treatment settings (e.g., drug rehab, group home, mental health facility, etc.), and school campuses.

5. Design and develop strategies that identify young people at-risk, especially those not old enough (younger than 10 in most states) to be involved in the juvenile justice system, and those who have already exhibited (in settings like a school or a local recreation center) antisocial and delinquent behavior.

6. Develop a national mentoring strategy that will connect youth upon their release from a juvenile facility to the resources that can reduce their likelihood of re-offending. At the minimum, those resources include a Christian adult, Christian peers, curriculum, and possibly, a job. (Note that in some cases, effective “after-care” includes a component that addresses and resources the issues and needs of the family.)

7. Initiate and develop partnerships and relationships with national ministries and organizations that can enhance the effectiveness and visibility of the Youth Guidance ministry.
5. Youth Guidance Staff

The telephone rings, and you recognize the voice on the other end as the administrator of the local detention center. You remember meeting her at a school event a couple months ago, and though she seemed somewhat interested in knowing more about YFC, she also indicated that she was too involved in some judicial matters at the local state house. But now, she was calling you to offer you the opportunity to run a Sunday afternoon “religious service” once a month at her facility.

Months go by, and the credibility you have gained provides you with a growing number of opportunities to meet with other judicial and law enforcement personnel. And once in a while, the school counselor at the local middle school makes a point of asking your MS staff member to spend time with “Cedric” since he has so many problems at home.

Without planning or budgeting for it, you suddenly realize that your chapter has the potential to start a new core ministry. You talk to your board and discuss the steps necessary. Your National Field Director gives you the names of other chapters in your region that have an effective Youth Guidance ministry, and during the next couple months, you visit those ministry centers with some of your “heavy hitter” board members and donors.

Following the visits, you have more discussions and meetings. Your Community Needs Assessment identifies all the possible ministry options, and an effective strategy evolves. But what happens now? How do you determine who is to develop and lead the new core ministry?

While your situation may differ from the one that has just been described, chances are that you will deal with the same issues of hiring appropriate Youth Guidance staff at some point. This section is designed to help you identify and process through some of those key issues, enabling you to build a strong Youth Guidance ministry team.

(Note that for purposes of discussion, this material will focus on paid staff - full and part-time - versus “ministry team/volunteer staff.” A number of documents pertaining to job descriptions and screening tools are located in the Appendix, but you should also access documents via Youth for Christ’s Intranet site.)

Youth experts or people mobilizers?
The reality of Youth Guidance ministry, or any core ministry for that matter is that there will always be more young people than qualified adults who can minister to them and address some of their profound needs. For that reason alone, make every effort to hire as your first Youth Guidance staff person, an adult whose passion for lost young people drives him or her to mobilize other Christian adults in the community.

**Competency with troubled youth versus “adult presence?”**
Actually, this is a both/and versus an either/or. It is vitally important that your staff either possess the skills to build relationships with at-risk young people or be trained in them. (How else can the ministry grow, and how can he or she train others unless they possess those skills?) But he or she must also understand and respect the realities of working in environments (like institutions) and “systems” (like courts) that expect and demand adult behavior and attire.

**“Big picture” oriented or “glued to the details?”**
In a perfect world, your Youth Guidance Director, or any staff member for that matter, would be proficient and comfortable with both. But reality being what it is, you will not get both. As a possible solution, consider the use of board personnel or an experienced Youth Guidance staff person from another chapter to help your new staff member stay balanced and focused on the critical goals and objectives that have been determined for him or her.

**Full-time or part-time?**
The answer to this question may depend primarily on these two issues (there may be others): One, funding for the program. Is the local board committed to the new ministry and willing to fund it for the length of time that may be necessary for the new staff person to build his or her support base? Or, will the new staff person, be expected to locate their own sources of funding – in addition to all that is involved in building a new ministry? And two, what is the real, identified potential of ministry growth in the community? (This includes a number of responses that will be gathered as a result of the Community Needs Assessment process.)

Once you have made the decision to move ahead with the hiring of a staff person, here are some issues and personal qualities to be looking for:

Leadership abilities: What proven “track record” does an individual have that demonstrates his or her ability to recruit, equip, mobilize, and manage other staffs, paid and/or volunteer? Are they willing and capable of investing in other adults who may become more effective in working with Youth Guidance young people than they? Are they like
John the Baptist who wanted to stay out of Jesus’ way so He could accomplish the Father’s plan? Or are they more like a “Herod” who only wanted the recognition for all he had done? Are they willing to be held accountable for the growth of the program, and can they hold other staffs accountable in a manner that affirms the work and value of others?

Ministry experience: What is this person’s “ministry story” and what experience and/or training do they have in this arena of youth ministry?

**What is their motivation for this ministry?**
Many sincere and good-intentioned adults look to this field of ministry in order to “make a Kingdom-impact” but for the wrong reasons. While it may be more prevalent among ministry volunteers, some staff join a ministry of this type in order to satisfy or address unmet emotional needs or personal pain from their past.

**What is their understanding of ministry “success?”**
“Success” in any core ministry of YFC should never be assumed to be a quick “in and out” approach to ministry, and the same is true for Youth Guidance. Our young people deal with profound issues and needs, and measurable change will not come overnight. Is the prospective staff person aware of this, and how will he or she deal with setbacks?

**How will the staff person work to balance the world’s approach to delinquent behavior with Biblical truth?**
In this arena of ministry, it is vitally important that Youth Guidance staff have a good grasp of “the system’s” approach and understanding of violent and emotionally disturbed youth. While he or she must acknowledge it and respect it – and never challenge it when in the presence of young people – they must also remain committed to the truth that “all men are sinners,” and that only through a redeeming relationship with Christ can a new way of thinking and living ever begin.

**Are they “train-able” in matters and policies as set forth by Youth for Christ, nationally and locally? Can they pass a “background screening?”**
While it is not intended to be humorous, there is the reality that some people with great youth ministry skills and passion carry with them too much “history” that disqualifies them from direct contact with young people. YFC’s application process must be followed, but you should also check with your local and/or state officials in order to meet their requirements as well. (This matter also pertains to ministry volunteers.)
6. Youth Guidance Context

“Understanding the community” is essential not only for developing a Youth Guidance ministry, but also for maintaining a knowledgeable relationship with community structures as part of an ongoing Youth Guidance program. Every three or four years, each Youth Guidance program should follow the “Community Survey” steps to maintain a high level of community awareness. Because changes sometimes occur in the fabric of community systems, this procedure is also helpful in evaluating the relevance of the Youth Guidance program design.

Understanding the Community

To have an effective ministry, Youth Guidance staff must know the area in which they work. They must know the different agencies that service that area and how they function. They must understand the “politics” (or the power struggles) that occur between governmental leaders, agencies and churches. This is information to be gained from research, not hearsay. To know the area takes time and energy – it is not accomplished in a few weeks or even thoroughly in a few months.

For the purpose of this section, some definitions will be helpful. Note that these definitions are by no means exhaustive but will be used in this section as basic terms.

1. Ministry area: the total geographical area in which a local YFC program is designed to minister.
2. City: one unit of government sometimes made up of many communities and neighborhoods.
3. County: usually includes more than one city or town plus the rural areas outside of incorporated city or town limits.
4. Neighborhood: a small geographical area bound together by social, ethnic, economic or other common factors.

The best approach to gaining the needed understanding of an area and its community is to research the total area and all the agencies that serve it (e.g., governmental, social and churches). Then each community can be researched with greater detail, thereby gaining specific insights on its relation to the whole.

In becoming familiar with a given ministry area, a staff person should begin with an assessment of the different agencies working within that
area. In many locations the United Way has a directory of agencies that it serves. These directories often have an explanation of purpose and may even list the agency’s location and its director. Another resource may be the local chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, which often has a list of credible social agencies within the surrounding area. Another resource may be the Chamber of Commerce. A more limited approach may be to establish rapport with the local police and juvenile court authorities, which may have information on the most viable and involved agencies in the area of juvenile problems.

A Youth Guidance worker should be objective in their approach to learning about the ministry area. If they haven’t lived in the area, there is a danger in misunderstanding the socioeconomic, political and religious atmosphere. It’s wise to outline the area and its make-up prior to establishing contact with individuals. This will help make information collected more organized and relevant to your ministry in the community. The following outline is designed to achieve this purpose.

The Community Survey (Youth Guidance Feasibility Study)

The Youth Guidance Community Survey is a programmed approach for developing a thorough understanding of the community. It forms the basis for a feasibility study in situations where a new Youth Guidance ministry is being contemplated.

The following are the basic objectives of the community survey:

1. To obtain general demographic information relevant to the ministry area.
2. To understand the structure of the governmental and service delivery systems of the community (e.g., political, educational, social service, justice).
3. To obtain firsthand knowledge of the kinds of services available to meet the needs of troubled youth and their families. These services fall into the following major categories:
   - Police and Justice system (e.g., police, courts, probation, court services)
   - Education (e.g., guidance and counseling, special education, alternative education)
   - Social service (e.g., government-related welfare and social services including child protection; also all non-religiously based programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, YMCA, Boy’s Clubs of America, Partners, Volunteers in Probation, Prison,
and Parole) Neighborhood Services (includes all local neighborhood programs such as drop-in centers, community centers, crisis intervention programs, drug programs, employment programs, and emergency shelter care)
Religious agencies (includes churches, Salvation Army, Catholic Family and social services, independent agencies with religious base)

4. To determine possible gaps in type of service or service accessibility and also specific areas that may be under serviced.
5. To determine points of collaboration with existing agencies and the justice system.
6. To evaluate all of the above information, and then to design or determine at what point(s) Youth Guidance could best provide a necessary service to youth in the community and at the same time work in close harmony with existing services.

The following survey forms and agency interview guides (located in the appendix) are used in the Youth Guidance Community Assessment process:

- Demographic and General Data (general community systems information and basic population statistics, Form A)
- Police Department (interview sheet, Form B)
- Court (interview sheet for court services director or judge, Form C)
- Probation Services (interview sheet, Form D)
- Detention Facilities (interview sheet, Form E)
- Schools (interview sheet for use with administrator, Form F)
- Social Services (summary sheet, Form G)
- Neighborhood Services (summary sheet, Form H)
- Religious Agencies (summary sheet, Form I)
- Agency Interview Guide (Form J) Note: The agency interview guide is used with individual agencies for the categories of social services, neighborhood services and religious agencies. Data from the interview guide is then summarized and transferred to the appropriate summary sheets indicated above.
- Church Pastor Interview (Form K)
- Youth Guidance Feasibility and Design Input (summary of all data, Form L)

**Procedure for Conducting the Community Survey**

The recommended procedure for conducting the community survey begins with obtaining a social service agency directory.
Key representative agencies should then be selected from each of the agency categories listed earlier in this section. Initially, each of the major agencies, then several secondary ones should be chosen to bring the total in each category to about three or four. Interviews should be arranged and specific appointments made to visit personally each of the targeted agencies. When the agency interview guide is followed, the actual interview usually takes 30 to 45 minutes. More time is required for the major agencies, such as the police department and the court, where the specialized data forms are used.

The first interview should be with someone from the social planning department of the city, or from some similar department that can furnish a good overview of the demographics and services available in the city. (See Form A of the Community Assessment forms.) When interviewing the police department, the director of the youth division or the community services director should be included. (Form B of the Community Assessment should be used as the interview guide.) The visit to the court should include the director of court services, the administrator of the juvenile court or one of the juvenile court judges. (Form C of the Community Assessment forms should be used as an interview guide.)

The appointment with the probation department should involve the casework supervisor, the chief probation officer or someone else in a supervisory capacity. (Use Form D of the Community Assessment Survey as the interview guide.) At the detention facility the best persons to see are the superintendent, treatment coordinator, or the chaplain. (Form E of the Community Assessment Survey is an interview guide.)

Because Youth Guidance usually does not usually deal directly with the school system but rather with youths who are in alternative schools or out of school, the guidance department or the director of alternative education should be approached. In most instances because of the age of the youths helped by Youth Guidance, this contact will be at the junior high school level rather than the senior high level. (See Form F of the Community Assessment Survey.)

The Agency Interview Guide should be used when interviewing social service, neighborhood and religious agencies. The data collected for each of those three categories should then be transferred to the appropriate summary sheets found on Forms G, H and I of the Community Assessment Survey. After all the interviews have been completed, the critical results should be tabulated on the Youth Guidance Feasibility and Design Input sheet. (See Form J of the Community Assessment Survey.)
profile of the community should then emerge, revealing the openness of the various systems to Youth Guidance interaction and the spectrum of youth service needs in the community (by type and geographic location).

**New Program Start-Up**

If the community assessment is being conducted as an exploratory procedure prior to new program-start up, careful attention should be given to examining all of the points at which Youth Guidance might be able to cooperate with community agencies and various justice and social systems. This will determine the design of the Youth Guidance program.

For example, if the court or the probation department is in need of community-based agencies to provide alternatives to young persons in the juvenile justice system, a Youth Guidance referral program should be designed. The specific ingredients of the referral program must correspond realistically to the kinds of services for which the court or the probation people are looking. This might be the one-to-one volunteer component, or the small group component with additional weekly recreation.

If the community assessment points out serious needs for youth services in a particular neighborhood, a combination of neighborhood ministries and a referral program might be a possibility. If, however, needs are apparent in a specific neighborhood and there is no possibility for collaboration or referral with another agency, then a neighborhood ministry might be the option.

In some communities the best way to interact with the system is through a Chaplaincy or volunteer program in a detention or treatment facility. This involvement has the benefits not only of providing an avenue of working with youth but of proving oneself to the other agency structures that will become aware of Youth Guidance involvement.

Thus the Youth Guidance program in any given community should be designed in response to the needs and opportunities uncovered in the course of the community assessment. Along with the design of the program, a strategy for the implementation and development of the program should be established.

Both the design of the program and the strategy are developed in consultation with the local Executive Director, the National Youth Guidance Director, and persons from the Regional Service Centers.
Rural/Urban Considerations

In rural towns and counties, as well as in smaller cities and many suburban areas, the best design usually involves the utilization of the referral model as the operational emphasis. This is true because frequently there are fewer agencies involved in providing that kind of resource to the justice system. An area detention facility is also often targeted in terms of an institutional service outreach. In these areas it is possible to develop a referral program without much regard for the location of youth being referred since distance and accessibility may not be as much of a factor.

In urban, more densely populated areas, it is usually most efficient to begin a Youth Guidance program by targeting a particular neighborhood or community that is in need of service. The program can then be designed to be purely a front-line neighborhood outreach ministry or also involve some form of a referral component. Detention facility ministries may be of somewhat restricted viability because of the difficulty of accomplishing certain ingredients of the Relational Ministry Process since many of the youths involved will be from widely separated parts of the city. However, if religious services are not being provided to the incarcerated youth, an institutional ministry can be a great starting point.

The Youth Guidance staff must know and understand its community to be effective. The major goal of maximizing Christ’s impact in the world cannot be done in isolation and without regard to that world.

Beginning Youth Guidance In a New Community

Every community has teenagers who do not fit into the mainstream of society and need special or individual attention. This is the purpose of Youth Guidance. It takes the gospel to the youth who are often ignored. It goes beyond a community’s social agencies.

When the Youth Guidance program is being considered, someone should take the leadership in successfully starting it. If a YFC program already exists, this leader would be the Executive Director. If there is no program in existence, it may come under a local committee. In any case, the leadership needs to be committed to the need for Youth Guidance in the community.

The first step in establishing a Youth Guidance ministry is the contacting of the Youth Guidance National Director and the National Field Director. This
should be followed by daylong visits to at least two strong Youth Guidance programs. The Youth Guidance leaders can recommend programs that will provide a practical look at what Youth Guidance can do.

The next step involves building community support. Board members should have the opportunity to hear a Youth Guidance director tell how Youth Guidance can enhance an already existing program. If there is no board or YFC program, a local steering committee should be brought together to successfully provide leadership in developing Youth Guidance. This group should include people who have potential for financing, public relations, and contacts with the judicial system. These people, of course, should be firmly grounded in the faith. The strength of Youth Guidance lies in the fact that it takes the gospel to troubled youth, not that it is another social agency.

As this local group begins to function, a resource team should be brought together for a feasibility study to determine where young people are in the community and what specific community needs Youth Guidance could fill. The feasibility committee should include Youth Guidance people from the region who can give broad input and overview to the process. One or two days should be set aside during which these people can come to the area. They will divide into teams and move across the area, meeting with judges, counselors, institutions, church leaders, and police officials.

At the end of the 24- or 48-hour period, the teams will compile their material, which can later be given to the program in the form of a completed study and program design.

While this feasibility team is in town, a breakfast or brunch should be arranged so interested community people can see firsthand what is possible through a Youth Guidance ministry. This is a good way for the excitement of the new program to become contagious. Meeting with YFC/YG veterans from other cities also builds credibility for a new program. Such a meeting can be a good beginning for fundraising.

After the program has been studied and recommendations have been made, the local leaders need to set up a budget, including salary considerations.

Also included in the budget should be the Youth Guidance share of secretary’s time, office phone share, rent and utilities. The program budget should reflect that very little revenue would come from the youth
who will be helped by Youth Guidance. Therefore, money should be allotted for equipment, facilities and whatever it will cost to take a teenager through a normal year’s program. Usually, an arbitrary figure can be placed on this, according to the number of young people anticipated in the program.

The feasibility study should enable a Youth Guidance director to develop a program and a budget for the first year. Finding the personnel and revenue sources should be given priority. When the right people have been found, they can develop the program. Do not start recruiting kids or developing ministry, until the right people and adequate funds are in place!

The following are some tips on beginning a successful Youth Guidance program:

1. Invest money to find a qualified leader. This will avoid many personnel and program problems later. Youth Guidance, when administered properly, will support itself quite quickly.

2. Start small and concentrate on one or two program areas. Numbers have very little bearing in a Youth Guidance ministry. The importance lies in its quality. Concentration on one or two program areas allows for specialization. Referral or neighborhood ministries are the best initial programs. Institutions are a little harder and group homes should never be started unless there is a definite program to administer them.

3. Make Youth Guidance a part of the overall YFC ministry. Youth Guidance will be most successful when given room to work within the boundaries of the ministry and allowed to find its own level of success. However, it needs the respect, equality and strength of the total YFC program. It must be a part of the team.

4. Be patient with the program. It will not grow in the same manner or breed the same kind of success as a Campus Life or Campus Life Middle School program. Allow it to fulfill its own purposes.

Procedure for Youth Guidance startup in areas that already have existing YFC programs:

Action Steps:

1. The Executive Director contacts the National Field Director and National Service Center for purpose of notification.
2. Meeting with ED, NFD and if possible, the National Youth Guidance Director.

3. Needs assessment/feasibility study coordinated by National Youth Guidance Director and/or someone from the Regional Service Center.

4. Summary report of needs assessment and possible program possibilities sent to ED and NFD.

5. Executive Director presents needs assessment and program direction possibilities to local board for approval.

6. Designing of program and budget with strong emphasis on a possible person who might be available. (Copy sent to NFD and National Youth Guidance Director.)

7. Final approval by Board and Executive Director. Commitment includes at least 100% of first year's budget underwritten.
Youth for Christ has witnessed through the years that almost anyone who “has a heart for troubled youth” and a larger than average share of patience will be able to minister effectively to young people.

The strong focus on volunteerism in Youth Guidance has allowed for ministry models that are do-able and volunteer-friendly. However, if we plan to develop a multifaceted YFC ministry, reaching youth “wherever they may be found,” we must be more intentional in developing a philosophy of ministry to at-risk youth; in other words, we need a “treatment model.” To do this we must ask the questions that, when answered, will allow us to initiate ministries that, though very different in methodology (compare neighborhood groups with Institutional Ministry), are based on common values and assumptions about at-risk youth today, as well as a sound biblical foundation.

