

# PARENT-LED YOUTH GROUP

*The Rock Church*

## OUR MODEL

Because we value personal relationships so highly at The Rock, one of our greatest concerns is to develop strong families. This has been our heritage and one of our greatest treasures, so our youth group follows a parent-led model.

The main difference between our youth group and the typical model at most other churches is that our youth group is **led and taught by dads**. Here's what Rick Whitney (a national leader of our Great Commission movement) has said concerning this model:

*As I have spent time assisting and guiding our youth across the nation, I've approached the opportunity primarily by focusing on the parents. Because when I think of teens, I think of fathers. Thus, first and foremost I seek to help local churches train and equip dads. My emphasis is to recruit fathers to stand up and be counted in front of their sons and daughters. My instruction and passion is to strengthen their hearts and build their resolve.*

## OUR GOAL AND BIBLICAL MANDATE

The goal for The Rock youth group is to produce teens who will bring joy to God *and* to their parents as they are trained in righteousness through godly modeling and parental input. The Bible makes this pretty clear:

### **Proverbs 23:24-25**

*"The father of a righteous man has great joy; he who has a wise son delights in him. May your father and mother be glad; may she who gave you birth rejoice!"*

### **Ephesians 6:4**

*"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."* [Parents must teach their children.]

### **1 Timothy 5:8**

*"If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."* [Parents must provide for their children.]

### **1 Thessalonians 2:11-12**

*"For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His kingdom and glory."* [Parents must correct their children.]

## OUR PLAN

The overall plan of our parent-led youth group has four basic elements:

### **1. Weekly Meetings**

- We meet almost every week, usually skipping the first week of the month to allow for family time.

- We believe that dads need to be the ones instructing and guiding, so dads will take the lead in organizing and giving direction to the group. And it's good for our youth to listen to their fathers in this context.
- We encourage not only group **prayer** with all of the teens and **discussion** of each night's lesson, but also a brief **testimony** from a teen during each meeting. This is a great way for every teen to have a chance to share how they came to know Christ, and it's great practice for them to learn how to share their testimony in a straightforward way and be able to speak before their peers.

## 2. Outreach Activities

- We try to incorporate at least three activities during every calendar school year specifically designed so that our teens can bring their friends to a wholesome party where there will be good food and great fellowship — **and the gospel will be shared**. Ideas include sledding, cookouts, Christmas parties, etc.
- We strive to have our teens involved in **sharing their faith**. We provide places and events where they can bring their friends and speak up for the Lord. Our teens cannot have a “Christian ghetto” mentality where they just hide out with their Christian friends.

## 3. Conferences

Road trips can be critical in shaping the lives of our children. Extended times away can leave lasting soul impressions. Parents also attend as chaperones.

- **Overnighters** — Twice a year we have an overnigher which is usually held at the church building. There is always some teaching, singing, worship, games, food, etc. Lights out is typically at midnight, and then we regroup the following morning for breakfast and a brief time of prayer and sharing. *This is NOT an outreach event.*
- **Spring Teen Conference** — This conference is for all Great Commission churches in the northwest and is usually held at one of our sister churches in Colorado. It's designed for our teens to bring their unsaved friends, and over the years we've seen a number of those friends accept Christ. It's held in the spring so the kids have almost a full school year to build friendships and bring those lost friends with them.
- **High School Leadership Training (HSLT)** — This conference is almost a week long and is designed for the seriously committed Christian. There is a lot of teaching and several opportunities for our youth to be involved in sharing their faith. It costs about \$200 and represents a pretty significant commitment from each of our youth, but it is life-changing. *This is NOT an outreach event.*

## 4. Service

One hallmark of our church's youth has been their willingness to jump in, roll up their sleeves, and **work** — and we don't want to lose this! In fact, we want to increase it all the more. We provide numerous opportunities for our teens to serve in our church — weekend service set-up, tear-down, showing hospitality to our visitors, helping out with

nursery or Sunday school, performing with the worship team, etc. We believe our youth should be known for their excellent service and good work habits.

*“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” – Matthew 20:26-28*

*“Neither intelligence nor talent is as valuable as the knack for hard work. Give your child this knack.” – Unknown*

*“The best security I can give my children is an unquenchable thirst for hard work.” – Unknown*

## **SUMMARY**

Parents, it’s critical that we do NOT assume our teens will turn out right without our serious involvement. This parent-led model is sure to help you:

- teach and work with your teens
- relate to your teens and help them respect godly authority
- increase your involvement in the lives of your children
- “be there” with your children at major turning points
- model godly behavior
- enhance your family life

Just to encourage all the dads, here’s a story that illustrates a great point:

### **Stepping through the Traps**

from *Parenting Today’s Adolescent* by Dennis Rainey

The scene caused a chill to trickle down my back. On an outdoor stage in Denver, Colorado, with fifty thousand Promise Keepers watching intensely, a fifteen-year-old boy — blindfolded and barefoot — began stepping cautiously toward a dangerous obstacle course filled with a dozen steel animal traps. Directly in front of the boy lay the grim, gray jaws of a huge bear trap that was so powerful that it could crush his leg and so large that setting it had required three men. Several feet to the left of the bear trap lay a smaller device, a beaver trap — quick and potent. Next to me, twenty-five feet away from the blindfolded young man, stood the boy’s father.

This unusual demonstration was my closing illustration in a message titled *Turning your Heart toward Your Children*. I wanted to make a visual point that children need their dads to guide them through the challenging terrain of adolescence and life. On each of the traps I had fastened labels representing the “traps” of adolescence, words like peer pressure, alcohol, drugs, sexual immorality, rebellion, and pornography.

The boy took two tentative steps and was about to take a third — directly toward the bear trap — when his father, Tom, screamed into the microphone, “Trent, stop! Don’t take another step. I’ll be right there!” His order echoed though cavernous Mile High

Stadium. The air seemed to suck out of the arena as an eerie silence replaced the normal fidgeting and low-grade hum of the throng. No one moved. Except Tom.

Trent sure didn't move. He waited obediently as his father circled the trap field and stepped in between his son and the bear trap. Tom whispered instructions to Trent. Then he turned his back to the boy. The young man eagerly placed his hands on his father's shoulders.

Slowly, taking small and deliberate steps, Tim maneuvered through the trap field, his son nearly glued to his back. Trent's hands gripped Tom's shoulders, his shuffling feet often clipping his dad's heels. Tom stayed as far from the traps as possible, not taking the slightest risk that Trent might bump a trap with his bare toes.

One man's tentative clapping broke the silence in the stadium. Soon others joined in. A chorus of voices yelled encouragement to the father and son. Only a few yards, a few traps remained. When the two reached me and the blindfold was pulled off, Tom and Trent hugged each other. Applause and cheering started at one end of the field and swelled to a thunderous standing ovation, rolling like a tidal wave across the stadium.

Above the roar I shouted over the sound system. "Men, that's what God has called us to as fathers — to guide our children through adolescence, the most dangerous period of our children's lives!"