

Student Ministry Faith at Home Strategy

Faith at Home Vision: To make the home of each student the primary place where faith is lived and nurtured.

Obstacles to Faith at Home in Youth Ministry:

- **The Giftedness Problem:** Youth pastors typically possess giftsets that include relational ministry, evangelism, teaching, creative programming and other things that allow us to personally influence students. Engaging the home can be difficult (requiring organization, communication...etc) and intimidating to youth ministry leaders.
- **The Passion Problem:** Most youth pastors get into youth ministry because they love personally impacting the lives of students, period! And, to be honest, we love the reciprocal affection that we experience with students. To be brutally honest, we love the inner sense of value we receive as a result of our personal ministry successes. This leads us to crave the spotlight and the attention we get from placing ourselves in the center of a student's source for spiritual influence.
- **The Availability Problem:** Youth ministry can be one of the most taxing, tiring, and depleting fields of ministry in the church...the last thing a youth pastor wants is another thing to focus on and another way to divide their energy.

Goal of this Youth Ministry Faith at Home Strategy: To develop a simple, realistic approach to help faith to be lived and nurtured in a student's home.

A 4-Part Approach to Faith at Home in Youth Ministry:

I. Enhance the Partnership – A vital part of helping parents to engage their students spiritually is not just equipping them in what they do in isolation from the church but helping them to partner with the church's student ministry. Teenagers need other voices in their lives outside of the home; helping a parent to become a partner with their student ministry is critical.

Action steps...

1. Equip Small Group Leaders (SGLs) to engage parents.

- Give parents a bio with picture of their student's SGL. Send a letter to parents at the beginning of the year with this SGL bio...introducing them to their student's SGL.
- SGLs periodically email / txt parents with a short summary of what has been happening in their group.
- SGL's ask parents periodically "How can I help?" When a SGL hears from a parent how they (the SGL) can specifically encourage a student, this is a big win!
- Consider a special event where parents gather with SGL's.

2. Send regular and brief updates to parents.

- What are students learning?
- What opportunities are coming up that students can take advantage of?
- Again, keep it brief. Make it look sharp when possible.
- Daily updates during youth trips. Consider using GroupMe to quickly post pictures/updates for parents to see.

3. Bring parents into youth ministry programming at strategic moments.

II: Enhance the Conversation - One big thing we believe we can do to help parents engage their students spiritually is to provide opportunities to get them talking about spiritual topics.

Action steps...

1. Encourage it! Communicate the value of faith conversation on a consistent basis.

- Parents often need to be encouraged / exhorted to see how important this is in their home!
- We (youth pastors and leaders) need to be intentional about encouraging students to talk to their parents about issues they face and about important moments in their faith journey.
- Coach SGL's to point students toward faith conversation with their parents.

2. Provide questions for parents at strategic moments.

- Anytime you invite parents to come and participate in the youth service. be intentional about how we can get them talking in that moment. Provide for them questions to discuss after they leave.
- Series based / topic based parent meetings: always provide some guide to enhance the conversation.
- Post trip/camp/retreat parent celebrations: After a youth trip have a time for students to share how they encountered God with all the parents present. Then we will get parents talking with their student about the trip.
- Mission trip re-entry retreats: Find a place close-ish (30-45min away?) to your church where you help students debrief the mission trip. Then have parents pick their student up from that location, rather than at the church. This way we can have a celebration with the parents, share stories, get them talking, and they have the whole car ride home to chat! Provide a small card with mission trip focused questions for parents to ask their student.

III. Equip Students to be Missionaries at Home - We want to focus on impacting the home, not just through the parents, but through the students too. We will always have students who have parents / siblings that are non-Christians or struggling / lukewarm in their faith and we want to help them engage their parents.

Action steps...

1. Preach it!

- Annually teach on this and develop an entire series where faith at home is the focus.

2. Include parents/siblings any time you talk about outreach.

3. Utilize parent celebration moments to assist students in reaching their parents.

- Celebrate and affirm every parent when you bring them together with their students. Let them know you believe in them and acknowledge that they may be new to or curious about Christ. Consider using other parents to speak these things to parents. This creates more opportunity for parents to be influenced by their student and by the church (since for many students one of the most powerful things they will do is simply invite their parents to church!).

4. Coach SGLs to instill this value in their students in small group time.

IV. Equip Parents to Face the Unique Challenges of Parenting a Teen - There are several things that parents must navigate which are unique to their student's teenage years. Come along side them in these areas.

Action steps...

1. Engage parents in critical topics that coincide with what you are teaching their students.

- Parent only meetings (Saturday brunches work well for us) where you hit big topics that are important to parents (purity, technology, mental health, life transitions such as entering MS or HS or College...etc)

2. Hold conferences / workshops where your church can bring in outside experts on helpful topics.

3. Resource parents. Use church budget dollars to provide helpful resources to parents.