**Running Events**

This session is all about running awesome events. We will first take a look at the context in which we run events, namely a disciplemaking ministry, then explore some general guidelines for awesome events and finally look at specific ways in which we can run Wow events!

**1. Events in a Disciplemaking Ministry**

Before we jump into the specifics of how to run event in a youth ministry it would be helpful to set the context in which events take place. His People Christian Church is part of a global movement known as Every Nation Ministries and as such has embraced a common approach to disciplemaking with the following four phases: Engage – Establish – Equip – Empower. As a youth ministry, His Youth, we believe it is critical to embrace the same approach for disciplemaking as the wider church so have built out youth ministry around the same four phases of ministry.

**A. Engage Events**

The first phase in our disciplemaking strategy is to Engage teens by connecting with them and bringing them to faith in Christ. Our Friday night weekly ministry focuses primarily on this phase and is an opportunity for believers to bring teens that they are building relationships with into an event in which they can engage with others believers and with God. Here is an outline of an Engage event:

**6:30-6:45 Setup.** Those responsible for the night meet to walk through the night - set up any decor and get all the materials for the night ready. Those presenting the night are walked through the PowerPoint presentation that drives the event.

**6:45-7:15 Prayer.** Our leaders gather for a briefing about the event and what is required from them and we spend time praying that God will move in the lives of the teens.

**7:15-7:40 Chill.** This is our hang time where teens play games like Pool, Table Tennis, Foosball and Darts or just chill. The teen and adult leaders are encouraged to spend this time connecting with teens.

**7:40-7:45 Welcome.** We welcome teens to the night and ask any newcomers to come forward to be introduced. We ask them their name, what school they are from and sometimes a silly question like the colour of their toothbrush or something like that.

**7:45-7:50 Announcements.** This is a key part of the night as it connects newcomers and regulars into our wider ministry. We advertise our Sunday morning topic and the theme for next Friday night.

**7:50-8:40 Event.** Next we introduce the theme for the night, often with a video clip, and then we launch into the event. The theme for the term and the night will determine what happens during this time.

**8:40-9:10 Small Groups.** Teens move into small groups and newcomers are assigned to a group. Our small group leaders get the questions on Wednesday night so they can prepare for this time. We currently use 4 to 5 small group question - the first one links to the event they just experienced and the rest take it deeper into spiritual matters. The time ends with prayer in line with what they discussed.

**9:10-9:15 Refreshments.** We serve juice and biscuits in summer and Hot Chocolate and biscuits in winter. Some nights the main event includes food but we generally still end with a drink at the end.

**9:15-9:30 Hang Time.** We allow more time for the teens to hang out or play games in the room but we end promptly at 9:30 so parents are not kept waiting in the parking lot.

**9:30-9:45 Departure.** We spend some time in the parking lot engaging with parents, making sure everyone has a lift home and also have adult leaders drop teens off which is a great way to engage with teens.

We create a theme for each Term to ensure that the 10 nights are connected to one another and not just random events. Some recent series include:

\* The Divergent Series - where each week we focused on a different faction (Dauntless, Erudite, Candour, Amity and Abnegation) and how that as believers we are called to live out the values of each faction (ie Brave, Wise, Honest, Peaceful and Selfless).

\* The Online Friday Series – each week we focused on a different media platform (Whatsapp, iTunes, Snapchat, Google, Steam, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Netflix) to give teens a chance to connect with each other and explored ways to get online with God.

\* The My Life Friday Series – each week we focused on a different area of a teen’s life (their Hobbies, Music, Movies, Passion, Health, Mind, School and Friends) to explore how to bring God into that part of their world)

\* The Live Friday Series – each week we took a game (such as Sims, GTA, Assassins Creed, Destiny, Tomb Raider, Watch\_Dogs, COD) and built an event to bring the game to life in the real world.

\* The Reality Friday Series – each week we used a different reality TV series (Survivor, Utopia, Star School, The Mole, Project Runway, Amazing Race, Hunger Games, Come Dine With Me) – to teach teens to be real with themselves, each other and with God.

