

Answers To Fifteen Objections To Being Involved In Youth Ministry

Over the years we have heard many reasons from parents excusing their children from active involvement in our youth ministry. Here are the most common reasons given and a brief reply to each of them.

1. My child may be negatively influenced

This objection arises from those who are familiar with struggling youth groups and then assume that all groups are filled with people who are unrighteous. While any healthy group will include some who are unsaved and are being reached out to, the church cannot tolerate blatant unrighteousness, whether among adults or youth (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:11-14).

Our leaders will deal with anybody that is having a significantly harmful affect on those in the youth groups. We don't assume that all kids will come to the group in order to serve the Lord fully. But parents ought not to separate their youth from other youth to the extent that they cannot obey the commands of Christ which concern reaching the lost and edification of the church.

One of the desires the Lord has for young people is that they serve others. Serving people opens us to risk, which cannot be evaded in ministry. Through this we will learn more about our children's spiritual life.

2. My child is too busy with other activities (school, sports, etc.)

Everyone has to make decisions in their life about what is most important. How do we know what is most important in life? The Bible answers that the things that are eternal are more important than the things that are temporal (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 1 Timothy 4:7-8).

While we may have responsibilities to fulfill righteously in many areas of life, they cannot exclude other God-given responsibilities. Many have been able to participate in extracurricular activities and spiritually thrive in our youth ministry. However, many have also confused their priorities and suffered spiritually.

3. My child says the group is boring

Is this a statement about our youth ministry or about the child's spiritual interest? Many will say the Bible is boring. We definitely do not want to bore people with God's Word. If many in the group are considering the teaching to be boring, then maybe there is something to the complaint, but it is more likely that this is evidence of a spiritual problem with the child and should add to our motivation to have our child involved.

4. My child does not need to be involved because he/she has Christian friends outside the local church

Christian friends outside the context of a church are fine, but it is no replacement for the church. One of the things Jesus came to do was to establish the church (Matthew 16:18). We are not just a collection of individual Christians. God has designed each Christian to function in the body of Christ, His church (1 Corinthians 12:12-27) and there is a clear responsibility to serve for the benefit of all. There is truly a degree of accountability, authority and responsibility that are critical to the Christian life and cannot be reproduced outside the church.

5. My child gets what a youth group offers through their Christian school

While there are positive elements to Christian schools, one of the disadvantages is that people are tempted to wrongly think they replace participation in youth groups. Although this is surely not the intention of school administrators, it nevertheless is a common perspective. There are many ways that a youth group is fundamentally different than a Christian school:

- The youth group is part of the local church, which Christ established (cf. Matthew 16:18).
- A youth group is a part of a church, which continues. Young people will one day graduate from school and need to transition to something entirely different. Thus a youth group provides a context for continuing on in the faith.
- A youth group is made up of a diversity of people from different backgrounds. Christian schools, due to the cost of tuition, tend to draw from only part of the community, economically speaking. Young people will lose the sense of the breadth of Christianity and a personal sense of the financial situation of the fellow Christians.
- The focus of a school, by definition, is academics. The focus of a youth ministry is spiritual growth. While a school can include ministry and a church can educate, each has a different primary function.
- A young person can reach out to others and bring them to the ministry of a youth group. It is rather difficult to do this with a Christian school.

6. My child does not need to be involved because they have fellowship with believers within the local church

Inter-generational fellowship is important but there must also be a place to bring a child's peers. Few un-churched youth would be interested in a group of younger kids and adults. The types of activities that youth enjoy are also age related. Our youth must be interested in outreach to their peers and the youth group provides an environment for this to take place.

7. We have changed churches and my child is going to the youth group at my old church

We want to encourage families to attend the same church. Yet we realize that it can be difficult to lead some youth. Our advice would be to work through with your child all the reasons for your decision to change your church affiliation to seek to keep your family together. Indeed, this is one important consideration when it comes to deciding what church to attend and when to change churches.

8. We have recently begun attending FBC and my child does not want to participate in the youth ministry

This is a fairly normal situation, as many youth do not want to automatically join in with their parents' decisions. Besides your patient encouragement, we can help by inviting your youth to activities and discovering if there is anyone in the youth group who knows your child and can invite them.

9. My child doesn't know anyone in the group

Our student ministry works hard to help people who are newer to feel welcome and to become a part of the group. Also, new people attend frequently and your child will not be unusual or made to feel awkward.

10. I don't trust the youth leaders

Obviously, our church elders have put our youth leadership in a position of trust. We do not put people into youth ministry quickly or without confidence that they can serve the ministry well. If you feel you have information that our elders do not have that would give evidence of a lack of righteousness or competence, you should communicate this to the person who you are concerned about and then, if you remain unsatisfied, to one of our elders. We do not deny that some church youth leaders may be untrustworthy, but we believe we screen those serving sufficiently to protect the children and youth.

While some churches may have some leaders who should not be trusted, churches have some people that cannot trust anyone, including God. Since all leaders are fallible, we must, even with the best leaders, trust that God will work out His will through their strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, our faith is not in people, or even in our ability to accurately evaluate people, but in God.

11. It is too expensive

We seek to keep the cost of our youth activities to a minimum. But as any parent of a younger person knows, they can be expensive. This can be true in most of their endeavors. For the vast majority of families, this is an issue of allocation of resources. For those few families that do not have the finances for their child, our church is able to assist.

12. No one can do everything

We understand that no one, not even the leaders' children, will attend every activity. We are not interested in simple attendance, but in the underlying attitude of desire.

13. My child tried the group and left

Relationships are built over time. This requires that people continue to attend. Our encouragement would be for the child to mature by working through whatever caused them to leave. This would put them in the best position to build godly relationships within the church.

14. My own youth group experience was bad or I have heard stories about other groups

We do not claim that every youth group is worthy of attendance. Just because some Christians are hypocrites does not make all Christians hypocritical and likewise youth groups. Please give our youth ministry a fair chance.

15. My child does not want to go

This is the bottom line reason. When all is said and done, all of us attend church to the degree we want to. Yet whenever a child comes to the youth group they have an opportunity to respond to God's Word, to change their heart and for someone to reach out and help them. As with many important things in life, we don't always want to do what is best for us.

If you as a parent believe your child is best served through the youth ministry, then our encouragement is for you to not abandon your responsibility of leadership in your home (Ephesians 6:1-4). This will take wisdom and you may wish to consult our youth leaders, who have experience in helping youth through difficult times.

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