

## Next Gen Leader Suggestions

Here are some key things a Next Gen Leader (especially a first time one) should know and do:

### 1. Understand Your Audience:

- a. Get to Know the Children/Youth/Young Adults: Spend time with your ministry field outside of structured church activities. Understand their interests, struggles, and spiritual needs.
  - i. Attend extracurricular activities. Sit with parents and get to know them as well.
  - ii. Take notes or journal what you learn.
- b. Cultural Awareness: Stay aware of the cultural trends and challenges that Children/Youth/Young Adults face today, including social media, mental health, and peer pressure.
  - i. What are Next Gen students watching/listening to? What apps are they using?
  - ii. Ask leadership and parents what things may be specific to the local culture that you serve.
  - iii. Regarding parents, do you live in a community that likes things planned out months in advance or is a shorter term preferred?

### 2. Build Relationships:

- a. Be Approachable: Make sure the Children/Youth/Young Adults feel comfortable coming to you with their questions and concerns.
- b. Engage with Families: Build relationships with the parents and families of the Children/Youth/Young Adults. They are key partners in the spiritual growth of the young people.
- c. Spend time getting to know people outside of a Next Gen ministry focus. Engaging with these folks especially before and after worship services is vital.
  - i. Ask to meet with each of your elders individually, over coffee or lunch. Make it a goal to have met with all of them within 6 months. Then continue to ask each new elders.
    1. In doing this you will find out who your allies are, who you need to win over, and you'll probably make some lifelong friends in the process.
  - ii. Attend non-Next Gen events as another way to build these relationships.

### 3. Develop a Vision:

- a. Set Clear Goals: Have a clear vision and goals for the Next Gen ministry. This will guide your programming and help the Children/Youth/Young Adults grow in their faith.
  - i. Set achievable spiritual, acts of service, fellowship, and personal goals.
  - ii. When a student walks into your group, what do you want them to know and do by the time they graduate into 'Adult Ministry'?
  - iii. It pays to be intentional.
- b. Spiritual Growth Focus: Ensure that your activities and teaching are aimed at helping the Next Gen student grow in their relationship with Christ and each other.

#### 4. Effective Communication:

- a. Teach with Clarity: When leading Bible studies or sermons, ensure that your messages are clear and relatable to their age group.
  - i. Try to mix both whole book of the Bible studies with topical studies as well.
  - ii. Always try to include practical application with each lesson.
- b. Communicate Expectations: Be clear with the Next Gen students about expectations for behavior and participation in the ministry.
- c. You Cannot Over Communicate: Use every method at your disposal: email, text, social media, website, church app, etc.
  - i. Be your own public relations pro. If you're not good at it, enlist a volunteer to help you!
  - ii. Even the senior citizens whose kids are grown and moved away need to know what you're doing and why it matters.
    1. If nothing else, do this so people know how to pray for the ministry.

#### 5. Planning and Organization:

- a. Structured Programs: Plan a mix of activities, including Bible studies, worship, service projects, and fun outings. Variety keeps the Children/Youth/Young Adults engaged.
  - i. Knowledge of local and regional events and places will be key.
- b. Time Management: Manage your time well, balancing administrative duties, lesson preparation, and personal life.
  - i. Make sure you have a complete day off sometime during the week. Sunday will usually not be that day due to church duties.
- c. Keep a calendar that you share with others (pastor you report to, church secretary, key volunteers, etc). Write down all office hours, appointments, events you plan to attend, etc.
  - i. This will create a definite layer of accountability and credibility.

#### 6. Be a Role Model:

- a. Live What You Preach: Next Gen students will look up to you, so model a Christ-centered life in your actions and decisions.
- b. Humility and Authenticity: Be genuine in your interactions. Admit when you don't have all the answers and show a willingness to learn and grow.

#### 7. Self-Care:

- a. Spiritual Health: Maintain your own spiritual health through regular prayer, Bible study, and rest.
  - i. If you don't do this you will burn out quickly.
- b. Avoid Burnout: Know your limits, and don't hesitate to ask for help or delegate tasks when necessary.
  - i. Because you will work on Sundays, you must insist on a day off during the week. Choose a day that typically won't interfere with Next Gen extracurricular activities (i.e. Friday football).

8. Seek Mentorship:

- a. Guidance from Experienced Leaders: Find a mentor who has experience in Next Gen ministry to guide you and provide advice as you navigate your new role.
- b. Seek out a relationship with an ordained elder or deacon in your church that you can share things with and it is agreed by both parties that "what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas".
- c. Attend events like the EPC Next Gen Leadership Training or Reformed Youth Ministries Youth Leader Training to learn methods and principles as well as to develop relationships with other Next Gen leaders.

9. Adaptability:

- a. Be Flexible: Next Gen ministry can be unpredictable. Be ready to adapt your plans when needed while keeping the ministry's vision intact.
- b. Embrace Change: Be open to new ideas and approaches as you grow in your role and as you get input from others.

10. Legal and Ethical Responsibilities:

- a. Safety First: Understand and adhere to the church's policies on child safety, including background checks, and reporting protocols.
  - i. If your church does not have a policy, petition the elders to put one into place.
- b. Ethical Conduct: Maintain professional boundaries and ensure that your actions align with the ethical standards of your church and community.