

HOW TO MOBILIZE TEENAGERS TO PRAY

How do we involve young people in prayer? This is a tough question on the hearts of many responsible for youth ministry in their congregations.

The following guidelines were written by a young lady who experienced God's growing favour upon the young people in her congregation over a period of approximately 4 years. At first only 8 teenagers attended youth meetings, but God gave her a passion for prayer, and things changed. In just 6 months, 90 young people were partaking in youth meetings, all of them excited about prayer!

No 'strategic planning' sessions, 'fancy' entertainment or 'special' speakers; simply worship and prayer drawing them into what they each truly longed for: A loving relationship with Jesus as their Friend, and God as their Heavenly Father (in an often 'fatherless' world).

Perhaps these steps can help you in your youth ministry:

- Grasp that only God can do this work! We, all of us, have tried practically everything we could think of. Now it's time to trust God.
- Be excited when you talk to young people about prayer (even if it is only an announcement in a church service). How can you expect others to be excited about prayer, if you aren't?
- Do not just ask the youth to pray; give them specific things to pray for! Ask the Lord what's on His heart, and ask them to pray for these things. Prepare yourself thoroughly—do the research. It takes hard work and much preparation to encourage teenagers to pray:
 - Why are we praying?
 - What are we praying for?
 - What Scriptures can we pray?
 - What do we give thanks for?
- Ask them for feedback the following week. Once the youth start hearing what God is doing for others, they become attentive and they start to believe that something might happen for them as well. They can testify at school to other children as well. The more young people become interested, the more they are motivated to pray, and they begin to enjoy prayer because they are seeing the answers to their prayers.
- Consider inviting people to speak to them about prayer. Keep it simple and practical; do not try to impress them. As a leader, attend prayer conferences where you can learn more about prayer and pass this knowledge on to the youth in a manner that applies to their everyday lives.
- Get the youth involved in experiencing prayer in different ways by having a special 'Prayer Project.' For example, hold a 'Word-watch week' (where the young people take it in turns to read the Bible out loud), or a '10 days of prayer' (where they, for instance, pray for members of parliament by name). Try '30 Days of Prayer' during Ramadan (creating in

them an awareness of how to pray for those of another religion). I have found that reading through the Bible appeals to young people, and they grow spiritually in the process!

- Let the youth testify at meetings about answered prayer or how 'Word-watch Week' impacted their lives. Many young people experience God 'speaking' to them when they read Scripture and find something touches them.
- If possible, invite someone that your group has been praying for to your gathering and pray for them in person - the Premier (of your province), or the Mayor of your town or city. Believe me, it does something to their hearts when these young people pray for them in their presence, and it makes prayer very 'real' for the youth as well.
- Train at least two of your youths to lead and organize prayer meetings so that they can do it without you. In prayer ask the Lord to show you who you can train (it's not always the noisy ones that are good prayer leaders).
- Pray for your youth by name. Write their names down and pray for them as the Holy Spirit leads you during the week. Send them a text message, or start a WhatsApp group.

It is truly something special to see a teenager lead his/ her friends in prayer!

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