

Student Ministry Breakout Session
Breakout Session
UNLEASH 2008
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First, a disclaimer. You're going to hear a lot of information in the next hour or so. With this, we challenge you to look for the transferable principle. Some of the things said won't work for all ministries. You take it, change it, and adapt it to fit your particular ministry. Take this info, strip it to its core, and apply it to your ministry and how it fits for you. Build it back up from its bare bones. The principle is what you apply.

Challenge you, don't look at all this and come away with "We can never do that." We can all learn together and share together. NewSpring's heart and vision is to learn together and share together with other churches.

Lots of things have changed since UNLEASH last year. Last year, we were meeting at a place in the mall, The Fusebox and we're getting ready to make a move right down the street here to a new area. With that, God has blessed this ministry, and after 9 months, it was time to make another move. After lots of debating and praying, we made a move to the main campus in October of this year and combined our Middle School and High School ministries. To be honest, we first took a dip in attendance and are now just starting to build our attendance back up.

Let us tell you, we have no idea what we are doing! We all have a different way of doing things. We have a culture where it is okay to fail. Grow, learn, and to try something. If it doesn't work, we scrap it and try something else.

When we combined ministries, we had different staffs that we had to evaluate strengths and put them in a position where they could succeed. With that, we have the staff broken up into two areas. First there is GRAVITY, which is what draws students to ministry. Then there is GLUE, and that is what makes the students stick after they come.

But the key to everything is relationships. No one will come if you don't have relationships. It's the heart of our ministry. What were you thinking the first time you saw your spouse? There was something in them that attracted you. Ministry has to be something that attracts. How are you attractively dressing your ministry?

We're gonna take some time to go over the 2 parts of ministry that we have here in Student Ministry. GLUE. This is where Small Groups and Volunteers come in. We use Small Groups to guide and lead our students. Its somewhere students can express their emotions and where they can "be students." Sometimes life sucks. We have to provide an opportunity to share our experiences, to offer hope and to be real. Relationships are the common denominator. In Small Groups, we have a rule of 80/20. Leaders do 80% of the listening and 20% of the talking.

We have been blessed with volunteers! Our goal is to train them, plug them into their sweet spot, and let them loose.

Questions to ask yourself. How are you sharing your life with other staff members? Volunteers? Students? The vision for Student Ministry is the same for the church. We're not a separate entity of the church. Volunteers are the lifeblood of the ministry. Train them so that they know how to communicate with students. Are you available for your students to talk to? Pour your life into certain students. Jesus was a great model on how to do this. Create a mentorship.

1 Corinthians 2:3-5

Most importantly, be yourself! Be the person God made you to be. We think we need to be the coolest, hippest person out there. What you have is exactly what your kids need. Kids see through the façade that you try to put up. Show them you care. Let the kids see you! People don't care what you know until they know how much you care. Practical things you can do are remember their name, remember the last conversation you had with them, and remember their birthday. Be others oriented. Staff should model this for the volunteers.

GRAVITY exists in two main areas. First, there is a heavy campus presence - Campus Coordination. We send out staff to know the lay of the land. We have changed schedules on staff to make sure that we have lunches free to go and to hang out with students in their schools during their lunch time, and we are getting volunteers plugged into that as well. We have a staff member that is over this area. She has met with these schools, asked questions, and found out how we can serve them. We ID the student ministries on campus and partner with students to help win their campus for Jesus. No matter what organization is working to bring students to Jesus, we are going to partner with them, not to win them over to NewSpring, but because we are all part of the big "C," the church, and it's about Jesus not one organization.

Next is our program side of ministry. We strive to create an environment where students can understand what is being talked about. We try to be sensory oriented, appeal to the 5 Senses. What can they touch, see, feel, etc. that may enable them to have an even more understanding of what we are hoping to communicate to them? Our generation is the most cynical, jaded, and skeptical generation, and we are responsible for their vision. It is our responsibility to correct or rebuke their vision. It's all about Jesus. We point them to Jesus every time. If you don't end up pointing them to Jesus, you are just giving them a one-way ticket to Hell. Don't point to just good moral stories. We will use anything short of sin to point them to Jesus. We've got to be willing to take risks, create a culture to fail. If it flops, we try something else. When something is dead we don't try to keep riding it. It's dead. Moses is dead and buried, we jump on Joshua.