\* Cash Friday – we built this series around four weeks of the Show Me The Money film series from Heartlines and a few other money-themed reality show nights including: Dragon’s Den, Monopoly, Deal or No Deal and Who Wants to Be A Millionaire.

\* Escape Friday – we built this series around the Escape Room phenomenon and added events like Fear Factor, Comedy Club, All or Nothing Night, Heaven or Hell Night, Clash of Clans Night and a Breakout Party.

\* ReCharge Friday – we designed this series to recharge teens after a long week at school with events such as: Pizza Night, His-Her Night, Dodgeball Night, Movie Night, Encounter Night, Chow Night, Talent Night, CrossFit Night and Power Night.

You can get all the material for these Friday events including PowerPoint, handouts and posters by visiting: http://www.ymresourcer.com/Programs.php (navigate to the Engage section).

**B. Establish Events**

The second phase in our disciplemaking strategy is to Establish teens in the faith. Our Sunday morning weekly ministry focuses on this phase. Here is an outline of our Sunday morning service:

**(1) Worship:** We start by worshipping together with the adult congregation and we exit the sanctuary when worship ends. After worship is finished there is a slide that goes up in the Sanctuary advertising our series (with the topic or character we are focusing on for that particular week) and it has our logo and it says: "High Schoolers are welcome to move to the youth room now!" This helps us catch new teens who are attending church with their parents and who don't yet know about our youth service.

**(2) Hang Time:** Once we get into the youth room we wait up to 3 to 5 minutes for the teens to connect with their friends and also grab a chair to sit on. As they enter the room there is music playing and also a PowerPoint presentation is looping with photos that have been chosen from the Friday night event – this helps to get the Sunday congregation to be aware of what we do on Friday nights and also teens enjoy seeing themselves on the big screen.

**(3) Welcome:** A teen welcomes people to the service and ask newcomers to come up to the stage. They are then asked to share their name, the school they attend (sometimes their grade) and usually one stilly bit of information about themselves – like their favourite colour or the colour of their toothbrush. Once they have shared this information about themselves, the person welcoming them will interact with the audience and ask: “What is their name?” and “What school do they go to?” And everyone has to repeat it back. We are then asked: “What are they?” To which we answer: “Family!” The next question is: “And what must we do to them?” To which we answer: “Love them”. And the person asks: “And what else?” To which we answer: “Care for them.” And finally the person says: And what else: “Don’t chase them away!” The person is told to take their seat and the next person is welcomed - if there is more than one visitor on the day.

**(4) Offering:** A teen presents the offering message to motivate teens to give of their tithes and offerings and the box is sent around. This is a great training opportunity to develop teens towards preaching.

**(5) Announcements:** A teen does the announcements (there are overheads slides for each of these parts of the service to help keep things moving and prevent us forgetting any of the key items). Here are some items that are include: A challenge to like our Facebook page, to get their photo taken for the wall, a review of the Friday night event with a few select photos, a preview of the coming Friday night’s event and the introduction of the preacher.

**(6) Word:** The Welcome, Offering and Announcements takes around 10 minutes which leaves us about 40 minutes for the ministry of the Word. A recent series was entitled Heroes where we have spent eight Sunday mornings focusing on different Bible characters (Joseph, Rebekah, Daniel, Hannah, Jonah, Ruth, Peter and Esther. A key focus of the term was to get the teens to get into the Word for themselves, to Connect with the life of that Bible character and discover for themselves keys to growing in their relationship with Jesus. Some Sundays included video, images printed and placed on walls, drama, reflective reading, narrated readings, small group discussion and report back, etc. Teens often get a worksheet to use during the service and we also made use of the chalkboard to capture insights that the teens learnt and reported back on from their small groups. We usually seat teens around tables – 6 at a table with no-one sitting with their back to the preacher – and this encourages the preacher to engage teens in the message and interact with each other at their tables.

