

The Traditional Young Life Club (Submitted by Fil Anderson)

What is a Young Life club?

The Young Life club is historically the most effective setting for the proclamation of the Gospel. In some communities, it remains a highly effective tool in reaching out to a majority of a targeted adolescent community. Usually the meeting is held on a week night in a neutral place, such as the home of one of the kids. The atmosphere is friendly and relaxed. A club is under the leadership of men and women who care enough for kids that each meeting has maximum effectiveness in expressing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Young Life club should be a heavily prayed-for meeting. Even during the hour, leaders should cultivate the habit of praying without ceasing. Some club teams have been wise to establish prayer teams, which meet during the club hour to focus their attention exclusively on prayer for the meeting. This beautiful platform of expression, the Young Life club, may become one of the most powerful influences for Jesus Christ in the entire community.

Primary Considerations

1. In a class by itself in importance is the leaders' relationship with Christ. Club will always reflect their attitudes. They are the ones who set the whole tone of club. They should radiate Christ in actions, words and attitudes.
2. A successful club is one in which Jesus Christ is made known. It may have nothing to do with numbers of kids, how many laughs were shared or how smoothly it was run. Club is geared to kids and where they are. Nothing is pushed or forced since Christ does not force Himself. Making Jesus known at club simply means doing things in His way, with His attitudes and His actions. The fun and games of club are all part of the nonverbal communication of Christ.
3. Young Life club is a team ministry. Christian kids and leaders living the Christian life are of major importance. They help set the atmosphere to be that of Christ's love. Their love and concern at club build a vital believing base for the message.
4. When kids leave club, they should feel like something was different about that one hour. As they continue to come, they should find out for themselves that it was Jesus Christ's presence that made it special. It was Christ in people, in the songs, in the laughs, in the message and in the attitudes.
5. Numbers *are* important! Christ's command to all of us is to 'go to all the world' and to every person. We will ask God to use us to reach as many kids as we can in our meetings. Well attended meetings usually have a stronger feel of excitement and interest. Obviously, then, we hope lots of kids will show up, and we pray to this end. *But be careful.* Numbers, per se, do not necessarily spell success.

Preliminary Considerations

The club meeting features *planned* informality. The leaders are in charge, but the students feel it is their club. They sit on the floor, usually in the home of one of the participants, but it could be held elsewhere. The parents are the hosts and should be within earshot of what goes on.

1. Most clubs meet on a weekly basis, the same night each week. Continually shifting the night or calling off club will seriously impair the outreach it has.
2. Typically, in suburban situations, the meeting lasts from 50 minutes to an hour. In some urban and rural situations, the meeting may also involve recreational and social activities, and last for an evening. In places where the majority of teens experience home as a place to escape from, club becomes a safe place to be, and kids want to stay as long as possible.
3. It must be attractive - should move along and not drag.
4. The meeting is designed to introduce disinterested high school kids to Jesus Christ. *It should not become a clique for Christian young people;* we must always guard against this as some clubs become safe Christian sanctuaries.
5. It is open to any student in the school or community. There is no such thing as membership or dues.
6. Leaders make every effort to cooperate with school activities and to help promote school spirit. We want school, church, and civic leaders to look at Young Life as an asset to the community. Always be sensitive enough to include those who tend toward being dropouts. Strive to win them also.
7. Special care must be taken not to conflict with the program of the local churches and to gently correct any teenagers who might consider Young Life their church.
8. Information, both printed and spoken, must be given to parents. This may be accomplished through a prepared brochure, personal visit, phone call, or Parents' Night. In urban situations, it is vitally important that club leaders have a letter of introduction and explanation available at every meeting for new kids to take home. Don't leave parents guessing about what kind of group Young Life is.
9. No club may exist under the name Young Life without the supervision of a Young Life staff representative. This means, among other things, an adequate reporting system on a regular basis.
10. Leaders are free to experiment with new features in club just as long as the Gospel is not obscured or the club does not become mere entertainment.
11. Careful records should be kept in the form of weekly club report cards and use of the informal club cards filled out by the young people themselves once a year. It is imperative that the club leadership knows what kids they are ministering to. A good club survey will reveal that information.
12. Leaders must exercise care in the protection of personal property, as well as in the conduct of the young people before and after club, particularly those driving cars. Any damaged property must be replaced and proper apologies given.
13. If at all possible, clubs should not get too lopsided with girls or guys. An even split is desirable. Each leader must be conscious of this and pray and work hard to keep the balance.

14. The message is the climax of the meeting. All that is done earlier should prepare the way for the verbal presentation of Jesus Christ.

Atmosphere of Club

1. Should be relaxed and enjoyable.
2. Picture Christ's love flowing from you to each kid.
3. Let students know you appreciate being with them.
4. Give them as much responsibility for the club meeting as possible. Help them to feel that it is *their* club. Let them participate. Here are some possible ways to incorporate students into the leadership and ownership of the club:
 - a. Have kids lead songs. (They should be carefully coached first.)
 - b. Have them clap, raise hands, answer questions.
 - c. Have them yell for their class or team.
 - d. Have kids pass out brochures, give announcements, do walk-ons and skits.
 - e. At certain times in the year you may want to ask kids to share their faith, lead in prayer or give the message.
5. Keep things moving. Don't lose momentum.
6. Each of the team leaders should sit in the middle of a group of kids and give rapt attention to the up-front leader at all times. This attitude will catch with the kids around the leader.

