

Take Your Group to the Next Level

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Now that you've started your young adult group, you want it to grow to the next level. Here are some key principles to help you move forward.

1. Give It Away—Involve as Many Young Adults in Ministry as Possible

Ministry vision begins with a leader—usually that's you. But the best way to achieve your vision is through a team. Jesus needed 12 disciples, so you probably need some help too! As the primary leader, your role is to build and invest in a core group of people who can serve alongside you. This core team can multiply and grow the group faster than you can alone.

Once you have a leadership team, don't get comfortable. Create an environment where you allow young adults to "do" the ministry. The more people involved, the more likely your group will grow.

We hit a plateau in growth several years ago. We were stuck at about 40 to 50 young adults consistently attending our activities. Our team shifted its goal from increasing attendance to adding people into ministry. When we set a goal of having 40 people involved in ministry, our attendance doubled within six months. We realized we needed more people involved.

When young adults feel ownership—when they know they are truly part of the ministry—they attend more consistently and naturally invite their friends to join.

2. Do It Right—If It's Worth Doing, Do It with Excellence

One of the strengths of young adult ministry is its organic, relaxed atmosphere. Years ago, Earl Creps, an expert in young adult ministry, described most groups as a mix of Starbucks, Ikea, and Best Buy—only not as good. His observation still rings true.

While spontaneity and authenticity are valuable, they should never become excuses for poor quality. It takes planning and excellence to attract and keep young adults. Prepare in advance—from sermon planning to event leadership—and do everything with excellence. If you're not careful, "authenticity" and "being real" can become a cover for laziness or lack of preparation.

3. Go to Them—Reach Young Adults Where They Are

It would be nice if a social media ad could fill your church with young adults, but it doesn't work that way. Reaching them requires intentional, strategic effort. Every thriving young adult ministry I've studied had a clear plan and strategy. Growth is never accidental. You must decide where to find young adults. Here are three key areas to focus on:

—Young Adults in Your **C**hurch

There are already young adults in your congregation—probably the reason you started this ministry. Go after them first. Jesus told His followers to begin in Jerusalem before moving outward, so start local and build from there. Build a strong relationship with your youth ministry; every year, they graduate a new class of high school seniors. Find out where the last few classes have gone and connect with them. Work on building healthy connections within the church.

—Young Adults in Your **C**ommunity

In our town, young adults gather in the river market and on main street. You have similar places in your area. That's where you'll find those who are not yet connected to church. Be wise in how you engage—these environments often include loud music and alcohol. Use discernment as you reach out. Find creative ways to make a difference and draw people toward your ministry. Jesus himself took this risk when He spent time with sinners and tax collectors.

—Young Adults on **C**ampus

If there's a college or university near your church, target it. Find ways to connect on campus. Identify students who already attend your church and partner with them. Go to ball games, activities, and events. Sponsor gatherings or Bible studies on campus. Work with college leaders. Explore Chi Alpha resources for guidance on starting a campus ministry, partnering with existing ones, or equipping the local church to impact the school.

4. Do It Smarter—Learn from Those Who Do It Better

No one knows everything, so I've been intentional about learning from others. I regularly read business journals, ministry books, and research on young adult culture. I reach out to leaders of thriving groups. I listen to podcasts and sermons. I visit other ministries, attend their services, and meet their teams. I stay curious and keep learning.

5. Do All the Right Things—Create Balance in Your Ministry

Too many times, groups get relegated to one kind of ministry. They may be strong in discipleship but weak in events, or the opposite. You need balance. Young adults need to have fun together, so provide opportunities for that to happen. Young adults need to grow in their walk with God, so provide opportunities for that as well. Young adults need to be involved in missions and helping others, so provide opportunities for that too. Create a healthy balance. When you do, your group will grow stronger and deeper.