Prior to developing any ministry objectives, the Youth Guidance staff person should analyze the target youth, make intelligent assumptions about the dominant causes of delinquent behavior, and develop a philosophy of ministry. To be useful to the ministry as a whole, the treatment model should be easily communicable to Youth Guidance volunteers. In fact, as much as practical, the chapter’s volunteers should be involved in the process of developing the philosophy of ministry.
7.1 Becoming Youth Culture Experts

As missionaries who travel in the world of young people it’s not unfair to expect that we bring some youth culture expertise to our jobs. Our mission assumes that we will reach young people where they live. That assumption alone will require us to become students of youth culture. It’s where they live.

If we take some time to reflect on just the language training foreign-field missionaries do to prepare for their work we can appreciate our own need to become fluent as “youth-ese” conversationalists and knowledgeable of the specific dialects affecting the world of “youth-ese”. We need to study adolescent culture and constantly be looking for ways to help young people bridge the gospel message and lifestyle back into the world in which they live. YFC staff ought to become both general youth culture conversationalists and specific dialect experts of the young people among whom they work.

7.1.1 General Expertise

General youth culture expertise is that which can be learned through study and mass media exposure. It is through such generally accessible information that we may discover, for instance, that around 25% of our United States population will likely be Hispanic in the year 2050 (US Census Bureau estimates). Or we may become aware that media and marketing have contributed to establishing a global youth culture based upon adolescent experience, where young people from different countries may actually have more in common with each other than with those from their native lands (Offer, et. al., 1988, The Teenage World. Plenum Medical). We could learn through such means who the Osbournes are and how many young people watch them on MTV.

Is it important to know that 44% of high school seniors have never been involved in a religious youth group during their adolescent years? (Smith, Denton, Faris, & Regenerus. 2002. Mapping American Adolescent Religious Participation. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 41 (4), 597-612.) Or that among 12th grade students “only the most frequent religious service attenders are significantly less likely than non-attenders to have used drugs in the last year?” (Smith & Faris. 2002. Religion and American Adolescent Delinquency, Risk Behaviors and Constructive Social Activities. National Study of Youth and Religion, Research Report #1, p. 18.) Would it be valuable to learn that frequent Bible reading
is one of the few strong predictors that a young person making a pledge to remain sexually pure until marriage might be able to keep that pledge? (Rahn. 1999. Youthfest Research Study. www.linkinstitute.com] Much of this information is a bit off the beaten path, but it is all accessible for those hungry to learn.

Therein lies the key. We won’t become well-educated experts in youth culture without being willing to dig out the available knowledge.

The bottom line is that we have to work hard at staying abreast of youth culture. Some will find it useful to subscribe to newsletters or magazines that help condense the volumes of information into usable forms. Christian and secular seminars are also available to help us stay current. An occasional tour through a bookstore can provide some illuminating insights; the same could be said for video and music stores.

YFC/USA Ministries will regularly suggest sources that are either especially rich in content or efficient in summarizing important information related to adolescents. For the staff person committed to cultivating general expertise in youth culture, it’s not that hard to find what we need.

7.1.2 Specific Expertise

Specific youth culture expertise is that which is largely learned through direct experience and observation. It is based upon knowledge that can normally be gained only through a considerable investment of time and attention. In many cases, it is an expertise that we cultivate naturally because we have lived in the culture in the past as teenagers ourselves. When we attempt to walk in this familiar culture in the present we have the advantage of ministering in their world with an insider’s expertise. For example, while there aren’t many YFC staff who might understand a sub-culture of gothic young people, there are likely some from our ranks who grew up among these dark, black-clothed teens.

This doesn’t mean that there might not be available material from general sources that can be used to enhance our understanding of a specific adolescent group. The richness of story in some movies or music videos are often lodged in particular experiences. Some research is of the ethnographic variety, allowing the researcher to plunge into a unique culture for investigation. But none of these sources can automatically be labeled as authoritative when we
want to learn about, say, the backyard fight club culture that has emerged in a small town in the Midwest. Or the gang activity in that same town. In fact, prior experience in working with particular gangs is no guarantee that our knowledge is sufficient for ministry to a different group of gang-involved teens.

We best cultivate specific youth culture expertise when we define the boundaries of the culture and plunge in with eyes wide open. It may take some “walk-around” time simply to figure out what subcultures even exist. That’s OK. Our immersion does not only serve our cultural learning curve. It is also how we build relationships of trust and rapport so that the gospel message might be heard and understood.

Our goal in becoming experts is in no way an arrogant attempt to gain knowledge for the sake of knowledge. We seek to build significant, trustworthy relationships that allow us to live and preach the gospel in relevant, credible ways.
7.2 A General Profile of Youth Guidance Young People

Youth Guidance has, in past years, focused on four basic root causes that seem to characterize troubled youth. These are the four assumptions:

1. Among young people in trouble, there is extensive low self-esteem. The youth see themselves as failures and as having no future.
2. Alienated young people have a peer group that does not produce caring relationships and often produces behavior that is labeled deviant or delinquent.
3. Troubled youth lack a relationship with a caring adult model. There has been little trust developed between the child and an adult who loves unconditionally and who disciplines fairly.
4. The young person has not established a relationship with God in which he feels forgiven for his sin and clean before God as a new person in Christ. The young person in trouble is weighted down by his moral guilt (not just neurotic guilt) and has not had a legitimate spiritual experience that enables him to deal with his spiritual need. (This is not to say the young person necessarily feels guilty.)

While Youth Guidance agrees these four assumptions characterize many youth “at risk,” we do not feel we can continue to say that these are the only causal roots that characterize troubled youth.

For example, in regard to the issue of extensive low self-esteem (the first root cause), recent studies have shown that many youth who are involved in delinquent and violent behavior exhibit high self-images (not low self-images as previously believed). Some at-risk youth, especially those active in gangs, often build their self-esteem on their successes as they meet the expectations of their peers. The gang assumes the function of the family in developing the youth’s self-concept by giving positive reinforcement and recognition for their actions—even though those actions are negative. Their strong self-esteem is not a false self-esteem. It is their real self-esteem, but it has been developed upon a bad foundation.

In regard to the second root cause, the peer groups of alienated youth are at times, very effective at producing caring relationships. But these relationships, with their “code of loyalty” and dependency, often produce deviant and delinquent behavior.

Related to that is their deficient values base which determines their day-to-day choices, and therefore, their behavior. The values that they have
assumed as their own were learned from their peers and the media, and fill the vacuum that should have been filled by values taught through adequate parenting. For them, right is wrong, and wrong is right.

Other significant factors contributing to delinquency in the lives of troubled youth are:
- The inability to delay gratification
- The inability to soothe themselves when angry
- The inability to empathize with others
- The inability to deal with authority
- The lack of structure of family leading to little or no parental supervision or discipline or models of morality

Youth Guidance assumes that the extent to which these conditions exist within a young person is the extent to which he or she can be considered a youth at risk.

Youth Guidance does not consider it necessary that a deviant act be committed and a young person subsequently placed into the juvenile justice system before he is considered “troubled” and therefore the object of this ministry. If these conditions exist in a life, there is a need requiring intensive and specialized intervention.

Once the youthworker has assessed the problem, he or she can develop a philosophy that forms the basis for ministry methodology. The staffer’s goals flow from this analysis and also form the basis for his or her evaluation of effectiveness.

What Christians Have to Offer

A Christian, through the quality of his or her life in Christ, brings a distinctive person and program to young people, as characterized by the following:
- Sense of mission
- Unusual freedom to love unconditionally
- Healthy self-concept based on a biblical foundation
- Proper commitment to a biblical value system
- Message of forgiveness and redemption
- Vulnerability and transparency

What are the goals of the Youth Guidance’s ministry?

The primary goal of “discipleship evangelism” must be filtered through an understanding of Youth Guidance teenagers. (What are their needs and
“stories,” and how can they be reached for Christ and discipled effectively?) The goal of discipleship and evangelism interpreted in a ministry with troubled youth has four primary areas:

1. The development of a healthy self-concept (positive self-regard), based on a biblical foundation.
2. The development of positive peer relationships.
3. The development of a relationship with at least one healthy adult model, and preferably, a body of believers (the church). Does a Christian provide something unique as an adult model?
4. The development of the whole person. What is the biblical mandate regarding this objective?

Therefore, the Youth Guidance Treatment Model is based on these three concepts:

1. The Model of Delinquent/Criminal Behavior
   a. Poor self-concept, or one that is based on an unbiblical foundation
   b. Dysfunctional peer relationships
   c. Absence of healthy parent models
   d. Lack of spiritual rebirth that hinders the development of the whole person

2. The Model of the Change Process
   a. Gradual development of healthy self-concept
   b. Development of positive peer group relations
   c. Establishing a meaningful relationship with a caring adult.
   d. Becoming aware of their sinfulness, and exhibiting a desire to change (confession and repentance)

3. Structured Change Experience (the Youth Guidance Treatment Model)
   a. Self-concept: The areas relating to an individual’s poor self-image are closely connected with his experience in the context of poor or nonexistent relationships.

One of YG’s goals is to structure experiences and to create a climate in which the individual is accepted and has opportunities to recognize his or her own worth. Primarily this involves a significant relationship in which an adult accepts, cares for, and pays attention to the youth – no matter what.
Camping experiences and initiative tests are utilized to assist youths in coming to grips with their own unique abilities. For example, a young person who completes a difficult week in a wilderness camping experience, despite all of the physical and emotional fears, will feel good about that accomplishment. This success will begin to change the way he views himself. Small groups can also add to the growth of a young person’s self-esteem. Acceptance by group members, trust, and noncompetitiveness are essential elements that contribute to the process of growth.

b. Positive peer relationships: So many troubled youths are familiar with selfishness, manipulation and hurting others for personal gain. The positive peer group experience can help individuals with socialization problems move from mistrust and gaming, to trust and openness. Group experiences become significant growth stimulators if the members in the group can learn to function in more positive ways with each other.

The YG group is designed to facilitate this type of growth. The emphasis is on communication, personal worth, acceptance, trust, openness, and mutual help. New behavior patterns are learned in the context of a safe environment and can be transferred slowly into practice in outside relationships.

c. Healthy adult model: Many of the attitudes, behaviors and values that troubled young persons exhibit are the result of learning that has occurred through association with negative role models. These models can be parents, other relatives, and friends in the community. Often though, particularly at an early age, the imprinting of attitudes and behavior patterns occurs in the home through exposure to parents. There is no substitute for a significant relationship with a healthy adult model in facilitating growth and change.

One of our major goals is to insure that the young persons involved in the YG program experience good modeling. Since young persons often emulate the attitudes and behaviors of those who are significant to them, modeling can have a profound impact in facilitating behavioral and attitudinal change.

d. Spiritual growth through personal redemption: Permeating everything in YG is the spoken and living message of God’s...
love. Basic Christian truths and values are taught as the foundation of growth for the whole person. Jesus Christ, His work and teachings, and man’s total sinfulness and need of a Savior, are presented meaningfully as the way to personal spiritual redemption and growth. The caring relationships and the social concern expressed through activities undergird the Gospel message.

Proclamation of the Gospel and social concern are two dimensions of the same truth – namely the expression of one’s own new life in Christ and subsequently the responsibility of the Christian. These two dimensions must not be divorced from each other. They are part of the holistic expression of the Gospel. “Faith that doesn’t show itself by good works is no faith at all – it is useless.” (James 2: 17)

The timing and the sequence of proclamation and social work are important. The Youth Guidance worker should rely on a Spirit-led sensitivity for guidance as to when to proclaim and when to listen.

**Evaluation Questions for the Youth Guidance Program Based on Treatment Goals**

1. Are self-images based on biblical foundations, and are they improving? Do the young people really understand their true value to God?
2. Is the small group functioning at a positive and constructive level?
3. Are quality adult–youth relationships being built?
4. Are the youths in the program learning more about God? Can they explain to a staff person basic concepts of the Gospel (in their own words)? Are they experiencing redemption through Christ and coming under His lordship?
8. Youth Guidance Relational Ministry Actions

Have you been to a “model home” lately? Isn’t it a pleasant experience to walk on clean carpets, look in the clean appliances, and admire the new electronic gadgets and “toys” that you may never be able to afford? But what were your emotions when you left? Have you ever noticed what is missing in a “model home?” Authentic life, and even the “mess” that comes with it!

To some extent, the following material on the eight Youth Guidance Relational Ministry Actions (RMA’s) can be a “model home” for your local chapter – great to admire and walk through, but no authentic life, or real power to them. It is possible to work so hard to master the RMA’s that in the process you become betrayed by them and forget that in and of themselves, the RMA’s (like so many government programs) cannot change a life or give the real life that is found only in a relationship with Jesus.

Are all of the Youth Guidance Relational Ministry Actions vital for a local ministry program to be healthy and effective? Yes! It is true that some (like “Appointments” and “Small Groups”) carry more weight given the profound needs of our young people. But just like the human body suffers when one part is ill, so too your ministry to Youth Guidance young people will be affected if you neglect the intentional practice and mastery of any.

Here are the eight Youth Guidance Relational Ministry Actions (each will be discussed in great detail in the remainder of this chapter):
- Appointments
- Small Groups
- Large Groups
- Mentoring
- Trips
- Strategic Relationships
- Support Teams
- Ministry Teams
8.1 Youth Guidance RMA: Appointments

**Definition:**
Meeting one on one to provide individual attention and focus on a young person's specific need.

Important note: A one-on-one ministry is done MALE-to-MALE or FEMALE-to-FEMALE. When the need arises for an appointment with a teen of the opposite sex, take another paid or volunteer staff member with you and try to meet in a public place where you will still be able to talk. Just one accusation (true or false) of inappropriate behavior can discredit your ministry and damage the reputation of YFC and Christ.

Why are “appointments” a critical RMA for Youth Guidance? First, generally, you will learn more about a teen in a one-hour appointment than in a group setting. For some teens, you may be the most trusted adult they know, or in an institutional setting, the only adult they feel they can trust. Second, appointments can address an issue raised by the teen or personalize a discussion from a recent discussion, meeting, or small group. They are also effective for follow-up, checking up on new Christians and the discipleship of growing Christians. And third, appointments are extremely valuable in having the teen’s undivided attention while discussing the most important issue in all of life: A life-long relationship with Jesus Christ.

Here are some important issues to keep in mind when you meet one on one with a Youth Guidance teenager. One, although no RMA should be done without prayer, it is especially important in an appointment, to be sensitive to God’s direction in responding to the student.

Two, find an appropriate location, one that is free of distractions and interruptions, and one that allows for relaxed conversation. A meal or snack may provide the most comfortable setting. But as mentioned earlier, never be in a place where another adult can’t observe what is taking place.

Three, be careful not to guess what the teen is thinking, assume how they will respond, or expect them to be as spiritually mature as you are. Also remember there are two sides to every story.

Four, appointments should be set up with a specific purpose in mind. Avoid the temptation to begin with a lot of small talk that postpones and
de-emphasizes your purpose. (However, “small talk” does have its place, particularly if the teenager is not yet at ease with you, or if you do not know each other very well.) Sit down and get to the point (i.e. “You indicated you wanted to talk about how to have a relationship with Christ. I’d like to look at this booklet together and see if it answers your questions…” or, “During the church service last Sunday, you asked me to come see you today. Is there something you want to ask me?”) Remember too, that at-risk youths “live life on the edge,” and matters that were of intense concern yesterday, may no longer be an issue today, at least to them. Give them an “out” if they are no longer interested.

Five, be genuinely interested in what they say, and listen carefully to understand what they mean. Always remember that we, through our body language, are also communicating to youths, even while we are listening. Never act shocked by what you hear, and always accept them unconditionally. (God gave us two ears.... we should listen twice as much as we talk!)

Six, use questions that encourage responsiveness in the part of the youth. Questions that open doors and promote deeper sharing have three basic characteristics: (1) the questions are non-defensive, (2) open-ended, and (3) biblically perceptive.

Defensive questions often begin with words like “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” and “why.” Though there is a place for gaining information by using these types of questions, they can also challenge a person, and cause him or her to defend their position and justify what he or she thinks or feels. Non-defensive questions give a person the opportunity to expand on how he or she feels at a given moment.

Open-ended questions give a youth the chance to talk freely about the source of his or her concerns, and the purpose of their actions. They are non-manipulative, and do not force the teen to give the answer the adult is looking for.

Biblically perceptive questions help a teen understand the real source of disappointment and pain, and can be used to guide the individual in a discussion about God’s love for him or her.

Seven, teach them to be independently dependent on Christ. Help them list possible solutions, instead of giving them all the “right” answers.

Eight, when applying biblical principles, avoid “churchy” vocabulary and Christian clichés. Recognize that most Youth Guidance teens have little
Bible knowledge and need a detailed explanation of Bible stories or references.

Nine, don’t claim to know more than you do. If you can’t answer a question, offer to find an answer and get back to them. If you feel you cannot help them, refer them to someone who can, and help them make the contact if necessary.

Ten, promise confidentiality, except in cases of a teen being abused, threatening to hurt themselves, or threatening to hurt others. Your YFC chapter should have a policy that meets your state’s requirement for reporting abuse.

And while it’s impossible to be an expert on every culture, be intentional in learning relational skills that are effective with young people from different ethnic backgrounds. In our desire to communicate the Gospel to young people, it’s possible to unknowingly create barriers that prevent that from happening. Unconditional love does cover a multitude of sins, but given our changing and diverse society, there’s no excuse for carelessness and laziness in this area.

One last comment regarding “appointments:” Plan a follow-up meeting, especially if the youth is living in a non-structured, uncontrolled setting. Keeping in contact with a teen is sometimes difficult in an institution, but it is even more difficult if the young person is living at home or in a less-secure facility.
8.2 Youth Guidance RMA: Small Groups

Definition:
A structured interactive meeting with 2 - 12 young people.

Why are "small groups" a critical RMA for Youth Guidance? First, Christ modeled the power of small groups. Scripture tells us that although Christ preached to the masses, He withdrew from the crowds when He wanted to teach and reveal important Kingdom-truths to His disciples. And at times, He even went a step further and spent intimate moments with only three of His friends – Peter, James, and John.

Second, small groups provide a positive, nurturing experience as an alternative to the common group pressures, which promote negative and damaging attitudes and behaviors.

Third, small groups help young people develop interpersonal skills that will allow them to build positive relationships with others.

Fourthly, the small group is one ministry setting where the leader can facilitate learning of biblical principles through creative and innovative means, which in turn, translate into changed beliefs, attitudes, and actions.

Five, small groups allow youth and adults to be challenged in their core beliefs while participating in a supportive, respectful, and confidential environment in which relevant issues are discussed.

Six, small groups are an effective Youth Guidance RMA because they can become a support group which will accept and encourage new, more positive behavior, and which will ultimately support the new Christian in their faith and discipline.

Finally, small groups provide a forum in which caring adults can develop relationships with at-risk youth.

The following material presents key information that will enable you to have an effective small group.

Setting and time
Youth Guidance staffs ministers in many different locations and settings, depending on the target group. A small group could take place in many
different places. Some of the places may be the home of a youth in a neighborhood where you are ministering, a church, a community center, a neighborhood park, a juvenile detention center, a shelter, a group home, a residential treatment center, a school, a recreation center, or even your own home.

It is important to find a location and a setting that is safe, accessible, comfortable, and conducive for creating life-changing discussion. When dealing with youths who are involved in gangs, keep it on their turf (if the youth are all from one gang) or a neutral place (when multiple gangs are represented).