When we design the weeks of the Series we allocate each week to a youth pastor, an adult leader or even a teen leader to develop and present. They are responsible to create the message and feed through their notes to the youth pastor who currently creates the PowerPoint that is shared on a closed Facebook group for review by all the adult and teen leaders during the week. Videos are all downloaded from YouTube and inserted into the presentation and links shared in the presentation that is uploaded to Facebook and a website on the Sunday afternoon once the morning event is over.

You can get all the material for these Sunday teachings including notes, the PowerPoint, audio recording and any worksheets used during the service by visiting: http://www.ymresourcer.com/Programs.php (navigate to the Establish section).

**(7) Prayer:** The service ends with prayer and often a time of response or ministry before music is played as teens either hang around playing pool or foosball or table tennis or chat with their friends or leaders.

**C. Equip Events**

The third phase in our disciplemaking strategy is to Equip teens for ministry. As teens are being established in their faith we watch for those who are ready to be equipped to minister among their peers and we equip them through the following initiatives:

**(1) Equipping Sundays Series:** At least once a year our Sunday teaching series is designed to equip teens – either to minister to their peers or to share their faith with their lost friends.

**(2) Monthly Leadership Meetings:** Our teen leaders gather once a month on a Sunday afternoon for 2 hours with adult leaders to plan either the upcoming term or the next month’s events. Each leader is responsible for one Friday night a term and work with a small group of Connect Leaders to plan and present Friday night events. These leaders connect with each other via a WhatsApp group.

**(3) Weekly Prayer Meetings:** All our leaders gather every Friday night for a time of prayer before the Friday event starts and this time includes elements of encouragement and equipping.

You can get material for Equipping teens by visiting: http://www.ymresourcer.com/Programs.php (navigate to the Equip section). Check out the Strategy and the Seminars pages for more resource.

**D. Empower Events**

The fourth phase in our disciplemaking strategy is to Empower teens to minister. We empower teens by releasing them to serve in the following areas:

**(1) Small Group Leaders:** Teen leaders are each responsible to lead a small group on Friday nights – the groups are no larger than 4 or 5 teens and the leaders are given the small group questions a few days before the event.

**(2) Friday Meeting Presenters:** Teen leaders are given the responsibility to lead Friday night meetings (they may open in prayer, welcome newcomers, or MC the night)

**(3) Sunday Meeting Presenters:** Teen leaders are also responsible to present part of a Sunday morning service (they may do the welcome, announcements or share the offering message or even preach).

You can get material for Empowering teens by visiting: http://www.ymresourcer.com/Programs.php (navigate to the Empower section). Check out the Strategy and the Seminars pages for more resource.

**2. Secrets to Amazing Events**

Here are some general guidelines to running great events:

(1) Involve Teen Leaders. It is best if teens (or at least adult volunteers) are the ones who do the planning and leading of the events. It takes a little more work to get there but is much more rewarding in the long run and will help create valuable skills in teens.

(2) Design Promotional Material. We live in a visual world so spending a good amount of time in crafting striking promotional material for the event is well worth the effort. This involves posters that can be shared in Facebook or a youth website and also printed and displayed in the venue.

(3) Prepare the Space. Make sure that every part of the venue is ready for the event – in fact, go out of your way to make the most of the space – even on a limited budget you will be amazing at what you can do with some creativity and effort. Think through every part of the event and decide where people will be at each point and whether chairs, carpets or tables will be needed.

(4) Create Hang Time. It is tempting to get carried away in the design phase that on the night you run out of time or end up sacrificing relational or hang time. Set time aside when teens enter the venue and also after the event for teen leaders and adult leaders to engage with teenagers.

(5) Design Amazing Visuals. Teens should walk into the venue and be visually know that the event is going to be awesome. The décor, posters, PowerPoint presentations, props, etc. should all communicate that effort has been put in and that they can expect a Wow event.

(6) Involve Teens Throughout. We make it a priority that teens are not spectators in events. It takes a lot more work to design an event in which teens are active participants throughout but the results will be worth the extra effort. Dividing a bigger group into smaller groups that work together and at times compete against other teams is one way to maximize participation as is choosing activities where many people participate rather than having everyone watch one or two people taking part.

