

What in the Church Are YOUTH Doing?

by Jason Humiston

Coming off of the Christmas season as we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, I am reminded of how God has used youth through the years to further His Kingdom. The Bible is full of examples of men and women used by God while still very young. A few that come to mind are David, Mary the mother of Christ, and the disciples. Church History is also full of examples of youth whom God used to challenge the status quo and make changes within the Church. **How does your church do in preparing your youth for service?** Are your youth serving in the local church now or do they have to wait to “grow-up” to have a part in actively serving?

The goal of the IFCA Youth Ministry is to “encourage and equip students for ministry in the local church.” One of the primary ways we go about accomplishing this goal is to encourage pastors, leaders and their churches to get students involved in serving as part of the body of Christ. The National Youth Committee provides opportunities to train your young people through involving them in Ministry Training Areas (MTA’s) at the regional and national levels. When a student is involved in an MTA they spend time preparing for their MTA and practice to do their best for God’s glory. This is an opportunity for them to learn the discipline of excellence. When sharing in their MTA at the regional and national levels they are adjudicated by three judges. These judges are not there to give a score based upon a “performance”, but rather to encourage the students by giving them insightful comments that are meant to build the students up and to assist them to continue to excel in the skills and talents that the Lord has given them. The exciting part for me is this time the judges are able to build into the life of the student.

The goal of having the MTA’s at the National Youth Convention is not to showcase how great our students are (even though we are blessed with some very talented students) or for them to receive a scholarship to a Christian school (which they can). Rather it is to provide an opportunity for the students to use the gifts and talents, given to them by the Lord, training them

for ministry in the local church. If churches throughout the country are sending students to the National IFCA Youth Convention to participate in MTA’s but not using them in the local church, we have failed.

I want to challenge churches to find creative ways to use students in ministry. *Students need to have times when they are fed the Word of God and when they can spend time with their peers. But, just like all of us, there are times when they need to stretch their “spiritual muscles” and serve the Lord as well.* For your church that may mean using more youth to serve in the nursery, teach a children’s Sunday school class or children’s church, lead a Bible study of their peers, usher, help lead music, be part of a planning committee, or something completely different. Find a way God has already gifted the student and train them towards this bent.

I have found over my years of ministry the more ways I find for people to be involved (especially students who do not regularly attend the church) the more they feel they are part of the church. It would be great to see all of you bring students to be part of the IFCA Youth Convention MTA’s this next summer. But even more exciting would be for us to hear of all the ways students are being used to do ministry in the local church.

The MTA’s we currently offer include: Preaching (young men only), Bible Story Teaching, Music (vocal and instrumental), Music Arranging, Song Writing, Puppets, Drama (monologue & team), and Worship Leading. The last couple of years we have added Gospel Illusions and Chalk Art. For the 2011 Convention we are going to exhibit Tract Writing and Helps Ministry (more information coming on both of these at this summer’s convention).