A location may also be determined by the transportation needs of youth. Work to find a place that is centrally located which all members can get to on their own, or else provide transportation. Communicate clearly the time and place where the small group is being held, what time it is being held, and how everyone will get there.

In establishing a time for a Youth Guidance group, it is additionally advisable to meet on a weekday after school. This allows its participants less of an opportunity to forget or to get caught up in another activity.

**Participants**

In Youth Guidance, the participants can be very diverse. For instance, there are first time offenders, residents of long-term institutions, residents of short-term detention centers, students in an alternative school, youth from a specific housing project or neighborhood, or a variety of other situations.

To be attracted to this group, they must see something in the group for themselves. It is essential that an atmosphere of belonging, acceptance, and trust be developed.

In forming the group there has to be a similarity of interest or some area of commonality among the members. This commonality may refer to interests, age, goals, and problem solving areas in which they are seeking answers. At the same time, the makeup of the group should have some diversity. There must be some differences to go along with the commonality to cause some healthy friction; otherwise, the small group will stagnate.

It is recommended that girl and guy groups be segregated because of potential distractions, unless the objective requires a coed group. (An
example might be a small group on dating, boy/girl relationships, or teen parenting.)

Finally, gain a commitment from the individuals to be a part of the group. Their commitment needs to be voluntary and not coerced. Otherwise, the level of commitment will waver and they will potentially quit or be a distraction to the group.

Volunteers
Volunteers must initially go through a basic small group orientation that will introduce them to the dynamics and basics of a small group. Once this is completed, it is time to plug them in by applying the three “-tions.” They are observation, participation, and facilitation.

Observation
Observation is initially important in allowing the volunteers the opportunity to understand the dynamics of a specific small group. Thus, they will discern more clearly how they can minister effectively and what role they will play. This is also an opportune time to be praying for the spiritual awakening of each individual in the group. Observation will eventually lead to participation in the small group process.

Participation
Participation involves listening to what is said and not said (body language), praying, being transparent, open, vulnerable, bold, confronting in love, and communicating what a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is.

Finally, when a volunteer has been equipped and empowered to be in a position of leadership, it is important to elevate them to the third stage – Facilitation. A facilitator in a small group is responsible to lead and facilitate the flow, direction, sensitivity, cohesiveness, content, central theme, and closure of the group. Volunteers are essential to reaching more youths through small groups.

Staff and administration
It is important to know the people in charge of an institution you are working with. It is not only crucial but also very beneficial to have a positive relationship and rapport with those in authority. Actively and genuinely pursue a relationship with the administration and staff to build trust and credibility. The relationship that is developed could defuse problems in the future or even lead to an opportunity to share Christ.
Administration and staff of various institutions or settings can be your strongest advocates and ensure a greater degree of participation by teens.

**Curriculum**

Once the participants have been determined, the staff/volunteer must then create or find curriculum that is relevant to the youth. When choosing curriculum, it is also important to consider the setting where the small group is being held. For instance, the setting could be an alternative school where the Bible is not allowed to be used as a text, or the curriculum might be dictated to you by the administration.

The question that must ultimately be asked is, “Is the integrity of the Gospel or of the mission being compromised?” The key factor in determining this is whether or not the premise of the curriculum is based on biblical truth. For example, with the issue of sex, is the curriculum advocating safe sex or abstinence?

There is a wealth of resources and curriculum that can be accessed both in the Christian and secular market. Use these excellent resources for curriculum and don’t forget to creatively use the best curriculum of all—the Bible!

**Preparation**

Know the topic at least a few weeks in advance. For best results, plan a multi-week series or a year-long curriculum. (Note: If your small group takes place in a detention center where the youth are detained for only short periods of time, a “series” format may not work, particularly if the lessons build on each other.) Adequate lead-time allows staff and volunteers time to find or create meaningful games, illustrations from current events, videos, music, and personal experiences that relate to the topic.

Have all necessary materials in order and prepared early so you can be concentrating on the topic when you arrive at the small group. Also, be sure to brief any other staff or volunteers who will be participating in the group to affirm their presence, importance and role in the facilitation of the small group.

**Size**

The best number of individuals in a small group is 6 to 10 people. This may vary, depending on the situation. If your numbers increase to over twelve, it is highly recommended that the group be split and a second small group form.
**Room arrangement**

Arrange the room in a fashion that will encourage group participation. Start by arranging the chairs in a circle, if possible, so that all the attention will be focused on the members of the small group.

Remove any items that will be a distraction, thereby encouraging cooperation and concentration. Alleviate any loud noises by closing doors or windows so that everyone can be clearly heard. Discourage youths from putting their feet up on chairs or becoming too comfortable. We want to create a comfortable atmosphere but not a complacent one.

**Pray**

Take time to pray individually or with other staff and volunteers before the small group begins. Commit the group to God and intercede on behalf of those who will be attending the group. REMEMBER, we are the doormen that invite people in, but the Holy Spirit is the taxi driver who brings them there. If you pray, you will see changed lives and miracles take place.

**Facilitating the small group:**

1. **Introductions:**
   Have all members of the group introduce themselves and tell something significant about themselves. You can also ask a question such as “What is something of which you are really proud?” Or, have members give a word (it has to begin with the first letter of their first name) that describes them. Have them finish with sharing their personal expectations of the small group. During this time, make an effort to learn and memorize names. This will enhance your ability to develop a relationship with them in the future.

2. **Games:**
   One of the barriers in starting or doing a small group is helping at-risk youth break out of their boredom. Depending on the setting, some of the youths will have been involved in a number of groups throughout the day. We don’t want to be viewed as “just another group.”

   Games often help change perception and attitude about the group. This in turn will affect their attitude toward the discussion. As the word gets out, your group will gain a reputation for being not only helpful, but also fun.
Most important is that the youths are able to observe you having fun and being a “little crazy.” We want them to know and experience that Christians can have fun. By letting down our hair, so to speak, we develop a rapport and will be viewed as one of the group. Be careful, though, to not go too far and jeopardize your credibility and reputation.

Games can be fun, and also lead into your discussion. Put effort into selecting games and activities that will create interest and teach valuable principles. Games can be a very useful tool, so have fun and take advantage of an opportunity to build friendships with your youth.

If you are working in an institutional setting, always make sure you discuss with the facility staff what you plan to do ahead of time, and who will be with you. (Can you bring in volunteers or other adults if they have not been screened? Can you bring in food items? Can you give things away like tracts, and can you leave the staples in, or should they be removed?) Remember that their highest priorities focus on matters of safety and control - not “fun.”

3. **Clarifying expectations:**

There are certain rules or expectations that need to be followed for a small group to run smoothly and to be productive. These can either be decided upon by the group facilitator or created collectively by the group as a step in developing ownership.

The expectations are not created to inhibit openness and freedom, but to enhance the communication process. Expectations should revolve around issues such as: confidentiality, mutual respect, honesty, safety, and other special interests of the group members. Expectations should be given initially when starting a new small group and then periodically reviewed as needed.

4. **Discussion:**

The goal is to have already set a good tone for the discussion with preliminary activities and relationship building so the youth are anticipating dialogue. The first few minutes of the discussion are the most crucial. It is imperative that the facilitator set the hook by creatively drawing the group members in immediately. Unless you capture their attention right away, you might lose them for the remainder of the group.
Be creative and relevant in HOOKING them into the discussion. Some suggestions are: ask leading questions; use videos, current events, local or national news items, special speakers, music lyrics, role plays, readings, and object lessons. (One speaker has used a casket to communicate the Gospel message.) This list is by no means exhaustive so continue to be creative and think “on the edge.”

5. **Topic:**
When choosing the topic, it is again important to analyze the participants in the group and their real and felt needs. This will lead you to such topics as “Anger,” “Who is God?” “Is there hope in our world?,” “The Importance of Making Biblical Choices,” “Family,” “Dating,” “Relationships,” “Sex,” “Self image,” “Peer pressure,” “Addictive behaviors,” “Love,” etc. There is a world of topics and the key is to know the individuals in the small group. When appropriate, you may want to incorporate these cross-cultural values: trustworthiness, responsibility, respect, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

Another way of selecting topics is to allow the group members to decide. Who knows better what their needs and issues are more than themselves?

Note: What do you do if one of your members in the group suddenly breaks down and shares that he or she is being sexually abused at home? Do you just say, “That’s too bad”, and go on with your self-made agenda, or do you use the small group process to minister and give support to them?

It is important in a small group to not let your agenda or planned discussion be perceived as being inflexible or especially uncaring. We are there first and foremost to, “Communicate the life-changing message of Jesus Christ.” We are to be Christ incarnate in their lives, not to force our own agenda.

If it is perceived that the leader’s agenda is more important than the individuals in the group, it will fail. Remember, in creating a small group plan, it is important that it be flexible, so as not to appear “agenda” driven, but “needs” driven.

6. **Wrap-up:**
The wrap-up is your opportunity to draw the small group discussion to a conclusion. This is done by touching on the key points of the
discussion and possibly referring to a couple of thought provoking statements or questions.

The wrap-up includes a tangible and practical plan of action or a question to be pondered and researched through the week (i.e. admitting guilt to someone you have sinned against and asking forgiveness, or dealing with the question, “Is there a final standard of right-and-wrong in our world?”) In some settings, it is even appropriate to give a written assignment. Don’t be afraid to make the members work.

The wrap-up includes a conclusive opportunity to interject biblical truth and apply a Christian principle to the discussion. Reading or quoting a Bible verse and/or sharing an example of an individual or story from the Bible can accomplish this.

Ask yourself if the participants in the group have realized the relevance of a need for Christ in their lives. Some guidelines to keep in mind in regard to the wrap-up are: allow enough time, make it short and succinct, and leave them with one main point.

7. **Length:**
   It is recommended that the length of the group last from 45 - 60 minutes. It again is essential that you consider your participants and their attention span. There could also be youth with special needs that could affect the length of the group, such as those diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder.

8. **Duration:**
   Your individual setting or situation will determine the duration of the small group. Some of the settings will be best suited for an open-ended group that goes on indefinitely. Others will need to be time-limited groups that meet for six to eight weeks.

Participants in the time-limited groups need to be composed of a common interest or strand that knits them together around a common cause or need. For example, your small group might consist of eight boys who come from broken homes where the alcoholic father has left them. These eight boys would need to commit or sign a contract to meet for eight consecutive weeks and discuss the negative effects of their situations. At the end of the eight weeks, they could choose to sign up again, or else discontinue their involvement.
9. **Institutional settings:**
It is imperative that the staff and volunteers acquaint themselves with the rules and procedures of the facilities. Remember that in settings of this type, the priorities of the institution will take precedence over yours. If you value issues like safety and security, and plan your activity so as to not jeopardize either of them, your ministry will gain the trust and respect of the staff. Make it a point to always be courteous and strictly adhere to the policies that are in effect at the facility. Always inform the facility of any cancellations or changes in meeting times. Be prepared to keep some sort of a record of your time that lists time, date, location, subject matter, and names of participants (both facilitators and youths). And it never hurts to call ahead to make sure that your program is still on the schedule for a particular evening.

10. **Facilitator's responsibilities:**
One of the facilitator’s major responsibilities is to interpret reactions, moods, aggressions, disinterest, depression, and a host of other emotions. This ability is developed by spending time with members in the group and individually outside the group.

Second, they must work hard at understanding the mindset of an at-risk youth.

Third, it is important that the leader confront youth in the small group with gentle honesty. At-risk youth need to be faced with reality and gently encouraged to seek a higher standard.

Fourth, the facilitator is required to maintain discipline, especially on an individual basis. Your small group participants need to have specific guidelines set and enforced in a loving, firm Christ-like way.

Fifth, notes on any significant interactions among individuals or within the group need to be kept. Finally, the facilitator needs to spend time finding ways to use everyday experiences as open doors for leading the group into a decision-making process.
8.3 Youth Guidance RMA: Large Groups

**Definition:**
A structured meeting with more than 12 young people.

What makes large groups such an important Youth Guidance Relational Ministry Action? First, large groups can appeal to a diverse and broad range of people groups. This allows the opportunity to form new relationships with youth and assimilate them into other Youth Guidance programs.

Second, the non-threatening, non-judgmental environment creates a loving platform on which the reality of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ can be shared. The large group meeting is a natural forum to which non-Christians can be brought and introduced to the Gospel.

Third, the structure of the large group meeting creates a comfortable atmosphere in which positive relationships can be built. This leads to openness and honesty on the part of the youths and is followed by the staff responding to their needs. The staff and volunteers are viewed as caring, concerned adults and advocates who will stand alongside of them in the midst of crisis and struggle. Ultimately, there is a sense of community belonging, friendship, and “family” that is developed.

In addition, once youths experience unconditional love and acceptance, they are more readily apt to respond to biblical principles of God’s absolute truth.

Large groups also prepare some youths for involvement with other adults. In some settings, particularly institutions, large group meetings like church services, give the youths opportunities to experience an activity which can prepare them for participation in a church once they are released from the institution. Obviously, not every activity that takes place at a formal church service should be performed in an institution. Despite the difficulty in getting our young people to church on the “outs,” there is still merit in teaching them how to worship God in a corporate setting.

Six, depending on the focus of the meeting, large group activities provide youth and volunteers the opportunity to “connect” and build relationships that can be a source of support once our relationship with the youth has changed, or perhaps ended. If youth are to be infused into a local church, we must be intentionally exposing them to Christian adults other
than ourselves. Meetings of this type are a safe, and controlled opportunity for this to happen.

The following material presents critical information that will help you have an effective large group meeting.

Strategy: The initial step in utilizing a large group meeting approach is to strategize how best to incorporate large groups into your overall plan. Before you can formulate this plan, the following questions must be answered:

- What is the purpose and goal of a large group meeting?
- How often will the meeting take place? (Weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc.)
- Where will the meeting be held?
- Who will be attending (high school aged youth, junior high age, combination of both)
- What is the best time and day for a meeting of this type?
- How will gang issues be addressed?
- How will social, economic, racial, and cultural factors be dealt with? (Includes matters relating to urban and suburban ministry as well.)
- How many staff and volunteers will be needed?
- What will the budget be?
- Content? (Music, skits, games, crowd breakers, small groups, special speakers, sermon, etc.)
- Will there be food?
- How will the meeting be advertised? How will staff, if the meeting is at a juvenile facility, school, or community center be notified?
- How will you deal with discipline issues? What is the role of the facility staff?

Preparation
Once the critical strategic questions have been considered and answered, it is time to move on to the preparation. The direction discerned through prayer and seeking God’s desire for your large group ministry will dictate your choices and preparation.

For the sake of application, let’s assume that it was decided that the large group meetings would act as a “Port of Entry,” designed to attract at-risk youth. They would then be funneled into other Youth Guidance ministries, such as a mentoring program. The large group meetings will be open to all high school Youth Guidance programs (guys and gals) and are scheduled on a bimonthly basis with an open invitation to the prescribed
ministry area. The most important issue is now the topic for the meeting because it will be the rudder that steers the boat.

Know the topic at least a few weeks ahead of time. For the best results, plan a year-long curriculum. (If you want to bring in a special speaker, this is essential in order to book the individual six months to a year in advance.) This will allow staff and volunteers the time to find or create meaningful games, crowd breakers, and illustrations from current events, videos, music and personal experiences that relate to the topic. This also allows you to utilize youth in your program who desire to share their own personal experiences related to the topic.

Have all necessary props, material, decorations, and equipment assembled and in order at the large group location to allow for adequate set up time. At least two hours is recommended for set-up of the meeting, especially if a music sound check and practice is involved. This helps staff be relaxed and frees them up to deal with any last minute details or “surprises”. Always allow sufficient time to pray before the meeting for God’s blessing and movement of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the young people who attend.

**Location**

In choosing the location, it is important to consider the amount of people attending, personalities and people groups, acoustics, location in city or metropolitan area, gang turf issues, safety, transportation, and security issues (if at a juvenile facility). Also consider the building in which the large group meeting will be held. Will it be a storefront area, warehouse, auditorium, gymnasium, church, detention center, or another available facility? In making your decision, make sure it is a location that ALL youths will feel comfortable coming to.

In applying our scenario (“Port of Entry” design), it is best to find a location that is centrally located, non-threatening, and turf neutral. This most likely would be a gym or warehouse that is located on the fringe of the urban area. This is to avoid conflict over turf issues and to be readily accessible to both urban and suburban youth.

**Meeting room**

Here are some suggestions as to how you can create a good environment for your large group meeting.

- Arrange the room in such a way as to create a sense of cohesiveness.
- The front of the room should be opposite the main entrance to reduce the distraction of latecomers.
• Shade windows and remove items that will deter from the meeting or cause a distraction.
• Consider the use of a PA system with crowds of 50 or more people.
• Turn on all available lighting or use artificial lighting to enhance the meeting.
• The temperature will inevitably rise 5 to 10 degrees when people start packing in. If possible, start cooling the room if it is above 70 degrees.
• Play popular music as the youth are arriving to help them feel comfortable and at ease. Pre-recording the background music allows you to select songs that set the mood of the meeting, as well as those that fit with the topic. Objectionable lyrics rarely have a place in a YFC meeting unless they are absolutely essential to your topic.

Facilitating the large group meeting
1. Opening: Start with the leader or emcee introducing himself and other key individuals that need to be identified. If appropriate, then involve the whole group in a game or crowdbreakers to begin the process of breaking down barriers. This will eventually lead to an atmosphere of belonging and closeness where everyone feels a part of the meeting.

2. Music: Music is another non-threatening medium that can be used to communicate the Gospel as well as capture the attention of the youth. Here are some important details to think about when implementing music in your large group meeting. Is the music relevant and will the style of music appeal to your audience? Is it quality music and done professionally? Will the youth have the opportunity to participate in the singing (as in a church service), or will they “be sung to”? Regardless of your approach, the idea here is to find quality musicians that youth are going to want to come back to hear. (You don’t want it to become amateur night!)

3. Transitional Crowdbreaker: If a crowd-breaker is needed and appropriate for your youth and the meeting, choose one that will lead into a serious time of contemplation and discussion. Also remember to choose crowdbreakers that aren’t too athletic or gender-isolated; everyone should feel comfortable participating. If chosen wisely, crowdbreakers can set up the topic and be very helpful in setting the tone.
4. Introduce the topic: Be creative in introducing the topic. Use skits, role-plays, videos, comedy, music, and a variety of methods to create interest and draw the group into the topic.

5. Message/discussion topic: The two most popular approaches to delivering the topic are either by a special speaker (monologue) or a discussion leader (dialogue). Both methods can be equally effective and have merit, depending on your audience and purpose. Also, be innovative in trying other methods that can communicate the main theme and biblical truth.

In choosing speakers, make sure they are proven youth communicators who are dynamic and gifted, and possess the ability to capture the heart, soul, and mind of an at-risk youth. Be clear in your correspondence with a special speaker to ensure that your expectations are understood. This is especially true in regard to the topic, audience, and how you would like them to wrap up the meeting. The most important criteria in choosing a special speaker is his or her ability to communicate the life-changing message of Jesus Christ, and lead young people to the throne of God.

The discussion leader’s responsibility is to encourage and draw out the youth's opinions, views, feelings, and conclusions about the world they live in. This can be done by asking open-ended questions and by listening to their responses. (Of course, if your meeting is a Sunday service in an institution, the speaker may not desire any discussion.)

The discussion leader’s comments should be kept to a minimum. Remember to create conversation and not to preach. Try to involve as many in the discussion as possible.

By listening and allowing individuals to speak, you will gain a better understanding of where they stand with Christ. This will lead into the wrap-up and better prepare the discussion leader in communicating the relevance of Christ in their lives.