(7) Use Small Groups. At His Youth the actual focus of our Friday night event is what takes place in small groups. The whole event culminates in that thirty minute experience in small groups, of no more than 5 teens who answer questions created around the activities of the event and the theme that is being fleshed out.

(8) Pray Before Events. And finally, make sure that you gather as a leadership team once the setup has been done and things are ready to pray that God would prepare the hearts of the leaders to touch lives, that His power would be experienced and that every teen will be loved and drawn into the community of believers.

**3. How to Lead a Wow Event**

Recently at a leadership team training event, I prepared the following guidelines on how to actually run one of our weekly events! This was aimed at the teenagers who are responsible once having prepared the event (in partnership with the youth pastor) to actually get up on stage and lead a Wow Event!

(1) Do Your Homework. It takes a lot of work to pull off a Wow event so makes sure you put in the hours necessary to create the event. Start working long before the week of the event so you don’t end up in panic stations and last minute desperation.

(2) Be Super Prepared. Think through every single detail of the program. Write or type everything out to ensure that nothing is left unprepared. This will help things go smoothly on the night and increase your confidence levels.

(3) Brief Your Team. Before the prayer time, gather everyone who is helping you pull off the event and make sure everything knows exactly what they are responsible to do. If there are any question patiently answer them going over things more than once if necessary!

(4) Look the Part. It will add to the event if you think through how you will present yourself on the night as a leader. This does not mean wearing a suit an a tie but there could be items of clothing or accessories that will help you look and play the part as MC on the night.

(5) Come Out Blazing. When you start the event make sure you come out guns blazing – this means, confidently welcoming people and reflecting the level of excitement that you want the audience to reflect. This means knowing exactly what you are going to do at each moment of the event!

(6) Own the Stage. Make the stage your own by moving around and standing in a central part of the stage.

(7) Use Your Hands. The bigger your audience the bigger your gestures need to be – so be willing to exaggerate your movements to ensure people are drawn in to the event.

(8) Be Gentle and Tough. Throughout the event there may be those moments when people will be tempted to check out or chat with their friends. Be sure to take a gentle approach in drawing them back into the group or you will alienate them. It is best if you brief your fellow teen and adult leaders to help with “crowd-control” so you don’t have to chastise people from the stage.

(9) Watch the Clock. It is critical to keep a close eye on how long each part of the event is taking and make the necessary adjustments along the way so that you don’t run out of time and end up sacrificing important parts of the event due to a lack of control. Don’t be afraid to leave out an activity along the way if time is running short.

(10) Always Be Flexible. If an activity is not working out or you sense that you need to move on from something that is dangerous then be willing to be flexible with the program.

(11) Share the Credit. When the event is over and people thank you for an amazing event be sure to give credit to others who have helped you create and present the event.

(12) Improve Each Time. Ask for feedback from peer and adult leaders and look for ways that you can prepare and lead a better event the next time round.

Finally, I recently briefed our teen leaders about their involvement in planning and presenting Wow events at our Friday night youth event, and listed the following practical guidelines they needed to follow:

\* Work with others – some teens are tempted to plan and lead an event on their own – we are looking for teamwork!

\* Design the event – it is their responsibility to design the event from start to finish – not just design a few games.

\* Think everything through – they need to consider every aspect of the event and ensure it works together.

\* Figure out details – there is a tendency to do surface level planning but they have to get specific with every detail!

\* Type it up – when people actually type out the whole event it forces them to be more thorough and tighter.

\* Submit it for Review – we set a deadline in the week when the outline for the event must be submitted.

\* Create group questions – they are responsible to create five questions for small groups based on the theme.

\* Arrive early to Setup – we challenge them to get to the veue at least an hour before it starts to set up properly!

\* Set things up – this reminds them that it is their responsibility to ensure everything is ready for the event.

\* Walk through event – about 30 minutes before the event we walk through the Presentation to ensure all is clear.

\* Present well – they are challenged to be confident and lead the event well on the night.

\* Ask for feedback – after the event we expect they will get feedback about the event and how they led it.

\* Improve next time – based on the feedback they reveive they are challenged to think of how they can improve.