

## *Integrating Young Adults into the Larger Church Family*

*by Jon Brooks*

With the wide range of ages and styles that exist in most churches, integrating young adults within the mainstream of church life can seem like an impossible task. Yet this mission is possible, and necessary for the long term success of any young adult ministry. The benefits of integrated young adult ministry are numerous, including...

- Increased support by church leadership
- Increased opportunities to lead and serve
- Increased influence in the church at large, infusing energy and passion
- Increased doorways into the young adult ministry

Young adult ministry that's integrated into the larger church receives increased support by church leadership. That's because the results of the ministry become more visible when this age ceases to be a church within a church. A strong young adult ministry can produce many capable workers for the church, especially in the areas of children, youth, music, and media. And this excites leadership, especially the senior pastor! Ask your pastor how young adults can serve other ministries, and invite him to join with others for dinner or coffee after service. Sometimes young adults assume that older leadership can't understand them, and that the leadership is simply out of touch. But building relationships between the pastor and the group can help bring mutual understanding and friendship.

If you feel like the church isn't supporting you, perhaps you should ask if you are supporting the church. Are you promoting and serving in the ministries that are vital to the church? Are you well represented at major events and outreaches? Do you know what your church's leadership is passionate about? Do you know their vision, and how young adults fit into that vision? It's pretty hard to support the goals of the church if you're planning camping trips for the young adults every other weekend, and difficult to serve other ministries if your burgeoning event calendar leaves no margin for involvement in other areas of the church. So make sure your young adult ministry is not an end to itself, but rather see the important role it can play in strengthening your church. Your ministry will reap the benefits of a Godly covering by leadership.

Another facet of integration of young adult ministry should be connection with your church's youth. It is a well-documented fact that many leave the church at the age of 18, and increasing numbers of them will not return later in life. Additionally, many young adult ministries have short life spans because the group grows old, and there are insufficient numbers of younger people coming in to replace them. Strong relationships with the youth can turn this endemic problem into a wonderful opportunity.

Start building bridges with the youth, (as well as others), in practical ways. Recognize and talk to them when you see them! Occasionally grab dinner with them after church. Engage them in some friendly athletic competition. Conduct a joint service where responsibilities are shared, and then kill the youth in laser tag afterwards! When these relationships are built, youth will no longer dread the transition to adulthood, but eagerly anticipate it.