6. Wrap-up: The wrap-up is a brief synopsis touching on the main points of the topic. It also communicates some insightful statements or comments, made by the youth. The wrap-up includes a game plan, which the youths, if they so choose, need to follow up on.

For instance, if there is unforgiveness in their past, they need to go forgive that individual in a timely fashion. The youths are given a call to action and if they choose to live in the will of God, they will respond. Most
importantly, they are touched and confronted by God’s love and standards that were created in their best interest.

The wrap-up is the opportunity to share how they can find genuine truth, forgiveness, contentment, and acceptance in Christ. In reviewing the meeting later, ask yourself if this concept was communicated. Some guidelines to keep in mind are: allow enough time, make it short, and leave them with one main point. And remember: Never give youth a “should” without giving them a “how.”

**Advertising**
The amount of advertising done will depend largely on your budget. The most cost-effective means will be through word of mouth and posters. Place the posters in schools, if possible, and places that are most often frequented by youth. Sometimes local cable access stations have a calendar of events that you can advertise on free of charge. If the budget allows, you can also advertise in the paper or on the radio or television.

For an institutional setting, be sure to clear the meeting with all of the appropriate staff. Memos to all of the staff who will be on duty during your meeting are always appreciated, and at the very least, it never hurts to develop a monthly activity calendar that includes the time, date, and location of all of your meetings (both large and small group), the number of people involved, and if necessary the names of those people.

**Volunteers**
Volunteers can be utilized in a variety of areas in a large group meeting. Possible ideas would be transporting youth (make sure their car insurance coverage meets YFC/USA requirements!), set-up, music, leading games and crowdbreakers, testimonies, leading the discussion, doing the wrap-up, providing and serving the food, relationship-building, crowd control, tear down, one-to-one counseling, and a multitude of other responsibilities. And never think that volunteers as good for just “grunge” work, or work that you think is “beneath” you. Remember, someone is always watching to observe how you treat others.

**Time**
In choosing a time, it is important to be sensitive to weekdays and school the next morning, as well as various curfews that might affect the youth. An approximate starting time of 7 p.m. works well, and the meeting should last no longer than 75 minutes. If your meeting takes place in an institution, it is absolutely important that you be prepared to start your meeting on time, and that you end on time. And never assume that you
can go past your meeting time just because the facility staff was late in getting the youth to your meetings.

Ending on schedule will allow for time to hang out and talk after the meeting. This is important for peer-to-peer and youth-to-adult relationship-building time. Most importantly, this is an opportune time to address spiritual issues with youth. This allows them the chance to respond to the message of the meeting, and to Jesus Christ.

**Crowd control**
The most important factor in keeping control in a large group situation is having the proper adult-to-youth ratio. The more adults you have who are consciously aware of the potential misbehavior and disruption by certain youths, the quicker they can respond and deal with the situation. The best way to normally deal with a troublemaker in the group is to reach out to him with God’s unconditional love and develop a close relationship with him. Once a friendship has developed with a certain staff member, the young person is less likely to cause trouble out of respect for that staff or volunteer. Get training in this area, but here are a few practical ideas:

- Strategically place staff and volunteers around the room.
- Solicit the help of certain student leaders to support your effort.
- Make eye contact with certain people.
- Use the student’s name when talking with specific youth.
- Call attention to disruptive youth to include them in the group.
- Especially in gang conflicts, don’t hesitate to call 911.
- Use a firm, but natural voice.
- Create incentives that will motivate youth to behave appropriately, such as discounts on trips and events.
- Before the meeting starts, clarify what is expected of the facility staff (in cases where your meeting takes place in a detention center, recreation center, or school).

**Handling the unexpected – Crisis situations**
As much as we want to believe that at-risk young people will always handle themselves appropriately, the fact remains that all teenagers, but especially damaged young people, are prone to “acting out” and “going off.” (It is likely that they have rarely, if ever, witnessed appropriate conflict resolution.) How you handle those situations and the aftermath depends on how well prepared you are, and what you have done ahead of time. Here are some key questions to consider and ask:

1. What signals is this person giving that they are under stress and anxiety? How are they behaving today versus their normal behavior? Is their language abusive, threatening to others, or volatile?
2. What has, or is going on in this person’s life that is causing them stress and anxiety? What do you know about their life (family issues and problems, etc.) outside of this group that is causing them to respond in an aggressive manner (or passive manner) to me right now?

3. “Right now, am I a part of the problem, or a part of the solution?” What am I doing” (e.g., raising my voice, invading his/her “personal body space,” talking in a demeaning manner, letting my emotions control my behavior and words) “that is making this situation worse?”

4. “Have I spelled out clear expectations and instructions as to what I want this person to do right now? Have I given them enough time to think through their choices? How can I make this a “win/win” situation for all the people involved?”

5. “Do I need to isolate this person from his/her ‘audience?’ Is this person just ‘acting out’ for the attention and approval of others? Is it easier to remove one person from the room, or should I” (or the other staff) “instruct the other youths to leave?”

6. “Who can I count on for help if this escalates?” “Other staff?” “Other adults?”

7. “If I am new to the scene, who is in charge, and what is my role?”

8. “If bodily restraint is absolutely necessary, am I physically, emotionally, and mentally prepared? Am I the one to physically restrain the person? Do I have the training necessary so that the likelihood of physical injury” (to all parties involved) “is minimized?”

9. “Have I” (we) “documented what just took place and notified all the appropriate people (e.g., person/persons involved, other YFC staff and volunteers, facility staff, parents/guardians, other youths who witnessed the incident, school administrators, pastors, local YFC Executive Director, etc.)?

10. What happens next? What action should be taken with the young person to repair the relationship? “What steps can I take to minimize the likelihood of this happening again?” What action should be taken with the other youths who witnessed the incident?
8.4 Youth Guidance RMA: Mentoring

**Definition:**
A holistic, covenantal relationship between a Christian adult and young person.

Mentoring is an important Youth Guidance Relational Ministry Action for the following reasons: First, short of residential care, mentoring is the most effective way of affecting significant change in the lives of at-risk youth. Teens who accept Christ in an institution, only to go back home to a negative environment and neighborhood, don’t stand much of a chance unless they are supported in their new life. Mentoring continues the caring relationship that was begun within an institution, and provides an accountability relationship that will help the youth remember and fulfill commitments and achieve goals made on the “inside.”

Second, mentoring is one way of equipping youth to live responsibly as they mature into adults. Sooner or later, young people move on in their lives, and we have a responsibility to prepare them for that world, and for the challenges and responsibilities they will face.

Third, mentoring is part of YFC’s balanced approach to ministry, and involves care for the complete individual – mental, physical, social, and spiritual. Effective ministry must direct attention to all of those areas of need in an individual’s life.

Fourth, remember that mentoring is an excellent Relational Ministry Action for trained Christian adults. Many Christian adults do not feel adequate to lead some type of a group on a regular basis, despite the training and material that you may give them. And yet, they share your passion to be involved in the discipleship evangelism of a teen. Giving an adult the opportunity to mentor a youth on an individual basis is often the most successful approach to mobilizing a large number of dedicated volunteers.

As with any Youth Guidance Relational Ministry Action, mentoring requires careful planning and preparation. Here are some guidelines you should consider. First, realize that a successful mentoring relationship with a teenager involves several factors, including:

- View problems in the life of the youth as learning opportunities.
• Most well-meaning adults approach a mentoring relationship with the sole intent of changing or eliminating the negative attitudes and behaviors of at-risk youth. However, by affirming and praising the youth when “caught in the act of doing something positive,” we provide for them the encouragement necessary for lasting change, and earn the right to be heard when addressing problem areas.

• Make sure you are not the only “cheerleader” for a youth.

• Give the youth time to warm up to you, and express appreciation and admiration in ways that don’t make him or her uncomfortable.

• Don’t violate the personal space of a youth.

• When a youth is distancing himself from you, take a mental inventory of possible reasons of why. Don’t always assume that it is something to do with you. The problem may be based in another relationship.

• A plan to assess the areas where the young person most needs help, or those areas that he/she would like to see the most growth.

• Don’t hesitate to be authoritative with the youth. Adults who place no demands are seen as pushovers. But avoid being a dictator, since dictators fail at the crucial task of teaching inner discipline while demanding outward obedience.

• Model respect to disrespectful youth.

• Give seeds time to grow.

• Keep positive expectations alive in the young person, especially when they are tempted to give up on themselves.

Second, realize that mentoring relationships can fail for a number of reasons including:

• Poor screening of the youth, the adult, or both. Some relationships don’t work because there was nothing in common between the two people. Good screening eliminates, or at least reduces the possibility of this happening.

• Inadequate training of the volunteer.

• Lack of commitment on the part of the youth or adult.

• Unclear expectations as to what will take place during the relationship, or how long it will last. Will the mentoring relationship focus primarily on spiritual issues and growth, or will it address life needs like education, job training, parenting, independent living skills, etc., with a biblical component?

• Without a structure and plan, it’s difficult to keep a relationship going. You can only go to the movies or the local food joint so many times before even that gets boring.

• The youth is no longer gaining any tangible benefits from the relationship. What is taking place in the life of the teen to move him
toward responsible living? Is real change occurring in the life of the teen as a result of the relationship? How do you know?

- The goals of the youth don’t fit with the goals of the adult.
- Failure to anticipate that the match between a youth and a volunteer just won’t work. If this is the case, give both parties an easy way out so that both walk away from the relationship without any hurt feelings.

And third, realize that to be effective, a mentoring program requires a great deal of administration, planning, and a well-developed strategy that includes these seven elements:

1. A management plan that addresses:
   a. Mission and philosophy of your mentoring ministry
   b. The population served
   c. Source of volunteer and participants
   d. Mentor/mentee selection criteria
   e. Frequency of contact
   f. Duration of relationship
   g. Variety of roles for volunteers since not all Christian adults will want be a mentor
   h. Supervision of volunteers and activities that take place
   i. Liability issues
   j. Funding needs and resources
   k. Evaluation

2. A recruitment plan to generate interest among potential volunteers which includes:
   a. The type of outreach you will conduct to recruit volunteers (mass: general announcement in a newsletter; pointed: pre-selected subgroups; selective: target the individual)
   b. Materials (e.g., recruitment package, job description, application, and policies) that portray accurate expectations and guidelines for volunteers
   c. Year-round marketing and public relations plans
   d. Other volunteer opportunities beyond mentoring (e.g., leading some type of a group, support team, etc.)

3. Record keeping forms to manage the information associated with your mentoring program:
   a. Job Descriptions
   b. Mentor applications, agreements, and confidentiality statements
   c. Mentor preference forms
   d. Mentor monthly logs

YFC/USA Ministries
Youth Guidance Operations Manual
February 2003
e. Sample mentor activities policies
f. Sample parent/guardian expectations

4. A plan for interviewing, screening, and conducting background checks on potential mentors. This should include:
   a. A written application process
   b. Face to face interviews
   c. Reference checks (character references, criminal background, fingerprinting, and national child abuse registry)
   d. Eligibility criteria: personality profile (gender, age, language, education, residency, etc.)
   e. Willingness to participate in orientation and training

5. Training for both mentors and mentees on the mission, goals, and objectives of your mentoring ministry:
   a. One-hour pre-service training that presents the program, expectations, and a realistic view of mentoring
   b. Two-hour orientation training that introduces the concept of mentoring and mentoring roles, three-story evangelism, basic security information, and sub-topics (e.g., tasks of mentoring, qualities of successful mentors, problem-solving tips, and "the first meeting"
   c. In-service training (offered several times a year) that addresses a variety of issues and topics

6. A plan for the on-going recognition and support of your volunteers.
   (Keep in mind that creating awareness of your program in the community is paramount for its on-going success.)

7. A plan for the on-going evaluation of your ministry's success and failures.

   - Consistently collect data pertinent to your mentoring ministry
   - Constantly evaluate the program and the relationships
   - Exit interviews for all program participants
   - An individual growth plan for each mentee

Here are some other concerns and issues that should be addressed as you develop your mentoring program:

   - What is your mission and philosophy of mentoring?
• How will you accomplish "three-story evangelism?"
• What is the population of adolescents you want to target? (Age, sex, location/area of your community, extent of criminal behavior, etc.)
• Where will you find your volunteers and young people?
• What are your selection criteria for both your mentors and mentees?
• How often will they have contact with each other?
• What is the expectation as to how long the mentoring relationship will last?
• How will you assess the needs and abilities of the mentee and mentor?
• How will you utilize the volunteers?
• How will you supervise the activities?
• What about liability insurance and issues?
• How much funding does your program require, and how will you accomplish that?
• "Matching" the mentee and the mentor should include profiles and preferences, a time to meet the family of the mentee, an awareness of possible concerns about race and ethnicity, a well-planned "first meeting," and a statement of understanding between the two parties.
8.5 Youth Guidance RMA: Trips

Definition:
Taking young people out of their environment for a shared experience.

Why is "Trips" an important Youth Guidance RMA? One, trips build image and create enthusiasm. Regular activities with youth, whether on a monthly or weekly basis, are the foundation of a strong ministry. But special activities can strengthen your program in the way of community visibility, increased support base (both in finances and volunteers), and can often act as a first step for kids to become involved with your program.

In their early days, Lifeline Camps were the “entry point” for troubled youth. Though a week of residential camp is not always the best way to start a relationship with a troubled teen (there are too many unknowns to deal with), special activities and events do attract kids.

Second, trips provide an opportunity to present Christ. Special events like concerts (whether you produce them or take youth to them) and overnight trips are excellent opportunities to confront youth with the Gospel. Few activities work better than an event that brings a teen into contact with another adult who can communicate the Gospel in a creative fashion. Even though the adult may say the same thing you do, kids have a way of responding when they hear it from somebody else. Getting teens away from their usual environment has the same effect, especially when they are away from the distractions of their peers and family.

Third, trips create memories that build “community” in your group. Nothing builds a sense of “we” like shared memories—just listen to at-risk young people tell “war stories” or go “one up” with their “homies” in order to impress someone else. In the same way, a group that has experienced a significant event together, and had the opportunity to build healthy relationships with other youths, is a group that will stay together longer.

Four, trips provide an excellent opportunity for youth to build quality relationships with other adults and youth. Overnight trips and camps, especially those that have some component of “work,” give youth the critical opportunity to build relationships with other adults, and learn the value of teamwork and cooperation. And as an added benefit, at-risk youths are reminded that there are other adults besides you they can turn to when in need.
In settings where the numbers are small, trips that give your youth the opportunity to build relationships with youth from a church are invaluable. These types of activities can be that first step toward getting your youth involved with a local church.

Lastly, trips provide you with an opportunity to model to youth how best to handle real life situations. Regardless of how much time you spend planning and organizing an event or trip, something unexpected will take place. It is in those conditions that we have the opportunity to model the difference that Christ can make in a situation that appears to be out of control. Hopefully, they will see you as a person who really does depend on God, as well as a person who is able to keep their emotions and mouth in check when the unanticipated happens.

As you plan your trips, don’t overlook the following:

- Think “out of the box” with your trips. The definition of this RMA (taking young people out of their environment for a shared experience) may lead you to assume that a “trip” requires travel. Some ministry settings (like institutions) make this impossible, and for good reasons. Depending on your situation, you may be able to bring the “trip” to the facility, or at the very least, create a “new environment” for a short amount of time. When you propose an event or program that is different from what your ministry activities, be thorough in your planning, and involve the facility staff in every aspect.

- Have a year-long strategy for your trips. There is always a place for impromptu excursions to an amusement park or a concert (especially when you can obtain tickets at a reduced cost). But avoid the temptation to let special events be a “stand alone” activity. If presented appropriately, participation at special activities can be a motivation for positive behavior throughout a school year. Other events, like an overnight backpacking trip, can be the first activity for your new small group. (But take time before the trip to get to know your youth on an individual basis!)

- Budget responsibly. Be thorough in your planning (don’t wait until the week before to do this), and just to be safe, run your plans by someone else that is more experienced in this area than you. Be realistic in your projected attendance and expenses, and always have extra money allotted for unexpected emergencies.
In most instances, it is always a good idea to charge your teens some type of fee for participation. When kids have to pay for something, it has a way of increasing their commitment to attend. Just make sure that the individuals have a way to earn the money if necessary.

If you have to raise money for your activity, be sure to take the time as soon as possible after the event to report back to your donors. Better yet, have each youth write a letter of thanks and appreciation to the adults who invested money into their activity.

- Play it safe. No matter how tempting it is to “push the envelope” in order to give your group an unforgettable weekend, don’t. We live in a “lawsuit hungry age,” and there are all kinds of stories about mission organizations that are dealing with liability issues because someone took an unnecessary chance.

Don’t “put God to the test” and expect Him to cover you when you fail to address these areas before your event:

- Have you reviewed, and are you following the policies of your local office and those of YFC/USA that address your particular event?
- Have you read Play It Safe (published by Victor Press)?
- Are the vehicles you are using “road worthy”, and do they have necessary equipment and supplies in case of an emergency (i.e. flat tire, overheating, etc.)?
- Are the drivers adequately trained and briefed as to your plans and destination?
- Do you have enough adult leaders, and do they know what their responsibilities are?
- Do you have an emergency fund that includes cash and credit cards?
- If you are “contracting” with another company for an activity like rafting or rock climbing, do they have a “superior” rating? Is their equipment trustworthy?
- Do people know where you are going, when you will be back, and how you can be reached in case of an emergency?
- Can somebody organize and lead this outing better than you? Have you contacted them for advice?
• Always use permission slips and medical release forms. (Samples of these are provided for you in the appendix of this manual.) If you use them, or if you develop your own, make sure they are thorough in asking all the appropriate questions. (Some organizations will require you to use theirs as well.) In the same way, when you receive a form from a parent or guardian, make sure it is completed and readable.

One other note: Depending on the policies particular to your county or state, you may not be able to take pictures of your teens at an event like camp. Many agencies frown on the use of pictures (especially those that reveal a youth’s identity) for any reason, including brochures or fundraising. If you can take pictures during your trip, include a release statement, explaining that pictures will be taken at an event, why they will be taken, and how they will be used.

• Treat people and places with respect. Remember that wherever you go, and whatever you do, you are always setting an example. If your group sees you yelling at someone in traffic, bending the rules at a camp just a little bit, or failing to go the extra mile in cleaning up a lodge (even though it was messy before you got there) they will follow your example. If you have issues to be addressed with camp staff, do it in private with the appropriate party, but never in front of your group.

• Know where your young people are spiritually. In the busyness of an activity, we often fail to make sure this happens. The crucial standard by which we measure the success of an event is whether or not the youth had an opportunity to move closer in their relationship with God. But if we don’t know where the teens are before the event, we will have no way of determining their growth as a result of their participation.
**8.6 Youth Guidance RMA: Strategic Relationships**

**Definition:**
Cultivating relationships in the secular community with parents and professionals who impact young people.

Developing strategic relationships means “telling your story” to the general public, building relationships with community leaders, agency directors and school administrators. Mobilizing the community includes organizing the appropriate relationships and resources to impact a group of “lost” youth. Some of these relationships will result in volunteers, some in donors, and some in stronger credibility and influence in your area. These relationships will result in your community demonstrating more responsibility (ownership) toward your program.

Here are four reasons why “Strategic Relationships” are a critical Youth Guidance Relational Ministry Action. First, strategic relationships are necessary to reach “every youth” wherever they are. Staffs who develop programs matching their own comfort zones, will reach a relatively small circle of kids, usually only those responsive to the staff’s personality. Developing broad community support demonstrates YFC’s broader commitment, and provides people resources for the staff to reach more “lost” young people from different communities and cultures, and the access that is necessary to do so.