The Creative Process. We try to be four weeks out. It takes a lot of work, but it's worth it because procrastination leads to no relationships. You will spend all your time on the creativity aspect that you have no time investing in the lives of your students. We have a group of people that meet every week for our service preparation. The purpose for them in that meeting is to create heat and push back. We go through a refining process for all the messages that are delivered on Wednesday nights. But this sets up our creative people for success. It is just plain sucky when someone comes to you a day or two before Wednesday and asks you to put something together for that Wednesday. That is not creating an environment for excellence. We have reviews on Thursday morning where we watch the service from Wednesday night. We watch objectively to talk about what sucked.

Q & A

Now that you are combined, how are you choosing topics to talk about with sensitivity to the ages?

- We are involved in the creative process. We visit schools, handle subjects in small groups. We teach up. Students will presume intelligence. Being raw opens up doors for students to talk to their parents.

How much time to you allot for Small Groups?

- About 15 – 20 minutes

How do we engage, influence, and equip our parents?

- We're not doing a phenomenal job with that. We look at parents for volunteers. We have a guy that is the parent of a 6th grader, in his mid 40s, and the kids love him. He is a great leader. We also blog and, lots of parents go there to find out more about us and the ministry.

How do you balance between teaching Christian and non-Christians?

- Our church's vision is to reach non-Christians and de-churched people

Do you still use Fellowship One for check-in?

- Yes. We are so deep in it. We are able to track when students check-in, what schools, and a variety of other kinds of information.

What else do we do to keep from molestation?

- Really, trust God. We have a pretty extensive process, (interviews, observations, reference check, background checks, etc.) but we trust God with that.

What do you do with an 11th or 12th grader that just met Christ?

- Relationships! Build that relationship. Invest in them.

Do you have any student leadership teams?

- No, not yet, but we are moving towards that.

Sundays vs. Wednesdays for youth?

- Church is on Sunday, and we can't compete with that. We will compete with sports and schools any day. We've got to be more cutting edge.

How much time do you spend with students on Wednesday?

- 5:45 is when the doors open and about 8:15 is when we close the doors. But the services are about an hour and a half.

How many schools do you invest in?

- Right now we have 4 middle schools and 4 high schools that we are really trying to pour into.

When you talked about airing on the side of raw, what is the dumbest thing you've ever done?

- One time while talking, I mixed the words big and huge and it came out sounding like...another word (female dog).
- Once when talking about the parable of the sower and spreading the seeds on ground and producing a harvest. I prayed and asked God for all the students in the room to procreate.

What do you do for follow-up?

- We send everyone a follow-up letter. We also push Small Group Leaders to make a contact with them after they come and visit their first time.

How long is your targeted time for your messages?

- No real target time. We just have to be refined. Think about your audience. Mostly 20 – 25 minutes.

Significance of Glue and Gravity?

- By combining we kept all the staff. Gravity is the attention grabber, and Glue is what holds them here.

Process for getting students involved in ministry?

- NewSpring is all about serving. We encourage students to get involved in greeting, kids area, etc. We don't have a setup for getting involved in Student Ministry however.

Reason for combining ministries?

- Mainly we grew out of our facilities. We also had some staff that would be leading with middle school and high school and were stretching our resources. Basically you can have two services as a B- or one service with an A+.

What do you do in Small Groups?

- Small groups follow the night. They piggyback the message. The speaker is a vision caster, and the small group leader guides and leads.

How do you physically break up Small Groups?

- We are all over the campus here. In the auditorium, preschool rooms, etc. We break up by grade and gender.

What do you do about disciplinary actions?

- Not many problems. We don't have rules really, but we don't embarrass the kids.

Would it be okay to do a youth event once in a while or should it be once a week?

- You could do one thing at an A or something every week at a C. Do what God is telling you to do.

Ratio of high school and middle school?

- Fairly even.

What do you do in schools?

- Go into the schools, talk to them, build relationships, meet other students. Relationships that are already established at the schools, find those.

Should we go to campuses together?

- At first, would be a good idea to start in teams. After that spread out so you can cover more ground.

Do we see high schoolers taking ownership over middle schoolers?

- We want them to love on them, so we are starting to see that begin to happen.

What do we do when we try to span ethnicities and social status?

- You have to be intentional and willing to be uncomfortable. Seek out all students!

What do you do when you realize you have a bunch of cliques?

- Nip it in the bud

How do kids respond in worship?

- Some raise their hands, some are chatting, and some are bored