

The Traditional Young Life Club – Part II

(Submitted by Fil Anderson)

As was highlighted in the last article, the Young Life club is historically the most effective setting for the proclamation of the Gospel. The following “ingredients” and suggestions for making the club effective are a guide only, although should be taken into consideration as is written from a collection of years of experience. You know the young people you’re working with the best – do what is going to be most effective for the skills you have within your leadership team and is going to be most engaging for the young people you are working with. Remember, the main point of club is the clear proclamation of the Gospel – if you are engaging unreached young people and giving them a clear Message, you are running an effective club.

Traditional Ingredients of the Young Life Club Meeting

- **Music/Singing** has particular value in getting young people doing something together and in preparing them for the message. Good singing can be a tremendous asset to the meeting's atmosphere and effectiveness.
- **The Minutes (Skits/Games).** This is not just a skit thrown into the program, but rather an important ingredient for breaking down barriers and making kids laugh and relax in a happy setting.
- **The Announcements.** Mainly used to break the stride of the meeting and cover any future plans for the club. Camp promotion may often best be done at this time.
- **The Message.** An important part of any Young Life club is when a leader has the opportunity to speak of Jesus Christ to young people who do not know Him. Give them something to believe so the Holy Spirit can do His work.
- **The Close.** Brief, but important in leaving kids with a good impression of the meeting and what was said.

Making the Club Effective

Variety

Young Life leaders have discovered that a club is attractive in its informal, sincere, loving presentation of Jesus Christ. The message does not need the support of special gimmicks and tricks, special music or refreshments, to be effectively heard and appreciated. Sometimes the charm and force of a club meeting is its simplicity. On the other hand, care must be taken not to get in a rut and allow the meeting to become routine or lacklustre. From time to time, leaders will want to try a special effect, or club meeting, just to introduce some needed variety. See *Module Seven - Further Resources* for suggestions.

Discipline in club

Discipline is built upon respect. Most problems may be solved as we get to know the young people we are working with and as they know and respect us. Teenagers are naturally enthusiastic. In a setting as informal as a Young Life club, they will

undoubtedly pose discipline problems. Good leadership will ensure that the same problems will not continue week after week.

Christian kids can cause trouble with an "I've heard all this before," attitude. Disinterested students are often careless, not malicious, in their inattention.

- Pray for wisdom.
- Try to understand the reasons for inattention.
- Work hard to win the confidence of the ones who cause trouble.
- Keep motives in check. Are you motivated by a wounded ego or by a desire for kids to hear the Gospel?

Some Solutions to the Problem of Noise and Inattention

- Arrange furniture and focal point so kids can see the leader.
- Up-front leaders should be in a good light, good enough to show facial expressions.
- Leaders can help greatly by sitting close to trouble spots and modelling an attitude of complete attention to the up-front leader. Attitudes are contagious.
- At the first club of each semester, remind kids of some basic ground rules at club: We are committed to making club fun and treating you with respect. We ask, in turn, that you will listen carefully during the last 10 to 20 minutes each week. When noise and inattention must be stopped, try:
 1. Heart-to-heart talk, jovial or serious: "Hey, wait a minute. There are too many clubs going on tonight. This is way too important for us to compete with a lot of chatter."
 2. Just be quiet: Let it become obvious that someone is disturbing.
- Work on kids individually: Chat with him or her after club about it. Show love to that kid there and everywhere.
- Evaluate your club format frequently. Be willing to hear and act upon kids' constructive criticism as well as that of other leaders.

Special Problems

- *Kids who won't come in:* A leader should invite them in each time they hang around the outside. Be sure you are always friendly when you meet them at school. If they are making noise in an attempt to disrupt, appeal to their sense of fair play and ask them either to come in or at least let the rest of the crowd enjoy the club.
- *Kids who want to heckle you in club:* Above all, don't get angry since that would mean they won the game. If it isn't persistent, a readiness to laugh at yourself has the best chance of ending it quickly.
- *Smoking..* Do not allow it at clubs. It is against the law, it is offensive to non-smokers, and it can burn carpets!

Publicising the club

Of course the key to this is the student who is really sold on Young Life, perhaps a Christian who was greatly helped to personal faith through Young Life. Word of mouth invitations to others to come are most effective. These may be supplemented by:

1. Printed slips or flyers or pencils, giving information on where club meets, when etc. (Some school authorities object to these being given on campus. We must observe their wishes.) Some leaders see as much as a 25 percent increase in attendance due to flyers.
2. Posters or PA announcements are sometimes permitted on campus. Again, special care must be given to not violate school rules.
3. The leaders may become involved in some school activity, helping to officiate at a game, speaking to a class or assembly, working with a teacher or dean on some special program or project.
4. Be careful that your friendship with kids is not conditional on club attendance. Encourage kids to do most of the inviting of their friends.
5. Some kids need an invitation from a leader they have met. A good rule of thumb is to specifically invite a student once, and then pray for wisdom and sensitivity about bringing it up again.

Encouraging decisions

Young Life leadership is determined not to use embarrassing button-hole techniques. Yet, we must keep in mind the young person who might respond with a more directed and guided chance to trust Christ at a Young Life club. We do not need to wait for camps or special meetings to expect kids to make their commitment to Jesus Christ. If we give a closing prayer, we may help them phrase their own prayer of faith.

Leaders should be available to kids who might want to talk. We must make it as easy as possible to see us. We may want to encourage them publicly to come, letting them know we would like to help in any way possible. A direct question from the leader is in order with those we know very well, such as, "What do you think about all of this?"

It could happen at any time or place when a leader senses the young person wants help in meeting Christ in a personal way.

Pitfalls

A few assorted problems in club work are as follows:

- Do not use the summer camp entertainment skits for the minutes of club. This ruins it for all who go to camp and it is too often done.
- Beware of clocks, chimes and phones during the message. Stop them prior to club, if possible.
- Leaders should carefully avoid any situation where they might be alone with a young person of the opposite sex, such as taking him or her home from club.