Second, strategic relationships provide support. A natural step in building adult relationships is forming a steering committee or community support group to advise staff, provide financial support, and lend a hand in ministry activities. Since every person must take some responsibility for helping fund the program, developing a support committee will help keep fund-raising chores from interfering with direct ministry.

Third, strategic relationships increase visibility. The support group also provides a pool of adults who understand your mission and methods, and lend credibility to your ministry by representing it (and you) in their circles of influence.

And four, strategic relationships ensures longevity. The long-term benefit of good strategic relationships is realized in times of staff transition. Instead of starting from scratch, the new ministry staff is welcomed into the community and can immediately begin work. Programs and relationships
that may have taken years to build can continue into the future, instead of disintegrating and disappearing.

Don’t neglect the following issues as you work to develop strategic relationships. First, learn to explain why your ministry is worth support. People need a reason to invest in your work with kids. Vague promises and general appeals will not bring lasting support. Be ready to explain specific changes your ministry has made, or can be expected to make, in kids’ lives. When you get a chance to “tell your story,” be ready with examples of significant ministry, testimonies of changed lives, carefully articulated plans, and deepened commitments from dedicated volunteers.

Second, planning, preparation, and tools are required. Strategic relationship projects, including a Community Needs Assessment (located in the Appendix) must be part of your short- and long-range plans. Since these require work and time, they must be part of your basic job description. Community ownership and involvement won’t happen just because you are doing a good job of reaching a few kids. YFC brochures, informational literature, videos or PowerPoint presentations about your program are basic tools.

Third, expose your ministry to the community. Meet with key administrators at institutions and schools where YFC has ministry. Do presentations at service clubs, churches and other groups. Consider becoming a member of area service clubs, and encourage your volunteers to represent your ministry through their membership also. Seek news articles about your YFC ministry in area newspapers. Consider public service announcements and interviews on local radio and TV.

Four, develop public ministries to benefit your community. Consider sponsoring a weekly YFC radio/TV program (such as “Listen Up with Ken Davis”). Work with other groups to provide some kind of adult seminars for parents or youth workers.

And five, respect and utilize the power of collaborative relationships. Very few foundations today are willing to fund ministries and non-profit organizations that do not include a plan for developing and utilizing collaborative relationships in their proposal. Take time to find out what other agencies are doing and to whatever degree possible, volunteer some of your time with them.
8.7  Youth Guidance RMA: Support Teams

**Definition:**
Mobilizing Christian adults for prayer, counsel, and financial support of a ministry site.

This Relational Ministry Action has a significant place in Youth Guidance ministry because for all our efforts, great programs, and innovative philosophies, we are in a spiritual battle. Scripture tells us that unless we, as a part of the body of Christ, work in unity with other believers and according to God’s plan, we will be defeated. (Remember that our enemy has been at work for thousands of years, perfecting his strategy against us. We are no match for him unless we have a plan and a team, as well.)

What are the necessary steps in “mobilizing adults” to be part of a ministry support team? First, realize that the days of “going it alone” are long gone. From time to time, you will meet with a youth, or a group of youths and yes, you will be the only adult there. But never minimize the spiritual support and protection you will need. And do not view this part of your ministry role as an interruption, or a task that is keeping you from being with lost young people. It was E. M. Bounds who said almost 150 years ago, “Speaking to men on behalf of God is a great thing, but speaking to God on behalf of men is greater still.” The fact that you are even reading this material is an indication that you must begin now, even before your first “appointment,” to build your support team.

Second, pray to the Lord of the harvest that He will direct your steps to the men and women He has appointed to partner with you, and you with them in this Kingdom-effort.

Third, learn how to tell your “ministry story” in such a way that those whom God has burdened to be a part of the support team will know how to respond. Your “ministry story” should include (1) your passion for lost young people, and specifically, Youth Guidance teenagers; (2) information about your specific mission field, be it a detention center, a group home, an institution, or an inner city neighborhood; (3) a simple, but well-thought-out overview of your specific ministry opportunities, strategies and tasks; and (4) a specific story of a young person that in many ways, typifies the critical nature of this ministry, but also shows the redeeming and restoring power of the Gospel. (Keep in mind that as you are able to inform and mobilize Christian adults, they will be able to do the same.)
Who are the kinds of Christians that should be on the ministry support team?

- Church leaders and members who can represent you and the ministry before critical church committees, including the missions group, and Sunday Schools classes
- Adults and youths who are committed to prayer on your behalf, and on behalf of youth and ministry issues
- Adults from the private and religious sector who can be an advocate for you in private and public arenas
- Ministry partners who can connect you with other ministry partners for the purpose of raising funds
- Ministry Team members (i.e., volunteers)
- When appropriate, parents of youths with whom you have worked and ministered to

Where can you find Christians to be on ministry support team?

- Your home church and/or churches where members of the Ministry Team attend
- If your church has a “care group for senior adults,” make every effort to meet with them several times a year. While the income of “the retired” may be limited, their availability and commitment to prayer on your behalf are of far more value.
- If appropriate, you may be able to recruit other Christians from the agency(ies) where you conduct ministry.
- Depending on the people who receive your ministry letters, you may also recruit dedicated believers who share your passion for troubled youth. In fact, it is a sure bet, that if they are involved financially, they at least believe and support your passion for at-risk young people.
- Remember that prayer intercessors do not necessarily have to reside in your city, your state, or your country. Many a missionary has benefited from the Internet, and how it can be used as a ministry tool to keep people informed as to critical ministry needs and praises.

What are some ways to affirm members of the ministry support team, and let them know that through your partnership together, God is working through them?

- When appropriate, give them the opportunity to observe and participate in one of the ministry activities.
- Keep them informed on a regular basis of what God is doing in the lives of teenagers so they can pray effectively.
• Give them the opportunity to partner with you in a special event or trip of some sort.
• If permitted, give them a picture of you and one of your young people. (Be sure to follow the stated policies and procedures at an institution!)
• When appropriate, have some of your young people write a short note to members of the support team, letting them know how much they are appreciated.
8.8 Youth Guidance RMA: Ministry Teams

**Definition:**
Mobilizing Christian adults for discipleship evangelism with young people.

Though this Youth Guidance Relational Ministry Action is listed last, do not underestimate its powerful role or place in ministry. Here’s why:

First, Scripture commands it. As one of many examples, this is what Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 2: 2 “You must teach others those things you and many others have heard me speak about. Teach these great truths to trustworthy men who will, in turn, pass them on to others.” (II Timothy 2: 2)

Second, discipleship evangelism requires a ministry team. As an organization, YFC is committed to making a maximum impact on a maximum number of young people. We are committed to communicating the gospel to “every young person” and we are committed to “responsible evangelism.” The only cost effective and efficient process for fulfilling these commitments is through mobilizing, motivating and managing a team (or teams) of volunteers.

Third, participating in the body of Christ involves a ministry team. Certainly YFC staff members are part of the body of Christ, whether they serve with volunteers or not, but you will enjoy a much stronger connection, and have a clearer understanding of “kingdom work,” when you are giving other Christians a tangible way of expressing God’s love and providing them with the necessary support to do so.

Fourth, the presence of a ministry team builds community involvement and ownership. The number and diversity of volunteers in your program is an indicator of community and religious interest. When your program needs additional resources, a strong volunteer program can greatly assist in your program’s survival and growth.

Fifth, “ministry teams” strengthen your ministry’s credibility. The more diverse and representative your team of volunteers, the more likely it is that your program will be accepted by the schools, courts, churches, families and agencies.

Finally, “ministry teams” help protect you from loneliness and burnout. Remember what Elijah said after the great victory over the prophets of Baal, Israel’s return to God, and his long run to Jezreel? Fatigued and
fearful, Elijah complained, “I have worked very hard for the Lord God ... but the people have broken their covenant ... and only I am left ... and now they are trying to kill me.” Even though God had used Elijah to work a great miracle, and even though there were still 7,000 men in Israel faithful to the Lord, Elijah was overcome with loneliness and fatigue. God’s solution was to send Elijah to anoint Elisha as his assistant (1 Kings 19). In the same way, volunteers can help encourage you and protect you from the “only I” mentality.

Here are some important issues to keep in mind with the particular Relational Ministry Action:

**Building a ministry team requires your commitment**
Your effective utilization of volunteers requires that you make them a high priority within your ministry. This means you invest time in being adequately trained in this area, that you define your ministry responsibilities into small tasks that can be delegated, and that you devote adequate time toward recruiting, screening, training, supervising, developing and discipling volunteers.

**Ministry team members can serve in a variety to roles**
In addition to spending time with kids in direct ministry, volunteers can also be utilized with administrative and support chores, community relations efforts, and take leadership responsibilities for other volunteers.

**Your ministry team should be recruited from a variety of sources**
To communicate your involvement and commitment to your community, guard against having too many volunteers from one church, or one denomination, or one ethnic group, culture or community. Building diversity in your team’s race, personality, age and culture will make it much easier to communicate God’s work to a broader variety of young people. As importantly, the unity within the kingdom of God will be more evident to non-Christians.

**An effective ministry team requires work to organize**
Even after defining the tasks you want volunteers to do, you must write clear job descriptions to define your expectations, their responsibilities and authority. An application and screening process (including a background check) must be developed and followed. Then comes basic orientation and on-going training. Along with the training, YFC policies regarding safety procedures and ministry guidelines must be explained and enforced. Regardless of their assignments, all volunteers in direct contact with kids should be trained in presenting the gospel and leading someone
to Christ in a one-to-one setting. You will also need to provide on-going support, supervision and encouragement for your volunteers.

**Participating in “Ministry Networks” is important**
Membership in national organizations, such as the National Network of Youth Ministries, becomes invaluable for your own training, creativity and encouragement; but it also helps you communicate with, and better serve, the other youth ministers in your community. Your attendance at local pastor’s fellowships may seem unprofitable, but you must “feel the pulse” of church leaders to be effective in helping to mobilize your community.

**Church presentations and 1:1 visits are crucial**
A natural step in helping mobilize the community and infusing young people into the church is to build relationships with church leaders and congregations. You should have at least fifteen one-to-one appointments with key pastors, youth directors or church leaders each year, and should make at least six church presentations each year. These could include short reports to Sunday School classes or Bible Study groups, a booth at a church mission’s fair, or a five-minute spot in a Sunday morning service.

**Help sponsor training conferences**
Since YFC has so much experience, materials and access to “cutting edge” approaches for reaching lost youth, it is only reasonable that you should become recognized as a local contact, to get these materials into your area’s churches. Be ready to participate in a local Christian Workers/Sunday School convention with at least a booth or display of YFC materials. Perhaps you will be asked to lead a workshop or seminar on an appropriate ministry topic.

**Help sponsor outreach events**
When people first begin to think of reaching out to lost youth in their community, they often think first of doing a rally or concert. Often, these are not the most effective in the long-term, but they do provide opportunities for you to assist other leaders, and in the process, earn their attention when you present the need for follow-up and weekly programs. When you work in cooperative programs, help train staff and volunteers from other ministries, and occasionally invest your time and energy in non-YFC ministries, you are “helping mobilize the Christian community,” as well as demonstrating your commitment to helping build the kingdom of God ... not just your YFC program.
Prepare for errors and unexpected problems
Remember that deficiencies in your planning, preparation, communication and training will be magnified proportionately, as you add ministry team staff. They will “see” the ministry from different perspectives than yours, and while this can add strength and diversity to your program, it will also challenge your assumptions about what they know and understand. The bigger the gap between assumptions and reality, the more likely there will be mistakes and misunderstandings.
Building on the foundation of the five ongoing fruit-bearing conditions (chapter 2), YFC’s RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS involves eight ingredients that clearly define how we will practice discipleship evangelism within the movement. There are three values that have contributed to the formation of these ingredients.

First, we want to be able to steer our energies ruthlessly toward accomplishing our mission. Our mission statement articulates what we understand to be our focused assignment in the Kingdom of God: To participate in the Body of Christ in the responsible evangelism of youth, presenting them with the person, work & teachings of Christ and discipling them into the Church. The eight ingredients help all of us in YFC—regardless of our core ministry affiliation—to stay focused on this mission.

Second, we want to be able to align our ministry activity with our best understanding of how change actually takes place in the life of a young person. Three-Story Evangelism is the roadmap we use in YFC to describe this change process, and the ingredients of the RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS supply focus points that help us to see actual progress in a young person’s life.

Finally, we want to be able to evaluate ourselves honestly and accurately. Each of the eight ingredients is connected to a measurement strategy that will allow us to assess how well we are doing as we pursue our YFC mission, one story at a time.


9.1 Three-Story Evangelism

Under the leadership of then Vice-President, Bill Muir, YFC’s National Ministries generated an approach to evangelism called Three Story Evangelism (TSE). Like much of what happens when God’s people brainstorm ideas, this was a truly collaborative effort. People who were both inside and outside of YFC’s formal organization contributed to its design.

One way to describe Three Story Evangelism is to state the obvious. It’s about stories—connecting stories, in particular: God’s story, my story and others’ (their) stories. The more these stories connect, the more the gospel seems to take root in a person’s life. In the end, the goal of TSE is to help people make life-changing connections to God Himself.

Traditional evangelism practices often push through a series of sequential steps for a decision. Three Story Evangelism recognizes that in a postmodern world “stories” are more powerful with young people than “steps.” And stories—rather than “Listen to what I say, believe it, say this prayer, and you’re a Christian”—are what get people’s attention in such a world. Teens respond well to honest, real, living, hopeful, and authentic stories about life change. That’s one of the reasons that Three Story Evangelism seems to resonate well today.

There are several core beliefs at the heart of Three Story Evangelism. Foremost is that a Christian should move first to Jesus before moving into a lost world. We move our life into his by learning from him, learning about him and experiencing his life as a fresh new story theme in our own daily lives. Only then do we carry a story of hope to an unbelieving world.

Another critical belief is that listening has become more powerful than telling. If we want people to listen to us, we must first listen to them. People listen to people who listen. And that, after we’ve listened to them and they want to hear our story, they will listen only as long as we are real and authentic.

Additionally, we believe that people become interested in the gospel for different reasons. To illustrate, consider how just a few of the following desires supply different motivations for considering Jesus: purpose, love, family, heaven, community, and fulfillment. When we listen to their stories in conversation, we can reveal at the right moment the part of Jesus’ story most relevant to our lost friends. After securing their initial interest in Jesus
we can look for ways to explain more of Jesus’ story, including the salvation offered through his death and resurrection.

By helping others make critical story connections Three Story Evangelism makes a difference. TSE’s ultimate goal is to help connect an unbeliever’s story with Jesus’ story, and eventually the unbeliever with Jesus himself.

Still, Three Story Evangelism resists common classifications.

For instance, while skills related to Three-Story Evangelism can be taught to others—thus making TSE a wonderfully transferable tool—it would not be accurate to label it as simply an evangelistic method or tool. One might use tools like a gospel tract or a particular favorite illustration while involved in TSE, but this is more than an evangelism method.

As a description of the process of transformation that God seems to use in our lives, TSE is a powerful model of simplicity and clarity. Napkins in fast-food joints can be employed to illustrate the three circles in this model: God’s Story, My Story, Their Story. The circles might be drawn to represent the movement in a persons’ life. Is a relationship growing between two people? Then draw My Story and Their Story to represent more overlap between the circles. The same could be done with regard to either person’s relationship to God.

Three Story Evangelism offers something more than simply a post-modern friendly proclamation strategy. It is an organic model for understanding the processes of spiritual awakening and growth in a relational context. And because it satisfactorily describes how growth actually takes place, we can use TSE as a way to think about ministry.

We should not underestimate the significance of such breakthroughs in our understanding. Each time modern medicine has learned more accurately how our body heals we all benefit. There is a fundamental truth that is readily grasped by the simple act of drawing three intersecting—or nearly intersecting—circles. Three Story Evangelism is a great model for describing the give and take that naturally take place among persons, including what happens in our own relationships with God.

Three Story Evangelism helps us to understand and embrace the natural and often non-formal ways that the gospel gets proclaimed and understood. This is a particularly appropriate strategy in a world dominated by postmodern thinking. It helps locate evangelism in the discovery and exchange of stories, and notices when a story changes.
because of the activity of God or another in someone’s life. Sensitive to the natural rhythms of life, Three Story Evangelism helps us to understand the dynamics of gospel proclamation when exploring stories becomes our strategy.

And Three Story Evangelism forms the backdrop against which YFC staff practice and monitor THE RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS. The eight ingredients to which we will now turn are intended to help us focus on the Spirit-empowered movement that takes place in a young person’s life when our stories begin to converge with God’s. YFC/USA Ministries hopes to be able to develop further Three Story Evangelism training resources as soon as possible.
9.2 Initiate

One of the most remarkable and head-shaking realities about the love of God for us is that Jesus showed up in our world and died for us “while we were still sinners” (Romans 5:8). If God hadn’t taken the first love-motivated step to send Jesus into our world we would still be lost and headed for hell – or – on a path to eternal separation from God (John 3:16).

That’s why it’s so important for us to **initiate loving relationships with lost teens so as to reveal Jesus to them.**

Someone always needs to make the first move in a new relationship. Armed with the love of Jesus, that’s what Christians must do to initiate new relationships with lost teens. We must take the first step.

Where do they hang out? We need to show up there. Where do they work? We need to drop by. If they’re into school activities, we should show up to encourage them. If a destructive lifestyle leads them to an encounter with a judge, we ought to be in the courtroom. We meet lost kids in their world. It’s important for us to leave our world and move into their world in the same way Jesus left His world and moved into ours, as seen in Philippians 2:5-7.

Taking the initiative to meet someone you don’t know can be intimidating. It is even more uncomfortable when your worlds are different. The world of a lost teenager is very different from the world of, say, a 42-year old Christian adult. But the margin of difference can’t be any greater than what Jesus experienced when He left heaven to mix among us sinners.

Jesus’ love for us was initiated when He dwelt among us (John 1:14). That’s the same pattern needed to carry the love of Jesus to teens today. We who know Jesus’ love must take the first step to initiate relationships with those who don’t yet know about Jesus’ love. The remarkable thing is that taking the first step is, all by itself, perhaps the most powerful and authentic way we have to communicate the love of Jesus!

So we need to go into the world of lost teenagers and get to know them on their “turf.” Jesus came to “seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). We’ll imitate Jesus’ pattern when we seek out teens and get to know them as individuals. We initiate contact so we can introduce young people to the love of Jesus, a force that can change their lives forever.
9.2.1 Initiate: How It Works With Kids
Lost people need help. Sometimes they don’t know how lost they are or don’t recognize the consequences of the path that they are on. They often don’t know how to even ask for help.

Millions of teens are lost in multiple ways, the most significant of which is their cluelessness about the love that God has for them. They simply don’t know that they were created to enjoy a relationship with God that is intended to affect every fiber of their life.

Jim Petersen has written that one of the flawed assumptions churches operate under is that we can get the masses of lost people to come to us (Church Without Walls, chapter 10; NavPress, 1992). Evangelism needs to be delivered from this paralyzing falsehood. YFC’s commitment to initiate loving relationships with lost teens embraces the reality that because they need rescuing, we believers must position ourselves for timely help—in their world.

It may be fair to say that the first strategy in helping a lost young person become a life-long follower of Jesus Christ is to be in the right place at the right time in their lives. We intentionally bump our stories into the stories of spiritually blind teens, building rapport and looking for the right time to offer direction. We initiate relationships so that we can begin to understand something of their story and open up a window on God’s story through the transparency of my story.

It’s difficult to measure when a relationship actually begins. While we acknowledge this limitation, we are nonetheless committed to using measurement indicators that will help us stay focused on the RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS. So—for our tracking purposes—we will consider that a relationship with a lost teen has been initiated when we can identify both the name of the young person and some fact we have learned about their story.

