

Ron Luce: Feed My Lambs

It's no secret that almost 90 percent of those who come to Christ do so before the age of 20. Youth ministries are built upon the premise that the younger years are when the harvest fields are richest.

But time and again, I hear senior pastors and church members express the same frustration: "I just don't know what to do to get through to these kids!"

The good news is that "getting through" is easier than you may think. Put simply: Just feed them! (And I don't mean just feed them pizza, though that may be a good start.)

Jesus told Peter in John 21:15, "Feed my lambs." It was the first of three commands He gave Peter in their exchange in which He mentioned taking care of His sheep, the church. What most people overlook, however, is that Jesus specifically pointed out that at least one-third of Peter's attention ought to be devoted to the young ones, the lambs, and not just to the sheep.

This prompts a question that arises in many senior pastors' hearts: What can I do? How do I feed the young ones? What is my role, my responsibility?

The following are a few points taken from the *Double Vision* book and DVD seminar that literally thousands of churches have used to double the size of their youth groups. It's a simple planning process that allows you to "Feed His lambs"—and a lot more of them.

1) Pray.

Real impact begins with prayer. Of course, we should always be praying for the young people in our lives, given the unique challenges they face today in a culture opposed to

righteousness and godly values. But we need to also pray for the 26 million teenagers at large in America.

As you get your church praying for the vices and challenges teens are facing with media, sex, drugs and music, those church members' hearts will be softened and ready to reach out to the youth they're praying for. Every time you see a story of somebody being killed by a teen, or a teenager being a victim of someone else's bullying, it should trigger prayer from you and your congregation.

Equally as more important, pray for the young people in your county, in your city, in your community. How many teens are there in your area? How many high schools and junior high schools are there? What is the teen pregnancy rate, the drug use rate, the suicide rate for your area?

Remember, however, that no matter how much the culture is trying to steal your young ones, the gospel is stronger than culture. The gospel meets the cry of their hearts like no drug, like no sexual relationship. The gospel fulfills every need of their hearts. Though teens may look happy on the outside, they're really empty and destitute, looking for hope.

As you pray, also remember that the gospel doesn't need to be watered down for young people to embrace it. As a teenager, when I was reached for Christ in the middle of my partying days, it wasn't because someone watered it down. It's because someone laid it out in a way I could understand. Just speak the potency of the truth in a way they can understand it, and you will see real life-change as teenagers come to Christ.

2) Picture.

Ephesians 3:20-21 says, "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory" (ESV).

God is saying in this Scripture, "If you can imagine it, I can

do way more than that.”

The imagination is uniquely ours as humans. Animals can't imagine a better future or ways to make life simpler. It wasn't a cow that invented the milking machine or a horse that invented the tractor. It's only us as humans who have that unique God-given ability.

Can you picture in your mind having a church filled with young people? Can you imagine a Wednesday youth outreach that doubles, triples, even quadruples the number of young people who are hearing the gospel and having their lives changed?

The thing we imagine is the thing we begin to pray about. The thing we begin to pray about is the thing in which we become engaged.

As you dare to imagine what it would look like for youth revival to happen in your city, start to pray in that direction. It all starts with picturing it in your mind. Dreaming God's dream for the youth of your region begins with the senior pastor.

One way to begin is to imagine what it would look like after 12 months if Jesus Christ came back to be the youth pastor of your church. What kind of youth group would that be? What would the worship be like? The outreach? The leadership development? How much would it grow in the next year? Double? Triple? What kind of kids would you reach out to? Pregnant teens? Jocks?

Write it down. By imagining this from His perspective, it could be the beginning of dreaming God's dream for the teens in your region!

What if God wants to do something great in your region and He's just waiting for someone to dream great dreams on his or her behalf?

That someone could be you.

3) Plan.

We see God's plan for us fleshed out in Jeremiah 29:11, where He says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

Take your dreams, your thoughts, your imagination and ask God, "What will it take to accomplish the dream?"

It's the senior pastor's job to be the chief strategist of the church. Keep in mind that the people who run MTV are not young. They get young people to be on the TV shows, but it's the older people who look a lot like you and me who are doing the planning and strategizing. The pastor's job as chief strategist is to rescue a young generation.

Since God is a planner, we need to be planners too. Even a bad plan is better than no plan.

Start with the dream. Write it down. It could be that you want to have 100 young people in your church every week, with great missions teams, worship teams, outreach teams and drama teams. Begin to put a plan together.

Spending one day planning with your youth director and his volunteers—and even inviting your businessmen and leaders from your church—can be revolutionary. Better yet, spending one day together planning to implement the dream could be the launching of a teen revolution for Christ in your city!

Just one day.

4) Produce.

In the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), we see that God expects us to be productive with the talent or talents He's given us. We already know He's given us a light in our

communities, a well in the desert. There are broken people all around us. Now the task is to utilize the talent we've been given and, in our unique environments, produce results.

To do this you take the plan and put it into action. It should be broken down into monthly goals in each department and into organization charts. It will likely include job descriptions for each of your volunteers coordinating different parts of the dream.

When you've reached this stage, now it's your chance to begin to work the plan, orchestrating the volunteers in the youth ministry, getting the church praying for the vision and monitoring the results.

Little by little you'll see a thriving youth ministry happening at your own church—not just because you begged kids to come, but because you thought deeply, keeping the dream in mind, about how to take strategic steps to get there.

This is just a quick overview of a planning process. I encourage you to take an entire day and spend it with your youth pastor and his team. The sky's the limit. If all of us got engaged at this level, there's no telling how many multiple thousands of young people could be rescued for the cause of Christ and who could be turned into disciples that reproduce.

This is our moment!

*With almost three decades of youth ministry experience, **Ron Luce** has a heart to partner with senior pastors and youth pastors on the journey to reach young Christians at the most critical stage of their lives—the teenage years. To that degree, he offers strategic monthly insights on the most effective ways to engage the emerging generation with the message of Christ and to prepare them for a life of Christian*

leadership. To receive these invaluable insights from Ron in your inbox, go to to sign up.