

## **CORE COMMITMENTS OF THE CEFC YOUTH MINISTRY**

### **1. We are committed to the supremacy and sufficiency of the Bible to direct our priorities and guide our program choices.**

**We believe** that the Bible as God's Word is worthy of high esteem and we want that to be reflected in our youth ministry. The Bible is not only indispensable for our philosophy of ministry but the passing on of essential biblical truths to our youth is one of our fundamental priorities.

**In practice** this will mean that the teens will become people of the Book, normally being expected to bring their Bibles to youth activities. The teens will be challenged to think biblically and be instructed concerning their place in God's grand plan of redemption. They should regularly be asked about their daily devotions, as a further reminder of the same encouragements teens receive at home. In addition, they will be taught to be attentive to God's Word so as to allow the Holy Spirit to challenge and change their attitudes and actions.

#### **a. Put negatively, we are not interested in a youth ministry that tries to compete with the secular world.**

**We believe** that a healthy teen ministry draws teens because of the satisfaction that Christ has to offer rather than for the quality of the entertainment. The world finds its counterfeit and fleeting satisfaction in possessions, popularity, and power. It customarily practices a kind of verbal survival of the fittest as modeled on television sitcoms, while its music and films are too often full of desperation and vulgarity, frequently glorifying sex, violence, political correctness, and self-centeredness. We do not see our goal as sanitizing the world's message and means by fashioning Christianized versions of the world's offerings. We are likewise opposed to adopting the best of secular wisdom and marketing techniques as our "how-to" guide for growing our youth ministry.

**In practice** we will conscientiously combat conformity to the world by seeking as youth leaders and role models to sanctify Christ in our hearts on the one hand and be transparent in our failings on the other. We will regularly examine ourselves and evaluate the ministry to ensure that we are on course. In our desire not to succumb to the world, we do not think it necessary or wise to rule out social activities. They will be planned as a purposeful part of the overall program. Social events may fulfill such goals as teaching that all of life is to be lived to the glory of God, to foster fellowship among teens and with adults, to create a non-threatening environment for unbelievers, and to move our teens to greater commitment.

#### **b. Put positively, we desire to offer a clear alternative, a counter-cultural youth ministry where Christ is central and care for others, particularly those with whom we have no natural connection, is noticeably prominent.**

**We believe** that our youth ministry must be distinctively Christian and thereby counter-cultural. If Christ is central this will impact the kinds of activities chosen and the proportions of various activities. If we genuinely care for others, Christ will be exalted.

**In practice**, if Christ is central, Bible study, biblical teaching, prayer, singing spiritual songs and hymns, evangelism, missions, and acts of mercy will form the heart of our youth ministry. As care for others is one of our chief priorities, we envision a youth group where no student feels left out, where a mutual and loving responsibility for others' welfare permeates the group, and where such attitudes and actions are taught, encouraged, and exemplified by the youth leaders.

**2. We are committed to instilling a holy confidence in and healthy fear of the Lord that recognizes our Savior God's all-encompassing plan.**

**We believe** that the most revealing thing that can be said of the church is her idea of God. We desire for our teens a grasp of the greatness of our God. In addition we would endeavor to instill a holy confidence based upon a deep realization of God's faithfulness as well as a firm assurance of a right standing with him based upon the gift of his justifying grace in Christ. We want to strive against the tendency to reduce the scope of God's concern and thereby compartmentalize our faith. In this regard we want our teens to live with the awareness that everything they do every day, for good or for evil, is of eternal significance, which has both its effects in this life and in the life to come.

**In practice** the teaching in youth ministry will be God-centered and the teens will have a firm grasp of the outline of God's redemptive plan and their part in it. Teens will be encouraged to flesh out their faith in their God-given responsibilities. For example, students should be encouraged to view their studies as their current calling and they should be zealous to both honor and obey their parents, older people, and people in positions of authority over them. Challenges to give sacrificially of themselves and of their possessions should serve as yet another reminder that God owns everything and that Christians are but stewards of God's good gifts. Decisions about college, such as college majors or which college to attend, should be matters of seeking God's will for what God wants.