9.2.2 Initiate: A Prayer Focus
What’s going on in someone’s life that might make him or her receptive to starting a relationship with a Christian adult? On the one hand, it seems that timing is everything. On the other hand, it seems that location is everything. Where can we find teens so that we might establish our first relational connection?
Like street-savvy narcotics police, seasoned YFC staff learn a lot about the where and when of connecting to kids. This competence is critical to develop in our jobs. But it takes more than skilled job performance to accomplish our mission. The reality is we can’t really connect to needy people without God’s help.

Teens are lost in part because Satan has blinded them and works actively to keep them estranged from God. When we attempt to initiate relationships with lost teens, we are moving in on the enemy’s territory. We need God’s wisdom, His sense of timing, His direction in locating the right kids, His protection as we risk something of ourselves to reach out to others.

Toward that end we need a prayer strategy that helps us gain the Lord’s help. This means we need to learn to pray continually, so that we are alert to opportunities all around us. And we ought to be sure that our routine efforts targeted toward initiating relationships with lost teens are bathed in prayer. Do you visit a key ministry site each week at the same time? Then secure the prayers of others as you go.

Remember, the loving relationships that we wish to initiate with lost teens may likely be the first step in revealing Jesus to them. While we may make social connections with people because of our own relational skills, our ability to reveal Jesus depends on the work of the Holy Spirit through us. We have to pray!

9.2.3 Initiate: The RMA Strategy
How do the Youth Guidance RMAs help us to initiate loving relationships with lost teens? Here are a few practical tips.

First, remember that our young people tend to have few, if any, healthy relationships with adults, the desire, and/or the skills necessary to stay engaged with an adult. As a result, if you are to have any significant role in their life, you must accept the responsibility of being the “pursuer” in the relationship. You, as an individual, and your appointments with them must be a safe place for them – emotionally, socially, spiritually, and when appropriate, free from the interruptions of others. (Remember to take whatever steps necessary to protect yourself from an accusation of wrongdoing or inappropriate behavior, since they can wreak havoc in your ministry for months, and even years.)
Here are some other issues to keep in mind, particularly if you are ministering with a juvenile facility of any type: (1) Do not make it a practice of asking a youth why he or she is “locked up.” While we want to know some meaningful information about their story, that type of information is none of our business. And if that information is given you, by a facility staff member for example, never repeat it to another person, especially another resident. (2) In some cases and for a variety of reasons (e.g., suicidal threats, intense family problems, a judicial decision, etc.) a facility staff member may ask you to have an appointment with a youth. Always make sure to give the youth an “out” so that they do not feel your time with them is a choice forced upon them, or you. (3) Get into the habit of writing short notes to yourself about your appointment with a teenager – their name, important issues that were discussed, and most importantly, a reminder to yourself to check up on the teenager at a later date. And (4) listen to not only what is being said, but also to what is not being said.

Small groups, some large groups (if there are other adults present so that the ratio of adults to youth is no more than 1:4), and on occasion, trips can also be a great setting to initiate relationships with lost young people. (A concern pertaining to “trips” is that the risk you assume in having an “unknown” young person with you may outweigh the benefits. It is advised that you spend at least several hours with a young person before you take them out of the typical ministry setting (e.g., the group home, institution, or neighborhood).
Andrew, the brother of Peter, must have had some interest in spiritual things. It was while following John the Baptist that he heard the great teacher make a reference to Jesus that was irresistible. When he followed up by asking Jesus the simplest of interest-showing questions (Where are you staying?), Jesus responded with an invitation that resulted in their spending the day together (John 1:38-39). Little did Andrew know that such a day would be the first of many. Or that his life would be changed forever.

Our relationships grow as we spend time together. When we begin to accumulate a common pool of experiences we establish a common base to build upon. Early in Jesus’ ministry He performed his first recorded miracle by turning water into wine. The disciples were present as invited guests with Jesus (John 2:1-2). They would have been able to share in the mouth-dropping fun as Jesus upgraded the refreshments. Afterward the Bible indicates that they spent a few more days together in Capernaum (John 2:12).

What’s going on here? And is this a pattern that’s necessary for serious life change to take place? Jesus must have thought so. When He chose the twelve disciples from among those who had been following him for over a year His mandate was that “they might be with him” (Mark 3:14). If the disciples were to develop an authentic life-changing faith in Jesus it would need to be built on the most powerful of all learning methods: personal experience.

That’s why the second ingredient in THE RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS is to involve lost teens in shared experiences to show them something of Jesus’ unconditional love.

How can we hope that lost teens really learn what Jesus is like if they don’t experience His grace in an unconditionally accepting relationship? By spending time with young people we can show them Jesus alive in us. Our shared experiences build a bridge of trust across which the gospel message will be finally understood.

That’s how it worked in the apostle Paul’s ministry. In his letter to the Thessalonians he reminded these believers that they knew “how we lived among you for your sake” (1 Thessalonians 1:5), and freely built upon their common knowledge of shared memories as a basis for further instruction (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12).
So we need to move among lost teenagers and look for ways to involve them with us in a great variety of common shared experiences. Jesus came to live among us (John 1:14) and He developed relationships with us. That’s a pattern we need to copy. The fact that Jesus did so when we were undeserving of His attention only reinforces the fact that His grace is a real life changer. Lost teens need to experience Jesus’ gracious love as we involve ourselves with them.

9.3.1 Involve: How It Works With Kids
The closer we can come to helping young people actually experience the love of Jesus the more likely it is that they will understand who he is and what he wants to do for them.

Words alone are inadequate to communicate such a mind-blowing possibility. In fact, Jesus’ transforming love is disfigured beyond recognition when verbal strategies alone are used. We involve ourselves with lost teens so they see modeled in front of their very eyes the love of Jesus that resists adequate explanation. Our unconditional loving relationships with them are lost teens’ introductory experience to Jesus.

How do these dynamics of influence work? Significant impact happens when a) we perceive that a model is like us; b) we have a loving relationship with the model; c) we observe a model in a variety of circumstances and d) over a long period of time; e) models reinforce the overall message of an attractive group of people; f) models make it possible to know what they are feeling and g) explain their actions. (Richards, Christian Education: Seeking to become like Jesus Christ, chapter 8; Zondervan, 1975)

It’s clear that if we want young people to see us—and Jesus—as relevant to their lives we need to do much more than share religious activities with them. The more time we share together, exchanging natural conversations and getting to know one another, the better the chance there is for influence.

That’s because when we involve ourselves with lost teens we establish the kind of common ground that helps us really understand each other’s stories. And because my story points to God’s story young people will get exposed to the truth that can change their story forever.

Since we believe that life-on-life time is necessary in THE RELATIONAL
MINISTRY PROCESS, we will keep track of how much time we are involved with non-Christian young people. The accountability and focus we’ll gain by using this involve measurement strategy ought to be useful in helping us direct our ministry efforts.

9.3.2 Involve: A Prayer Focus
While we want to avoid involving ourselves in experiences that seek only to use relationships as vehicles to stretch young people, we do want to challenge a young person to grow. We need the Lord to give us his wisdom in achieving this balance.

Some young people bring out the best in their friends; others have the opposite effect. It can be extremely frustrating to have set up a group experience that has great potential for growth only to have it thwarted by poor interpersonal dynamics. Again, we need the Lord to give us his wisdom.

Some persons may feel inadequate for modeling Jesus to another. But if God is at work in us, he will display himself naturally while we involve ourselves with lost young people. Let’s always commit the integrity of our own lives to the Lord.

Above all we must remember that our involvement goal is to help lost teens understand the love of Jesus. This is fundamentally a matter that must be undertaken by the Holy Spirit. Only he can remove the veil of confusion that keeps young people from recognizing the truth. He may use unplanned conversations that require us to be alert to God’s movement. In any case we must ask the Lord to help us be ready for our role in his work. He often acts in ways that we can’t possibly anticipate to bring about an outcome that we can’t possibly accomplish. We have to pray!

9.3.3 Involve: The RMA Strategy
What are the practical ways the Youth Guidance RMAs can help us to involve lost teens in shared experiences? Try some of these suggestions.

If you minister within an institution, make use of what the facility offers you in the way of recreation and/or leisure activities. Is there a gym on the premises where you can “shoot hoops” with the guys, or play ping-pong with a resident? Are you able to “walk the yard” with a resident so you can get a better picture of his or her “world?”
Also, your facility may allow you to bring in other adults who are able to teach certain life-skills to the residents. Though the small group time may not be “religious in nature,” it can go a long way to creating a healthy climate of trust on the part of the youths, and the facility staffs as well, toward you and the ministry. (One YFC staff member arranged for a Christian beautician to visit the girl’s unit at her facility a couple times a month, and those visits had a huge impact on her ministry.)

Other examples of shared experiences include discussions and training on life-skill issues like GED classes, teaching young people how to fill out a job application, tutoring, Bible studies and church services, and group mentoring.

If your ministry setting is less restrictive than an institution, you have many more options available to you, including experiences like these: (1) “outings” away from a group home, a visit to the neighborhood recreation center, and even an unexpected visit to a local hamburger stand. Remember that the key to “involving” rests not with the activity itself, but that it builds a sense of community and connection between the youth(s) and you, giving you the opportunity to hear and understand more of “their story.”
9.4 Inform

Evangelism has always been at the heart of God. He wants everyone to be reconciled—or put into a right relationship—with Himself. Since the first time sin entered the world we have all been stuck in the same dilemma: our sin cuts us off from God and alienates us from the sort of fulfilling relationships for which we were created (Romans 3:23). It is incredibly good news (the literal meaning of the word gospel) for everyone who has ever taken a breath on the planet that God has been the pursuer in attempting to bring people back into relationship with Himself. The incarnation—when God showed up in Jesus Christ—demonstrates that God seeks out people in a relational way so that broken relationships can be restored.

YFC’s Relational Ministry Process has thus far called us to initiate relationships and extend them through meaningful personal involvement. If, however, our relationships with young people become ends in themselves we will ignore the reality that without God every relationship is genuinely incapacitated. We humans were created for relationships of harmony that are anchored in our first relationship with God himself. We really believe that it is necessary for lost and hurting young people to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Like Paul, we aren’t ashamed of this gospel; it reveals the possibility of salvation that has the power to make relationships what they can be (Romans 1:16). And so it makes sense that we now turn the corner to inform lost teens about Jesus so that they might put their faith in Him.

Let’s understand that evangelism doesn’t begin when we proclaim the words of the gospel. It has begun with every loving effort we’ve taken so far with lost young people. But we will be mistaken if we conclude that informing people of the gospel of Jesus isn’t absolutely essential to their understanding of God’s story (Romans 10:14). We are told in Mark 16:15 to, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

It is a great calling to talk about Jesus to young people. God’s story is genuinely powerful, containing the hope for new life. By informing lost teens about Jesus we can help them to discover His forgiveness, peace, meaning, freedom, joy and eternal life. And the good news is that this salvation is a gift of God through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8,9).

9.4.1 Inform: How It Works With Kids
When we help young people to locate their own loneliness or feelings of inadequacy with the words we use, we are effective communicators. When we help them understand that these very same troubling thoughts are the natural consequences of being lost without Jesus, we become effective preachers. While we’re not called to be “preachy,” there should be no mistake that we are called to preach the gospel.

Preaching the gospel has one goal: to deliver the story of Jesus Christ accurately to those who have yet to put their faith in him. If the Bible emphasizes getting the truth of God’s story in front of the right people—and it does—then we had better make sure we know what we’re talking about when we inform lost teens about Jesus.

Why is it so important for us to have a full understanding of God’s story? Because we will draw from that knowledge when we choose which part of God’s story to reveal. Our previous efforts at initiating relationships and involving ourselves with young people will help us connect God’s story to their story. We will have insights into their struggles that will help the gospel to be heard.

Ultimately we want to inform lost teens about how their current experiences can be understood relative to the truth about Jesus Christ. Our faithfulness in this assignment depends on how clearly and consistently we point young people to Jesus.

What we intend to measure in our efforts to inform lost teens about Jesus is how many times and the variety of locations in which the gospel story is told. Consistent with our understanding of Three Story Evangelism, we will not insist that all of the highpoints of the gospel are always shared in order to count it as an inform occasion. Our intention is to use this measurement indicator to remind us of how important it is to sow God’s word accurately and often if we want to reap a great harvest in evangelism.

9.4.2 Inform: A Prayer Focus

Paul’s prayer request from the Colossians gives us a great model to shape our prayer focus as we inform lost teens about Jesus (Colossians 4:2-6).

First, we need to pray for God to provide opportunities. Notice that this sort of request acknowledges that a real opportunity is one in which God has opened doors, prepared receptive hearts, and laid foundational understanding. When we act as though it is our duty to
create opportunities we reveal our own ignorance of how God works and become ministry bulls in a china shop of young souls. It is God who clears the path for the gospel to be heard; we need to pray for his leading.

Then we need to pray that God helps us to make the most of the opportunities he provides. This includes translating the mystery of life in Jesus to uninformed young people. God must help us be clear in our explanations. It also includes being alerted by the Holy Spirit to the particular ways that God is already at work, providing us with a sort of super-relevance that we can only attain when God whispers his insights into our minds as we look for the right words. We’ve got to pray!

9.4.3 Inform: The RMA Strategy
By practicing the Youth Guidance RMAs we will be able to take advantage of numerous opportunities to inform lost teens about Jesus so that they might put their faith in him. In fact, good planning will help ensure that we tell God’s story often. By extension, young people ought to have lots of different venues where they have learned something about Jesus. Youth Guidance RMAs will help us be strategic.

One of the realities of Youth Guidance ministry is that we may not be able to hear enough of a young person’s “story” before God presents us with the opportunity to tell “God’s story.” And in some ministry settings (like a short-term detention center where the average stay is only a few days), we may only have one appointment with a teen before he or she is released. Remember that “informing” in some situations is the most effective way to demonstrate God’s love for a teenager. Pressing him or her for an “easy decision” during an appointment because they are eager to “make a deal with God” will do more spiritual harm than good.

Consider too that “informing” can be viewed as laying a solid foundation for a decision that lasts for a lifetime, much like the excavation process for a high-rise building. For that reason, be clear and accurate with the information you present to young people, regardless of the RMA, be it an appointment, in a group setting, or on a trip. When possible, allow time in your small and large group meetings for meaningful discussion and dialogue about spiritual matters, and remember that not all young people learn the same way.

Here’s another important issue to consider with this ingredient: Your skills as a communicator and teacher will influence, to a degree, to what
extent the teenager will see and respond to the relevancy of the Bible in his or her world. No one will discount the power of a connection between an authentic Christian adult and a young person, but it can never take the place of connecting that young person to Christ. When a young person can see "his or her story" in the life of a Bible character, and how God "connected" with that person, you have given them a gift almost as invaluable as their salvation.

Finally, never let the method (e.g., tracts, videos, music, visual illustrations, the Bible, etc.,) by which you inform Youth Guidance teens about Jesus' love and His story overshadow the simplicity of His story. As an example, at a MidWinter conference some years ago, a speaker said the following: "He left His place to come to our place to take our place so we can go back to His place."
9.5 Invite

An earnest man—of considerable wealth—thought he had put it all together. His questioning of Jesus started to confirm his hopes and revealed to Jesus that he was a decent man. In Mark’s gospel we see that Jesus “looked at him and loved him” before he delivered the bombshell: “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” (Mark 10:21). The sad result is that this good man, personally and clearly challenged by Jesus, made the choice to walk away from Jesus rather than walk away from the wealth he had accumulated.

It’s especially revealing to note that Jesus did not stop him from leaving or adjust the commitment for which he was asking because of the man’s response. Having been clear about what was required, the man made the wrong choice. But it was a choice made honestly, with deliberation and without manipulation. And Jesus let him walk away.

When lost teens have had the chance to understand Jesus’ story—they’ve seen its impact in Christian lives and heard the words to explain its hope—they need to be asked to make a decision. And so the next ingredient in The Relational Ministry Process is to invite lost teens to make a decision to put their faith in Jesus Christ.

When Jesus calls persons to follow him—to become his disciples—they respond one decision at a time. It’s always been so, and it will always be so among the young people with whom we work. To invite someone to make a decision to follow Jesus today is to invite that person to take the first step in becoming a lifelong follower of Jesus. This long-term perspective is terribly significant with regard to how an invitation is framed.

Consider an illustration. Imagine that a three-story (no pun intended!) building is on fire and a man appears in the window of the top floor, flames all around him. Rescuers below have positioned a landing pad and now urge him to jump quickly to safety. Their pleas are urgent and direct and impassioned; this man’s life is at stake if he doesn’t make the choice to leap right now! They are calling him to a decision with consequences that will be experienced totally and immediately.

Some have appealed to this same sense of urgency with regard to our evangelistic invitations. Lost teens who die without knowing Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord are destined for hell. Compelled by the finality of
such consequences, why wouldn’t we urge people to put their faith in Christ with every word we utter?

The answer is simple: because Jesus didn’t! He invited people to follow him and demonstrated that he was worth following. Jesus wasn’t interested in people taking a momentary leap; he wanted them to become his lifelong followers.

For that very reason he did things a little differently than what is often practiced in youth ministry. With large crowds following him he didn’t seek to gain lots of decisions so much as clarify what he was inviting them to do. Using the tough language of “counting the cost” his goal was to help them make the decision today that would sustain their journey with him tomorrow (Luke 14:25-33).

That’s why we concentrate on decisions that are made in a relational context. We challenge those that have been informed about what it means to become a follower of Jesus Christ to make the right choice. It does not surprise us that today’s “no” may turn into a “yes” in a few months. We continually invite lost teens—lovingly, patiently—to put their faith in Jesus. The more time we have to involve ourselves with them and inform them of Jesus’ story the greater the likelihood that they will discover what we learned: that putting our faith in Jesus Christ is the best decision we ever made. And that it’s the most important decision we still make every day.

9.5.1 Invite: How It Works With Kids

The road to hell is paved with good intentions. Young people are great “intenders.” Most are not deliberately dodging responsibility. They really believe they eventually will act as they intend. But they often don’t understand that until they crystallize their intentions they may be operating with the sort of vague hopes that are powerless to actually change a life.

They simply don’t recognize how great the distance can be between the words, “I will” and “I do.” We do young people a great service when we impress upon them the utter necessity of responsibly deciding whether or not they will become followers of Jesus Christ.

Of course, the ultimate goal is not to secure isolated decisions from young people, but to help them choose to act and then behave consistently with their choices. Making sure that teens understand the cost and commitment involved in following Jesus is part of the help we ought to provide.
Our role in providing this assistance must also be governed by strong ethical standards. We respect the dignity that every human being has been given by the creative hand of the Lord of the Universe. One of the key attributes that we have all been given is the freedom to choose whether or not we will submit our lives to our loving Creator. And so we ought to do whatever is necessary to ensure that the decisions young people make to follow or not follow Christ are made freely and without manipulation.

When we invite lost teens to choose to follow Christ we can keep track of the decisions that each young person makes. Some young people obviously make choices about becoming Christians of which we are unaware. But in the relational ministry process we believe it is both natural and responsible for us to walk with teens, helping them to make timely and well-informed decisions about Jesus. Obviously, we’re hoping that every decision made is a positive one. But we’ll keep track of each young person who makes any choice about following Jesus (yes, no, not yet). The invite measurement indicator allows us to focus on that for which we are responsible: bringing young persons to the point where they can decide for or against Jesus Christ.

