

# nurturing your team

One of the most important, if not the most important, resource for any youth leader is their team. Ministry is incredibly difficult without others to help lead and grow the work. If our team is such an essential commodity, then it is vital that we spend time nurturing each member of it.

## Why invest in your team?

When we work with young people, it is easy to see this as our sole focus and purpose. If we are the overall leader of a group, our primary focus should actually be on developing our team so that they can be effective in their work with the young people. This is essential if the ministry is to be greater than just ourselves and what we can offer, and for the ministry to be sustained even if we are not there.

It is very easy, and sadly all too common, to value our team simply for what they can offer rather than valuing them firstly for who they are as individuals. God sees the person before he looks at what they can do and he loves them for who they are, and we need to be the same.

If we take the time to invest in our leaders individually, they will be more fulfilled in their role, they will grow in confidence and gifting and will therefore enjoy leading more and so may stay in the role longer. It will help each person feel more of an important part of the team and so have more ownership and responsibility for what takes place.

In order for this to happen, each

leader needs to feel accepted and valued by the overall leader. They need to be able to contribute to the task required and to know what the expectations of them are by both the overall leader and the other leaders. They also need to feel a part of the leadership team.

## Getting to know your team

It is obvious but worth stating that we all give of our best when we feel encouraged, valued and accepted so it makes sense that we need to spend time getting to know our leaders. Overall leaders need to see one of their roles as investing in their leaders, helping them to recognise their potential and help them grow in their gifting. This takes time and unfortunately there are no shortcuts. Ministry works best,

and is more fun, when we share lives together. There is a great feeling of hope, excitement and synergy when we are leading with people we consider to be friends with a shared goal.

Initially it can be helpful to keep a record on each of your leaders so you can remember what job they do, when their birthday is, what skills they have, what areas of ministry they would like to grow in etc. These are all important things which are easy to forget in the busyness of life.

Just as we might have a plan to regularly meet up with young people individually, it would be good to have a plan in place for regular contact with each of our leaders.

Organising the occasional social event for your team is a great way



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too of everyone getting to know each other better.

### Developing your leaders

We are all constantly growing in our abilities and gifts which God gives us. This is a vital part of what it means to be alive, that we continue to grow. If we stop growing we lose confidence, interest and purpose. If we want our youth ministry to continue to grow and be fruitful we need to invest in our leaders' individual development. You may have some people on your team who push themselves forward when things need doing or are good at voicing their ideas at meetings, whereas you will have others who do the exact opposite. We need to pray for God's wisdom to know for each person what it is that God wants to grow in them at this particular time. What would be good for them to have more experience and opportunity in at the moment? What potential do you see in each leader at the moment which would be good to unlock? Once these are identified we need to start thinking creatively about how we can help grow these things and how we can support the leaders in this growth.

### Communicating expectations

In order for our leaders to flourish they need to know exactly what is expected of them. This is essential for new leaders and getting it right from the start will make all the difference to the future contributions this leader might make. All too often we ask someone to be a youth leader but don't really explain exactly what is involved. The more specific we can be, the easier it is for the leader to find their place in the team and to feel quickly that they are contributing.

A good practice to get into would be to spend some time with each leader identifying what it is that you want them to exactly do, when and how you want it done and also to spend some time considering how you might measure success. How you measure success is particularly



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important to the leader when it comes down to how they contribute.

If we have our expectations clearly explained then both you as overall leader and your team know exactly what each person is going to contribute. Some churches write "job expectations" for each leader, a bit like a job description, so that these expectations are recorded for further clarification.

### Valuing your team

In order to get the best from our team we need to make sure they know how much we value them.



**What potential do you see in each leader that could be unlocked?**

Pray for each member of your team regularly, not just for what they are working on for the youth group but pray for all areas of their life, their work, their family, their faith. Make sure that they know that you are there for them to talk issues through, that you are interested in them and want to spend time developing your friendship. We need to develop trust amongst our leaders and this starts by being modelled by the overall leader. Trust your leaders in all things, and resist the temptation to step in and to do what you've asked them to do for you.

Finally, make sure that you are consistently encouraging each member of your team, both to them in private and in front of them publicly. Make sure that the whole team hear encouragements of each other as well as the young people themselves. Take some time too to let the whole church know when someone does something well. Perhaps you could write about it in your newsletter or you could mention it if you give a report to the leadership team or PCC. Public encouragement doesn't always happen that often and so when it does it can make the world of difference to the individual concerned.

Growing and nurturing a healthy team is essential for the life of the youth ministry and is an excellent model to the young people.