

# God's Youth Program

*by Bryan Gibson*

“What kind of youth program do you have?” That’s a common question asked by many when looking for a church to attend. So what kind of youth program should we have? What should a local church offer its youth, according to God?

**Gospel preaching.** No, the gospel is not too outdated for today’s youth. It is as relevant today as when it was first preached by the apostles. It contains the words of eternal life (John 6:68); telling young and old alike how they can be saved (Acts 11:14). It is, as Romans 1:16 says, “the power of God to salvation.” “How can a young man cleanse his way? By living according to Your word” (Psalms 119:9). Young people cannot live according to God’s word unless they first hear it. They need to hear gospel preaching, and they need to hear it regularly.

**Bible classes.** The church at Antioch was blessed with a number of people who taught God’s word (Acts 13:1; 15:35), and the same is true in many local churches today. Having a number of well qualified teachers enables a church to offer Bible classes for different age groups, where the truth can be taught on “their level.” It does, however, need to be Bible study—not an art class, not a social hour, not snack time, and not a time to discuss “more relevant issues.” You would be amazed at how many Bible stories even two and three year olds can learn.

**Worship services,** patterned after those in the New Testament—where edification (1 Corinthians 14:26), not entertainment, is the result; where activities are spiritual, not carnal. Many churches have gone to the “contemporary style” services, where just about anything goes. Young people may enjoy this; it may capture their attention, but it will not feed their souls. They need worship services where their minds are directed to the Lord, to His will, to what He has done for them, and what they need to do in return. God knows what they need, if we will just follow His plan. Look in the New Testament, look at what those local churches did, and then just follow their example. That’s God’s way, and we simply cannot improve upon that.

**Godly or righteous examples.** The Bible is filled with them, and they will learn them as they listen to preaching and participate in Bible studies. They especially need to hear about Jesus, the one perfect example. But they also need examples from those with whom they come in direct contact. They need folks around them who can say with Paul, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). They need examples to follow (Philippians 3:17), people who are “living sermons.”

**Christians who look out for their souls.** God has certainly seen to this need, with the provision that elders be appointed in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5), men whose responsibility is to watch for the souls of every member—including the young

(Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28-31). The burden, however, should not fall completely on the elders. Young people need to be surrounded by those who “sincerely care” for the welfare of their soul (Philippians 2:20). Churches that designate one man as the “youth minister” have missed the point. Scripturally speaking, every Christian is a minister or servant (Philippians 2:3-4), and so our young people (and everyone else) should have plenty of people to minister to them. Basically, a local church should provide a family atmosphere, where we all look out for one another.

Let’s not cheat our young people. What they so desperately need is the bread of life. “This is the bread which down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever” (John 6:58). Anyone think they’ve got something better to offer?