9.5.2 Invite: A Prayer Focus
There is perhaps no more holy ministry experience than the moment after which we have issued an invitation to lost young people and before which they have chosen whether they will begin to follow Jesus. It feels like all of heaven is holding its breath and eternity is hanging in the balance. And, of course, for those young people making a decision for Christ, such a dramatic description has a deep ring of truth.

Every day we each make hundreds of light-hearted and relatively inconsequential decisions. A decision to begin a relationship with Jesus Christ couldn’t be more different from these sorts of choices. It must be made deep in the heart and with honest awareness of how far-reaching its consequences will be for the one making it. Only the Holy Spirit of God has access to the inner chambers of a person’s heart; prayer is necessary for the Lord to do this awakening work. We must pray!

We simply can’t recruit enough prayer for these sorts of ministry moments. Every YFC staff person would be well served by having a ready-response prayer team, available on short notice for the work of spiritual warfare. We desperately need to recruit dedicated SWAT-team-types who will plead with the Holy Spirit to do the heavy lifting in
the persuasion process while we invite young people to trust Jesus for the first time.

9.5.3 Invite: The RMA Strategy

Are some of the Youth Guidance RMAs able to help us invite lost teens to make a decision to put their faith in Jesus Christ? Absolutely. Here are the ways to make them work for us.

Don’t kid yourself – our young people are used to making decisions that will affect them for a lifetime. (Just think how many guys and gals will make the decision today to get “beat down” into a gang, or how many will choose the avenue of violence to meet their needs.) Inviting lost teens to put their faith in Jesus carries with it eternal significance – for them and us – so it is critical that the offer be clear, and done in such a way so that we can measure and track the response.

In the past, invitations often came via the request that young people “raise their hands,” “come forward” or worse yet, “talk to a staff person if you prayed ‘the prayer’.” While some ministry situations, like large group meeting in a jail (i.e., church), give a staff member the opportunity to “inform” and “invite” a significant number of young people at one time, those same Relational Ministry Actions also present some tracking problems. For that reason, appointments, small groups, and mentoring situations are the optimum RMAs for making the “invite” since they give the staff member the best opportunity to record each decision. “Trips” can also be viewed as a great opportunity for the “invite,” since they often provide extended times of contact with young people, giving ample time to record each decision.
9.6 Invest

Earlier we noted how important it is to involve ourselves with lost teenagers so they can see firsthand the evidence of Jesus’ grace at work in our lives. We observed that Jesus’ call on the disciples’ lives included the expectation “that they might be with him” (Mark 3:14). This same principle of with-nessing is every bit as necessary for a new Christian as it is for a non-believer. When it comes to powerful learning, nothing packs as much potential for serious life change as does personal experience. That means we ought to routinely ask the question, “What do the new Christians we’re working with need to see or experience in order for them to take the next step in their new faith journey?”

So, as part of our RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS, the next ingredient is to invest in Christians with our time and lives so they can imitate us as we follow Jesus.

Jesus must have routinely operated with this principle at work. For example, in Luke 11:1 we read that Jesus withdrew by Himself to pray. Upon returning to the campsite where His disciples were waiting He found that His example had provoked an interest in them. “Lord, teach us to pray…” they asked. Jesus responded by offering them the model we have come to call The Lord’s Prayer. It’s fair to conclude that Jesus could have sought out enough of a private space for His personal prayer time that the disciples would have had no clue about what He was doing when He was off by Himself.

Lest the disciples miss the intentionality of Jesus’ efforts, He sometimes called explicit attention to His teaching agenda. In a dramatic memory-maker on the eve of His arrest, Jesus demonstrated the importance of servanthood by washing the disciples’ feet. His post-experience instruction leaves little room to dispute what He wanted the twelve to learn: “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:15).

Paul knew that his own example was critical for believers to understand how to better copy the life of Jesus. To one young church he wrote, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). He reminded Timothy that his young protégé had been given a clear picture of how to live for Jesus (2 Timothy 3:10). His letter to the Philippians was similarly instructive when he coached them, “Whatever you have
Some of us may not feel we have progressed far enough in our own Christian walk to be an example to someone else. That perspective is understandable, but it places undue pressure on us. Paul made it clear to the same Philippians that the example he offered to them was not of one who had already "arrived," but of one who was fiercely committed to following Jesus with integrity (Philippians 3:12-15). He knew enough to invest himself as an example for those who—if they didn’t see how to live the Jesus life—might not learn what they needed to. That’s the sort of investment every Christian teen—especially those new to the faith—needs.

9.6.1 Invest: How It Works With Kids

What are the alternatives to investing time with Christian young people so that they can be rooted in their faith? Our worst practice is to do nothing at all. Feeling like our work is accomplished when a young person puts their faith in Christ we shift our attention to the other lost teens needing to hear the gospel.

Another approach might be to have an initial meeting with a new Christian where we supply them with some follow-up material and a few words of encouragement. Then, for a mix of reasons, we simply don’t continue to connect. We still offer words of guidance when we have a chance, but our pattern doesn’t reveal a deliberate plan to establish their faith.

Historically in YFC we have conceived of follow-up as a series of appointments with a new believer where we work through a specific curriculum (Totally True) before we usher them into a church where they can get further instruction. While these efforts are more honorable than anything so far described, they still seem to fall short of the biblical pattern.

Christian teens need to see how to follow Jesus by walking with others who follow Jesus. And because this is simply a fact of learning-life, it stands to reason that the more compelling our example and the more time and conversation we can invest, the greater the impact. In Three Story language, our circles must experience an ever-greater overlap.

It is true that some activities may be more important to model than others. Like Jesus, we need to show Christians how to pray. We also ought to demonstrate how to receive instruction from the Lord by
reading the Bible. And, of course, how to immediately respond in obedience to what God asks from us.

It must also be true that if we can help establish new Christians in the faith by showing them how to live for Jesus, we can also help Christian teens to share their faith with their friends by showing them how to do so. Student leadership research has confirmed that when Christian teens have observed others doing evangelism they are dramatically more effective in their own efforts to win their peers to Christ (Rahn & Linhart, 2000, Contagious Faith: Empowering student leadership in youth evangelism; Group Publishing.)

When we invest time with Christian teens we will keep track of how many hours we spend with them. As with our earlier involvement efforts with lost teens, this measurement indicator is imperfect at best. We know that simply keeping track of hours doesn’t account for either the quality of time or how well we actually model Christ with our lives. But we believe that the measurement indicator will be useful in reminding us about the necessity of life-on-life time with Christian young people.

9.6.2 Invest: A Prayer Focus

Like our efforts of involving ourselves with lost teens, our time investment with Christian young people seems so natural that we might not feel the urgency of needing prayer. But as the Scripture clearly represents and we have already discussed, the non-formal nature of this way of learning is what makes it more transformational, not less.

With such potential virtually hidden in common shared experiences, we must be alert to what God is doing, or might want to do, in a Christian young person’s life. As we have routinely confessed so far, we need the Lord’s wisdom. By humbly asking God for help when we hang out with Christian teens we will prepare ourselves to see an opportunity that we might have otherwise missed.

It is not selfish for us to concentrate our prayers on the vitality of our own life in Christ. Being an example to others is not something we can turn on and off, like some sort of performance. Our true character will ultimately be evident to all. No small prayer energy should be spent on helping us to love Jesus more faithfully, every day.

While there are no doubt many more ways to pray as we invest ourselves with Christian teens, there is one that is critical to mention here. Each of us possesses only limited time. We will learn best how to
invest our time as the Lord guides us. For instance, he knows when a small investment in the right person will help produce another fruit-bearing worker for the harvest. We must ask the Lord for access to these sorts of insights. We must keep praying!

9.6.3 Invest: The RMA Strategy

Which Youth Guidance RMAs are particularly helpful to us as we invest in Christians with our time and lives so they can imitate us as we follow Jesus? Let’s take a look.

As was the case with “inviting,” meaningful “investing” is best accomplished through appointments, small groups, mentoring settings, and trips. It is a harsh reality of Youth Guidance ministry that our young people experience very profound needs at all levels, needs that can only be identified and addressed in smaller settings.

It may not be permissible or even prudent in every case, but to the extent possible, consider giving the new believers the wonderful opportunity to spend time with you “on the outs.” It is one thing to be in a relationship with a teen while he or she is incarcerated, but quite another to invest time with them when they are released. Seeing how you interact and respond to other people, like family members or friends, has a huge impact in modeling to them appropriate behavior and interaction.

How do you respond to the life needs of many new Christians, and invest in their lives to a significant level? You can’t, but through the “Ministry Team” RMA, young people can still learn to imitate Jesus as they see the example of other believers!

Note of caution: Young people who have experienced significant damage in their lives respond well to any authentic contact with an adult, so unless you are careful, your time will be monopolized by only a few young people. Without realizing it, you may inadvertently be communicating the message to other young people that in order to get time with you, they have to respond to your “invite.” TSE demands that we be actively engaged in the lives of many young people, regardless of where they are in their relationship with Christ.
9.7 Investigate

We might think that those who spent the most time with Jesus would have a benefit in knowing him and following him that is not accessible to those of us who have lived after he walked the earth. But Jesus’ teaching was apparently not complete at the point of his death. In fact, the risen Christ had to “open the minds” of his closest followers so that they could understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45).

Just prior to this Jesus fell in with Cleopas and a friend while they were hiking to Emmaus. He listened and learned a lot about what these two still needed to know for the life journey that was sure to follow the day’s journey. Concealed by a resurrection-altered body, Jesus “explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” When they later realized that this was the risen Christ who had given them their own private tutorial, they simply geeked out: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:13-32)

Understanding and obeying God’s word has always been an essential ingredient to spiritual growth. Jesus pointed out in the Sermon on the Mount that after hearing his words only a foolish person would refuse to adjust her behaviors (Matthew 7:24-27). Perhaps Jesus’ brother James had this teaching in mind when he declared a similar thought in his practical letter to the young church (James 1:22-25). We’ve got to learn God’s word. But we don’t get the value intended from that learning until we put it into practice.

The Christian young people with whom we work—especially those who are new to the faith—must become students of God’s word. That’s why the next ingredient in THE RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS is to investigate the Bible with Christians so they discover how to apply God’s word to their lives.

Please notice that this is about forming disciples. Jesus made it clear in the Great Commission that the point is “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). YFC’s sixth ingredient would be unfaithful to Jesus’ directive if it were shortened to read, “Investigate the Bible with Christians.” Our attention must be on helping young people apply God’s word in their lives.
Paul's passion for the growth and maturity of young Jesus-followers is instructive for us. Speaking of Christ to the Colossians he writes: "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me" (Colossians 1:28-29). His focus is on those with whom he works, and his efforts are heroic. Embedded in THE RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS, our efforts to investigate the Bible with Christians so they discover how to apply God's word in their lives are similarly focused and heroic.

He also issues a personal reminder to Timothy, appealing to the relational trustworthiness his young apprentice had learned along the way: "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:14-17). THE RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS helps us to issue our appeals to young people on the same basis that Paul uses.

Wouldn't it be great if more Christians knew the Scriptures from their infancy? The modern reality is that this is likely not even accurate as a description of YFC employees. Our world is increasingly disconnected from God's word, and experience-only approaches to youth ministry do not help young people to bridge this growing gap.

We must help the church to recover the "anywhere" nature of investigating God's word. Formal times to study the Bible more closely approximate an English class novel discussion than they do the sort of riveting life relevant give and take that Jesus modeled. Remember his experience with the two guys walking to Emmaus? Doesn't it make you wonder how Jesus could have possibly taught them the Scriptures without benefit of handouts or a/v equipment? He intends the Bible to be applied to life; that's why he taught it so near to where people actually lived! God's word must be turned loose again. When we investigate the Bible with young people with obedience as the goal, YFC will be doing its part to recover this critical need in the body of Christ.

9.7.1 Investigate: How It Works With Kids

Biblical content is important for us to pass on to young people. Which content? The early church formulated creeds that helped define a core content of common understanding for believers. To align YFC
with this historically rich curriculum, we will soon develop or adopt materials that can be used as our common core of instruction for new believers.

But what we want to accomplish when we investigate the Bible with Christian young people goes far beyond passing along a body of knowledge. We want teens to develop lifestyle patterns that have them routinely searching the Scriptures so that they can obey the Author of the Book. There is an abundance of research to support the idea that young people who engage in regular Bible study are more likely to display moral strength of character and also influence their friends for Christ (see research links at www.linkinstitute.com).

So we must pass along Bible study skills that teens can use throughout their lives. As we teach these skills, we should be able to pull out our Bibles in the middle of any conversation and lead young people to an inductive discovery of truth by asking three critical questions: What does the text say? What does it mean? What does it mean FOR ME? Learning how these questions work together will help teens to unlock any portion of Scripture for practical application.

We should also be careful to remind students that we study the Bible to hear from Jesus himself. This means that how we investigate the Scriptures is unlike how we might extract good advice from any other source of wisdom. And by encouraging a frequent return to the study of the gospels, we can help others to freshen their relationship with Jesus. Two simple discovery questions can guide this process for anyone, regardless of their spiritual maturity: What does this passage tell me about Jesus? What does he want from me?

God’s story is a rich treasure, and if we study hard for an entire lifetime we will not exhaust the possibilities for understanding and obedience that are contained in the Bible. When we investigate God’s story with young people we put them on this most important path for a lifetime of following Jesus.

We’ll attempt to measure how well we investigate the Bible with Christian students in much the same way we are doing with involve—our other focus on the ministry of God’s word. We will count the number of Bible studies done and track the settings in which the studies take place. This indicator also testifies to the reality that we can’t get too much Scripture into the spiritual formation of young people.

9.7.2 Investigate: A Prayer Focus
Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit will both teach us and remind us of his words (John 14:26). That makes our prayer focus fairly uncomplicated when we investigate the Bible with young people. We must ask the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of every heart so that we can see what Jesus wants to teach us.

Our prayers will also give us the humility we need to guard against the danger of prescribing the sequence of Jesus’ priorities for changing a particular young person’s life. For example, it’s not always true that the first thing a new believer ought to do is quit some of their destructive habits. How can that be? Because some young believers may get so discouraged by the mounds of instruction they are given that they lose sight of Jesus himself. Only the Lord knows what each heart needs to have his or her faith strengthened.

That’s why we pray—as always—for the Lord to do what we cannot do as we investigate the Bible with young people. So we keep on praying!

9.7.3 Investigate: The RMA Strategy

It might be surprising to discover how many Youth Guidance RMAs can help us to investigate the Bible with Christians so that they discover how to apply God’s word in their lives. When it comes to teaching the Bible we’re often stuck in a school-oriented paradigm. But what if we learned how to turn God’s word loose throughout the Youth Guidance RMAs? It could look something like this.

Youth in crisis are typically open to reading the Bible (or having it read to them if they have difficulty in this area). For that reason alone, the Youth Guidance staff member must be knowledgeable and proficient in his or her use of Scripture, and must be skilled in explaining what it means without the use of language and terms that mean nothing to the new Christian.

One of the biggest errors a Youth Guidance staff member or volunteer can make as they investigate the Bible with Christians is assuming that what is important to the adult will be important to the teenager. That is why it is so critical that all throughout the discipleship evangelism process, the adult is taking time to hear the every-changing “story” of the young person. Don’t assume that the issue or need that drove the lost young person to Christ is the issue that drives their new relationship with Him.
Work hard in your ministry settings, be it an appointment or group, to ask questions that force teens to investigate the scripture themselves, and do not be too quick to state the answer. (Don’t forget to affirm and recognize each response, even if it is a wrong one, since even the act of offering an answer can be a huge risk to some of our youth.)

One last comment: Regardless of which RMA you employ to investigate God’s word with Christians, it is of paramount importance that you use a scripture paraphrase or translation that is appropriate for the comprehension level of our young people. Most Bible printing companies have a good selection of scriptures that are easy to read for our young people, and you should use them while the young people are incarcerated. But make every effort to give the new Christian a different Bible when they are released since many “jail ministry” Bibles can unfairly “tag” the young person as an ex-con, making it all the more difficult for them to be infused into a local church.
9.8 Infuse

YFC is a man-made organizational enterprise, raised up during a particular time in the history of man’s relationship with God. We are specifically dedicated to helping the body of Christ be faithful in her responsibility to make disciples from among the millions of lost young people scattered everywhere. As a parachurch organization, we in YFC get to embrace the freedom to specialize, focus, and limit the allocation of our resources toward our particular mission niche as catalysts of discipleship evangelism among young people.

On the other hand, our membership in a parachurch organization never excuses us as persons from the rights and responsibilities that all Christians possess as members of the body of Christ. Our primary identity and allegiance must be to that which God has created—the Church—rather that which He has allowed us to create. Jesus’ priorities must be our priorities, and we must be careful to establish Jesus’ values as the foundation for our work.

The church is Jesus’ idea. He assembled the first group of those who would dedicate their lives to him. He commissioned and empowered the first leaders (Matthew 28:19, 20). He still assigns leadership roles—and other gifts—to the church as he chooses (Ephesians 4:7-13). Jesus is in charge, the unquestioned Head of the church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23). It is Jesus’ plan that “the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Ephesians 4:16).

So, when we are effective in accomplishing our Jesus-assigned role in the body of Christ, we will have helped lost young people become followers of Jesus. Then what? The seventh ingredient in The Relational Ministry Process answers that question. We will infuse new Christians into a church so that church leadership can report that they have been assimilated.

There is not supposed to be division in the body of Christ. Jesus’ prayer for unity (John 17:23) and Paul’s appeals (Ephesians 4:1-6; Philippians 2:1-2) make this abundantly clear. But unity is not so easily achieved, and to those of us involved in important evangelism efforts with young people, to work for unity seems a wearisome distraction from our real mission. Why spend the energy?

Because disciples of Jesus Christ are ones who have been “baptized”, or
assimilated, in his name. They are to join the body of millions of others throughout history and across cultures who adjust their lives around the rule of Jesus. And they are to do the work Jesus has in mind for them. If they do not, we all suffer (Ephesians 4:16). It’s part of Jesus’ plan.

When we refuse to cooperate with Jesus’ plan we rebel, plain and simple. We may believe that we are right and others are wrong in the creeds we affirm or the practice of our faith. But the bottom line is that Jesus set up the church, and he warns us to let him sort out the good guys from the bad in the end (Matthew 13:24-30).

So working outside the church is simply not an option.

This Relational Ministry Ingredient embraces the necessity of cultivating close working relationships with church leadership within our communities. In fact, it postures us in a submissive role (Philippians 2:1-5). We want to earn the respect of churches as they see formerly lost young people join in the activities of their fellowship as new Christ-followers. The body of Christ in our communities ought to become increasingly invigorated as we infuse it with young, energetic Christians. The new believers who have come through YFC’s ministries will have experienced the power of unconditionally loving relationships. They will also benefit from the impact of seeing God’s word turned loose in natural settings through our infuse and investigation efforts. The Church of Jesus Christ will become healthier, more responsive to her Head, and more equipped to glorify His Name.

Sounds like a plan.

9.8.1 Infuse: How It Works With Kids

Up to this point in The Relational Ministry Process we have been able to focus on the ministry activity we engage in with specific young people and God’s word. This ingredient in the process has a prerequisite that we have yet to talk about. It assumes that we have cultivated relationships of trust and service with church leadership.

Notice that these relationships are founded upon our need for church leaders’ expertise rather than our self-promotion. It’s not that we don’t bring some needed specialization to the church. It’s just that we don’t highlight what we offer in our introductory handshakes. We assume the posture of a humble servant. When we ask for help we acknowledge that we can’t even serve the church adequately unless they enter into a true mission partnership with us.
Around what will we base such partnerships? First, we share a common commitment to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and reveal him to the young people in our communities. Second, we agree that the ultimate goal of YFC’s mission ought to result in lost teens becoming faithful followers of Jesus Christ and infusing churches with their new life. We do not shy away from declaring such a commitment.