**3. We are committed to a multi-layered youth ministry that recognizes and accepts that not everyone is at the same place spiritually nor does every teen desire the same involvement in youth ministry.**

**We believe** that a commitment to a multi-layered youth ministry means that we are well aware that not all teens are at the same place spiritually. We are convinced that teens who are marginally involved can still benefit from youth ministry so that they should never sense that they are being ignored. In other words, those who are highly committed to the youth group should not become the exclusive focus of the youth pastor or youth volunteers. The goal is growth in every teen's relationship with Christ so that each teen may grow in conformity to Christ.

**In practice** the youth pastor will ensure that all teens are made aware of special activities and opportunities. Those who desire more in-depth discipleship should be afforded this opportunity. This does mean that the youth pastor and his volunteer staff will not necessarily be spending equal amounts of time and attention on each teen.

**4. We are committed to a youth ministry that capitalizes on the school mix of teens attending our church.**

**We believe** that God has brought together homeschooled, Christian school, and public school students in our youth program for a purpose. We want to exploit the advantages this diversity offers.

**In practice** there are a number of ways by which public school, Christian school and homeschooled students may use their varied experience to sharpen one another in their walk with Christ.

**5. We are committed to a youth ministry that encourages teens to take up leadership responsibilities within the youth ministry and that challenges all students to become involved in some kind of ministry in the church.**

**We believe** that teen participation in the youth ministry or in another ministry in the church is not only beneficial to the church, but also to the teen volunteer. Service in the church is a practical way for a young person to learn to function as a steward of God's gifts and abilities and as a servant in the body of Christ. Our desire is to see a large percentage of teens actively participating in at least one church ministry. With regard to the youth ministry we want students to take ownership of the ministry by the involvement of some teens in a leadership team. Such a team would function under the direction of the youth pastor and the adult volunteers.

**In practice** this means identifying potential leaders and mentoring these teens in Christian leadership skills and perspectives. It also requires that ministry needs in the church be both known and presented to the youth on a regular basis. Individual youth should be approached regarding particular ministries.

**6. We are committed to a youth ministry that does not isolate youth from the rest of the church, but rather incorporates them into the life of the church and fosters teen-adult relationships.**

**We believe** that there is profit in separate classes, projects, and Bible studies for youth which are particularly directed toward their needs, abilities, and interests; nonetheless, we are equally convinced that youth need to be rubbing shoulders with other age groups, particularly adults. Only in this way can the church function as a *community* of believers and can teens learn from the experience of the adults' successes, failures, trials, and temptations. We want teens to sense a commitment to the church and the wider church family to them, rather than their simply being devoted to the church's youth group. As concrete evidence of teens' commitment to the church, we believe formal church membership should be actively promoted among teens. We also believe that the development of personal relationships between teens and adults in the church is an essential part of a well-rounded youth program.

**In practice** this may be fleshed out in various ways including teens actively participating in inter-generational worship teams, ushering and greeting, missions with adult Christians, the men's and women's retreats, planning committees of the men's and women's ministries, prayer with adults some Sunday evenings and during the bi-annual weeks of prayer, and involvement in various ministries like car care, children's Sunday school, nursery, and VBS. Church membership would be encouraged as the norm for teens who publicly confess their faith in Christ. Adults would be regularly reminded of their charge to use every opportunity to befriend, serve, and serve with the youth.

**7. We are committed to a youth ministry that actively supports, serves, and assists in equipping parents to guide their teens on the narrow path that leads to life.**

**We believe** in a youth ministry that serves parents, listens to parents, and offers whatever help it can. We stand firm against any suggestion that would encourage parents in any way to abdicate their responsibility in the Christian nurture of their children. Youth ministry is not a substitute for Christian training at home.

**In practice**, given that our culture is increasingly hostile toward Christian teaching and values, our youth program should assist parents in the war that is being waged against faith - a spiritual war that parents may either be unaware of or uncertain about how to best guide their teens. Youth ministry should serve parents by exposing the kinds of temptations, worldview perspectives, and pressures teens face. The better informed parents become the greater the opportunity to stand united as a church body so as to protect teens from those aspects of youth culture that are destructive to faith and Christian practice. This kind of ministry can supplement other initiatives such as the Men's Ministry began, where men meet together quarterly to share their struggles and to search the Scriptures for guidance on how to raise their children.