And so our strategic partnerships begin with our confessed submission to the church. We must infuse new Christian teens into the church to their satisfaction. Do you see why we can’t possibly be successful without forging relationships of trust?

Our collaborations must focus on particular young people. We’ll find some common programs to share together, but that’s not a necessity. Even financial support of YFC’s mission is not our ultimate goal. Like case-oriented social workers we must work together so that specific previously lost young people join church families in their lifelong journey of following Christ.

Our measurement standard for infusing new Christians into local churches is intended to ensure that we will truly practice collaborative partnerships with church leadership. We’ll know a particular young person has been infused only when someone from a local church indicates that they have become active and assimilated into their fellowship.

9.8.2 Infuse: A Prayer Focus

A whole batch of new prayer concerns emerge from our efforts to infuse churches with new Christians. In many ways our world gets considerably more complicated than the already challenging mission to which we are committed. We must work—and prayer is a form of work—for the health and unity of local churches in our communities. As if engaging lost young people with the gospel isn’t tough enough!

This ought to become a natural concern as we build relationships with church-based co-laborers. We’ll ache with those whose work is discouraging and celebrate each church’s victories because of their benefit to the King we serve and love.

More particularly we will find it useful to pray through particular relational connections that young people experience as they get assimilated into a church. This can be an awkward time for newcomers and established church members alike.
We can never recruit too much prayer from among churches. But the active prayers of God’s people for the successful infusion of new Christians into their fellowships has the added benefit of keeping our important mission fresh in their hearts and minds. We gotta keep praying!

9.8.3 Infuse: The RMA Strategy

Youth Guidance RMAs have often been concentrated on front end of THE RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS. It doesn’t have to be that way. Here are some ways to employ the Youth Guidance RMAs to help infuse new Christians into a church so that church leadership reports that they have been assimilated.

Of all the ingredients, “infusing” Youth Guidance teenagers into the church is, without a doubt, the toughest. And for that reason, “Appointments,” “Mentoring,” and in a few cases, “Small Groups” (of no more than 3 or 4 teenagers) are your best options when it comes to selecting an RMA.

The reasons for the difficulty in this area are numerous, but here are a few: (1) our young people have a hard time in organized meetings of any type (or of any significant length) where their opportunities for participation are limited; (2) our young people do not typically understand what takes place in a church service of any type; (3) very few churches (i.e., adult and youth group members) are equipped to effectively disciple our young people, and do not understand the issues that affect their lives; and (4) our young people do not understand the critical need to be involved with a new community of people who will help support them in a number of arenas, including education, financial, physical, social, and spiritual.

Your best strategy to infuse new believers into a church will involve getting the two separate parties (the youth and a member of the church) together in a setting that is “safe” and affirming to the young person. (Note that this meeting should not be the first time you have spoken to either one of them about possible church involvement.) It might be that once you have spent time with the church leader, you invite him or her to meet with you and the young person at a neutral site like your office or a restaurant. (Be sure it is one that the young person is familiar with!)

As an example of how “infusing” might work in a limited small group format, consider organizing a “trip” to a local church to meet with the youth leader, and some of his or her key leaders. Or, depending on
the support you build from local church leaders, consider offering a “transition church experience” at your office. This experience could be organized in such a way so as to give the youth leaders the opportunity to lead the service and explain how their services operate. At the same time, this opportunity would give the young people a chance to meet other adults of your “ministry team” and begin the process of building relationships with them.
9.9 Inspire

Take a few minutes to review the seven ingredients that have thus far made up YFC’s Relational Ministry Process. They have focused our efforts in measurable ways upon helping lost teens become contributing Christians in local churches.

We have accepted the responsibility that the first step must be ours, and so we initiate loving, Christ-revealing relationships, expanding their impact as we involve these same teens in our lives and involve ourselves in theirs.

We look for as many opportunities as possible to inform these young people about Jesus, and—without ever compromising the respect due to one for whom Jesus died—we persistently invite them to join us as Jesus’ followers.

And when they say, “yes” to our invitations, we invest the time that’s necessary to show them how to live for Jesus. That will inevitably include investigating the Bible with them, so that they can learn how to apply God’s word in their lives.

These believers we infuse into local churches and—when church leadership is satisfied that they have really joined the body as disciples—we turn our eyes to find other lost young people who might make the same journey.

Whew! As time-intensive as THE RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS is, it will take a long time to reach the kids in our communities who are lost without Jesus. Unless…

What if we could inspire Christians to help us multiply the people involved in discipleship evangelism? This final ingredient in THE RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS is not simply a YFC brainstorm. It, too, is part of God’s master plan.

Think about it. We are Christians today because someone was faithful long ago. And—when we get to heaven—if we are deliberate enough in tracing our spiritual genealogies we should be able to trace our roots back to someone who actually walked with Jesus while he was on the planet. How many did he leave behind to start this incredible movement? Not enough to fill a good-sized church today.
Paul had the plan in mind when he spelled it out for his young disciple, Timothy: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2). But the contagious nature of Jesus’ life need not be limited to one-on-one strategies. Paul also commended the Thessalonians for becoming “a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia” (1 Thessalonians 1:7). When we follow Jesus’ master plan, we can expect to see “much fruit” (John 15:8) and the harvest will require a calculator to measure its impact (Matthew 13:23).

Let’s play with the math for a moment. Ten workers start an effort, praying modestly that the Lord will double their number in the first year. He answers this prayer and rewards their faithfulness by giving them greater opportunities. The workers—now twenty in number—repeat the pattern and become forty in their third year. This continues so that the 40 grow to 80 (year four), the 80 to 160 (year five) and so forth.

Ten years after starting this process there are now over 5,000 Christians who have been inspired to join in the discipleship evangelism of youth. They may have been scattered throughout churches and across the country, but that’s God’s business, not ours.

Can’t happen? Before scoffing at this vision notice what God has done within YFC where there has been a legacy of faithfulness for a long time. Multiplication is inevitable!

It’s simply time to make sure that we are clear about identifying our multiplication target. We want to inspire other Christians to join us in our discipleship evangelism efforts among young people. Our primary focus in this effort is neither to multiply YFC chapters nor YFC programs. Instead, we want to equip countless numbers of disciples who can contribute to THE RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS. We want to multiply the number of God’s people who are both energized by our mission and committed to working with us in some portion of it.

If we’re at all successful, the whole Church ought to benefit, inspired to greater faithfulness for Jesus’ glory.

9.9.1 Inspire: How It Works With Kids
Who are the people most likely to be inspired to join us in our work? YFC professional staff and adult volunteers are our obvious partners in mission, and this operations manual has been written largely with these folks in mind.
But we have also identified the critical role church leadership will play in helping us accomplish our mission. Many from among these ranks, especially youth pastors, will hold the key to multiplying our efforts.

Christian professionals who work with young people may also be able to contribute significantly to the formation of young Jesus-followers. Likewise, Christian parents may be enlisted to join us in the cause. In any case, those who can offer help with only one of the ingredients should not be turned away because they can’t work in the entire process. We must cultivate teams of people who are deeply committed to doing their part in youth discipleship evangelism.

Finally, we dare not overlook the potential contributions that Christian teens—especially those who have become Christians through our ministries—can make. Young people who learn the joy of being used by God to reach their friends for Christ are among those most inspired for a lifetime of service. And whether or not they ever serve in a YFC-sponsored work later in life, they can invigorate the body of Christ with a lasting legacy, the extent of which we’ll only understand when we get to heaven.

The kingdom value of such work is truly immeasurable. But we will measure our YFC progress against such a focus by asking those who are inspired by our mission to also join us in submitting to the discipline of accountability that has been identified throughout this description of the eight relational ministry ingredients.

9.9.2 Inspire: A Prayer Focus

We’ll take our cues for the sort of praying we must do as we inspire others to join us from the Lord Jesus himself: “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 11:37-38). Now, as then, the opportunities far outweigh the human resources committed to working with young people. We pray urgently for new workers, and stay alert for how the Lord will answer those prayers through all sorts of means.

Notice that the Lord is both in charge of the harvest and that he owns the fields where the harvest will take place. How should this affect the way we pray? The answer lies in the nature of the harvest.

Even with modern technology, there is some produce that still requires human hands for the harvest. In such cases the only way for the large harvest to reach its potential is to have more workers on the job. The Lord of the harvest would remind us that we can’t reap the fruit he
intends by using means—even accelerated means—that he hasn’t certified.

This means that when we look at the great field of unreached young people we dare not panic and abandon the strategy God has given us. Feeling overwhelmed by the vastness of the need, we may be tempted to make urgency-driven strategy decisions. Such choices are shortsighted at best and unfaithful at worst.

If we allow that our prayer focus may well be spent listening to the Lord on this matter, the Father will certainly reassure us about how to faithfully inspire Christians to multiply discipleship evangelism among young people. We must continue to pray!

9.9.3 Inspire: The RMA Strategy
It’s recycle—or maybe review—time. How does the clarity of our Youth Guidance RMAs help us to inspire Christians to multiply The Relational Ministry Process? Try practicing these suggestions.

Your most effective RMAs for this ingredient include “Appointments” and “Small Groups” While you may have the opportunity from time to time to tell “your ministry story” to significant number of Christian adults at one time, your best impact will come in settings where you have the opportunity to interact with the audience. (And don’t forget to target and train some of your young people as you look for Christians to inspire in this process – trained teens who are abiding in Christ can be very effective in expanding the discipleship evangelism process among their friends and peers!)
10. Youth Guidance Ministry Assessment

Let's consider our motives for assessment. Are there biblical ministry values that go beyond the practical worth of doing assessment in order to meet someone else's accountability demands? In other words, should we practice good ministry assessment because it's really important to God?

Doing our ministry evaluations because they are due to someone else testifies to the reality of interdependence of which the scripture speaks. It suggests that we appreciate the call of scripture to submit ourselves to one another, particularly to those who have authority over us (Ephesians 5:21; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 2:17). We recognize the kingdom value of having our work scrutinized today, because we know it will be judged in the future (1 Corinthians 3:12-14).

The practical reasons we assess our youth ministry may include the need to meet YFC obligations, but submission will only benefit our souls when it reflects a value that comes from inside us. We must be convinced that interdependence is a necessary reality. Unlike independent and self-reliant structures, the metaphor of the body suggests that we truly do need one another. Unlike dependent and other-reliant structures, the body of Christ imagery also testifies that we have been uniquely designed to make original and meaningful contributions, without which others will genuinely be impoverished.

Deeply beneficial assessment can take place only when honesty and humility blaze a trail that honors truth above all else. This isn't always easy; it's the same sort of posture that earned Socrates the label as the "gadfly of Athens" (see Kreeft. 1987. Socrates meets Jesus. Intervarsity Press.) In the service of the truth, any question was fair game for this ancient philosopher.

Douglas Hyde reported that a similar attitude provided the climate for continuous improvement among Communist Party members as they critiqued their various campaigns (Hyde. 1992. Dedication and leadership. Notre Dame University Press.) Knowing the truth was more important than protecting someone's ego from being bruised. Isn't it great that Christians don't have to choose between caring for others and loving the truth? These two values are not incompatible in the economy of the Christian faith. Paul insisted that the Ephesians should contribute to one another's growth by "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).
Honest evaluation can help us understand the true state of health in our YFC ministries. It can also reveal something about our own biases and ill preparedness to make important judgments about ministry effectiveness. We can always see what needs cleaning up better when the lights are on. Assessment helps us to make sure that we’ve got enough candlepower pointed in the right direction to really improve our ministry effectiveness. Continuous improvement is a worthy, even holy, goal. As John Wesley wrote, “It is a great thing to seize and improve the very now” (as reported on p. 55, Dean and Foster. 1998. The Godbearing life. Upper Room Books.) (NOTE: This entire section was excerpted and adapted from Rahn. 2001. Assessing honestly: Continuous improvement. Chapter 27 in Dean, Clark & Rahn (eds.), Starting right: Thinking theologically about youth ministry. Zondervan/Youth Specialties Academic.)

We have committed ourselves to the RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS as has been described in this operations manual. This process includes practicing the eight ingredients described in chapter 9, the relational ministry actions described in chapters 8 & 9, and the five ongoing, fruit-bearing conditions described in chapter 2. Taken together, they ought to help us focus our ministry on the discipleship evangelism of young people. Diligent assessment will help us pay attention to that which is important to us.
10.1 Focus: Life-on-Life With Every Young Person

Our discussion of discipleship evangelism (chapter 2) has asserted how important it is to connect meaningfully with young people in their world. These connections help those who were lost and blind become those who are found and can see. They are time intensive rescue efforts.

When we ask YFC staff to begin a separate database file on every young person with whom they work, it is so we can understand how well we practice life-on-life ministry. We want to record when a relationship is initiated, what the spiritual status of the teen is at the time the relationship began, and we want to record the amount of time spent (involve and invest) with each young person by the Christians in their life.

We have assigned these three ingredients of THE RELATIONAL MINISTRY PROCESS—initiate, involve and invest—the role of helping us to stay on track with the life-on-life discipleship evangelism value. They don’t measure everything that is important in life-on-life transformation, but they can provide us with accurate data that ought to be useful as we focus our ministry energies.
10.2 Focus: The Application of God’s Word in Life

We are also deeply committed to getting God’s word into the mix of active ingredients used to change a young person’s life. Jesus’ Great Commission standard is pretty hefty, “…teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). We’ve got a lot of work to do if we’re going to shoulder our responsibility faithfully.

In order to ensure that this discipleship evangelism element is not neglected we want YFC staff to monitor their own activity of sowing God’s word into teens’ lives. When our purpose is to share the gospel story of Jesus we keep track of the number of times and settings where we informed lost teens about Christ so that they might put their faith in him. When our purpose is to help Christian young people grow by discovering and applying God’s word in their lives we record the number of times and settings where we investigated the Bible with Christian teens.

Notice that we’ve hooked our monitoring machine up to our activity in using God’s word. There are two reasons for this. First, this assessment strategy will help us to focus on what we are obligated to do. And limited though it is in predicting specific life change, it will provide us with an accurate indicator of how much God’s word is woven into the transformational fabric of our ministries.
10.3 Focus: How the Kingdom Grows

Our understanding of discipleship evangelism includes a moment in time when lost young people make decisions to follow Jesus for the rest of their lives. As they begin this journey they come to another decision, one that is absolutely essential to their well-being. They must decide to join with other Christ-followers as they journey. When they initially join the church, it may be that they receive benefits without offering a lot in return. But the nature of their growth must reshape this formula. Eventually they must make the contributions to the body of Christ for which they were created (Ephesians 2:10).

And so God’s kingdom grows. A single decision is made. Lots of significant decisions cluster together to help point a new disciple in the right direction. Disciples gather together in churches to strengthen one another as they reveal the love of Christ in their world. Faithful church communities send out faithful missionaries to reproduce this growth process all around the world.

When we YFC staff invite every lost young person to make a decision to follow Christ, we do so knowing how important such decisions are in God’s master design. But we also know that they are only part of the story. So we also forge the kind of ministry partnerships with local churches that allow us to make a request of church leadership. We want them—not us—to tell us when previously lost young people have been infused into their local fellowships. And eventually, because of the way we will collect our information, we’ll also learn how many of these churched believers are inspired to join us in our discipleship evangelism mission among young people.

It’s imperfect, but assessment centered around invite, infuse and inspire will help us to focus on the right outcome indicators in our YFC ministries. A lost teen makes a decision to become a disciple of Jesus. A new disciple joins a church of other Jesus followers. An energized church sends new missionaries to join our cause. It’s how the kingdom grows.
10.4 Focus: Youth Guidance RMAs

Part of the Relational Ministry Process is the application of discipleship evangelism strategies to each of our core ministries. The distinctive form of Youth Guidance relational ministry actions is another focus of our assessment efforts.

Unlike any of the assessment described earlier in this chapter, our measurement of the RMAs has the exclusive purpose of supplying us with information that will allow us to evaluate and improve each core ministry program. For example, all of our core ministries practice small groups as one of their relational ministry actions. By keeping track of the total number of small groups that are done and their average attendance we are better able to understand the role that small groups actually play in each core ministry. All of this is with the goal of being able to better refine each core ministry so that we know how to combine our RMAs for maximum ministry effectiveness.

Here’s a word to the wise. The quality of the information that we collect and how we use it determine how valuable assessment can actually be to our ministry practices. Information quality is based on two factors. First, is what we are measuring actually important for us to know? This is the So What factor. If we cannot imagine our ministries deriving any practical benefit from a summary of the assessment information—especially if the results are extremely higher or lower than predicted—then the information quality doesn’t pass the So What test. In the small groups example above, we could apply this test by asking what difference it would make if we learned that where our small attendance averages were less than six, ministries also reported a greater percentage of new Christians had been infused into local churches. If the practical benefit of knowing such information is evident we can conclude we are measuring something that is important for us to know.

The second factor used to determine information quality is based upon the reliability of the information collected. If we simply cannot create a yardstick to measure something accurately, we shouldn’t try to assess it. This is one of the reasons that attendance numbers or financial balance sheets are such popular evaluation tools. There is at least the possibility of being accurate when we count something. Sometimes we trade off what might be really valuable for us to know (i.e., the dynamics of how particular small group members relate to each other) for what we can know (i.e., small group attendance averages) because we can’t figure out a reliable way to measure what is most important. On the other hand,
if a particular YFC staff person wanted to use a grading scale to rate the effectiveness of her particular small group from week to week, this information might be accurate for her. Her somewhat subjective rating standards would remain constant and she would not need to interpret her evaluation for anyone else.

Our relational ministry actions have been formulated—in large part—because they can provide nationally-gathered quality information to help shape the resources and training needed for each core ministry. Local YFC ministry staff may find additional useful purposes for collecting RMA assessment information.
10.5 Focus: Review, Reflect, & Adjust

We dare not waste our considerable efforts to collect quality information. This warning is not inappropriate. Too many ministries never take the time to use the information collected to make quality evaluations and adjustments to their practices.

Just imagine how frustrated we might be to discover that each weekly report we turned in was simply filed in a drawer without ever being reviewed. What a disincentive that would be to working on those reports! By contrast, think of how much of an encouragement it would be to learn that our submissions were poured over, analyzed, prayed over and discussed with one goal in mind: to help us become more faithful and effective ministers for Jesus Christ.

Once assessment information has been collected it must be reviewed and scrutinized carefully and prayerfully. We need to give ourselves the space and time to reflect deeply on what we can learn. If we want to catch big fish we have to work in deep waters. Our egos must be set aside. They will only prevent us from hearing what the assessment information might be saying. If we are both hungry and humble we can learn rich insights about how to improve our ministries. The routines of assessment can help us to constantly fine-tune our ministry practices for increased effectiveness.

This is even true for the foundation of The Relational Ministry Process, YFC’s ongoing fruit-bearing conditions. By becoming praying, reflective students of our own souls we can discover indicators of how well we are abiding in Christ, where our greatest faithfulness challenges lie and the roadblocks we encounter as we work for unity. The Lord will help us see when our planning is done in the Spirit and when it is done on our own. We’ll make progress in responding to the still small voice of God throughout the day.

These benefits of assessment are deeply personal, but have every bit as much to do with our ministry effectiveness as do those discussed earlier. God wants to grow us into great fruit-bearers for him (2 Peter 1: 3-8), but it won’t happen unless we give him the space to work in us. Anything important is worth scrutinizing for how it can be done better. By reviewing what we discover, reflecting on its implications, and adjusting accordingly we can improve both our lives and ministries.