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# Developing Student Leaders

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It's about that time of year now—right around Thanksgiving and Christmas—when your students who recently graduated from youth group come back to visit and check-in. After all the small talk, you'll probably ask the question that's been in the back of your mind ever since the conversation started. Are you plugged into a church?

Answer you want to hear: "Yes, I'm plugged into a church, serving in a ministry and growing spiritually on my own. Thank you for the tremendous influence in my life."

Answer you may hear: "Uh...well, I just can't find a church like this one. And,



UNASSIGNED

when I visit other churches, the people aren't the same there as they are here. And, they just don't teach the Bible the same way you do."

The latter answer that I've heard more times than I'd like to admit is the answer that sparked my passion for developing student leaders who understand that when they graduate from the youth ministry, they don't also graduate from their faith.

If I take spiritual pride in anything related to youth ministry, it's not in what most people would expect. My spiritual pride isn't in the size of my youth group, or the efficiency of my staff, or the strength of my volunteers. My spiritual pride appears when I see "former students" walking with Jesus five years after they've graduated. I love seeing them still following Jesus.

Here are a few things that we, as adult leaders, can do to cultivate students to become leaders:

- Understand that students can be ministers. Too often I hear that students are the future of the church. There's nothing further from the truth! Students are the church of today. We must create an environment where students are challenged to serve others, and discover the significant life God has called them to life.
- Think small. Cultivating student leaders isn't necessarily a program, but rather a process of developing students individually. A word of challenge: you don't have to develop these leaders all by yourself! Small group leaders can probably do this more effectively within their small groups.
- Paint potential. Students need to hear from us that they are gifted and talented, and that they are able to carry out God's work. Some teenagers believe that if they're not outgoing or popular, or lack the upfront-type personality, that they can't carry out the work of the ministry. It's important for us to encourage them and to challenge them by "painting the potential" that they have. They need to "see" that their lives can make a difference.
- Position individuals. Set your students up to win! For example, you may have some students who baby-sit for you. I've got three kids who are older now, but when they were young, my kids would always want a few "favorite" babysitters. They would want the ones who were the best, the most fun, the energetic, the ones who would jump on the trampoline, wear weird clothes, etc. When I would hear that, I'd put my arm around baby-sitting teenager and say, "My kids love you coming over and babysitting. You have a gift with children. Why don't you get involved with the children's ministry at our church?"

My youth ministry friend, I want to encourage you to develop the students who display any sort of leadership potential in your ministry. Not only will it benefit the work of the ministry, but more importantly, it can alter your students' understanding that God has shaped them in unique ways and can leave an imprint in their community and a legacy in their long-term walk with Jesus.



## 1 COMMENT



**Hannah says:**

February 21, 2015 at 10:56 am

This is a great article! It has great tips. Right now, we are starting a Student Leadership training in our youth group.

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Yes, YouthMinistry me!

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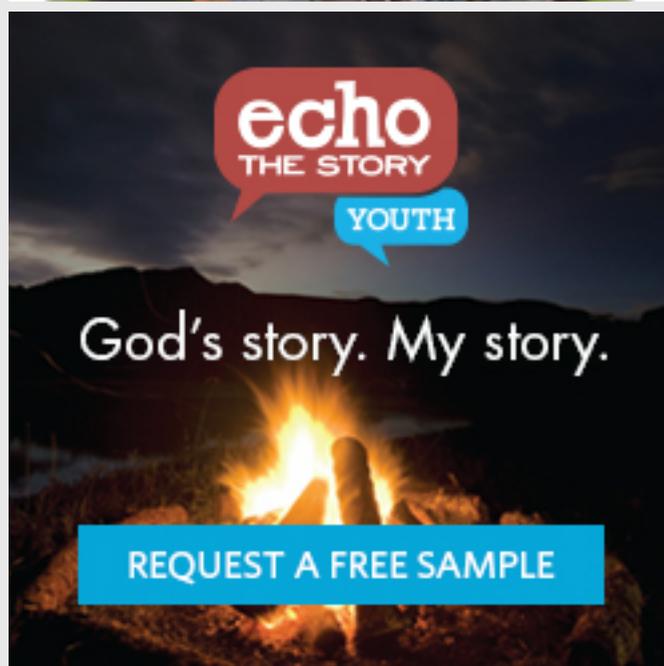


The image shows three overlapping covers of D6 devotional magazines. The top cover is 'forward' with a person climbing a rope. The middle cover is 'the brink' with a man's face. The bottom cover is 'direction' with a man's face and a speech bubble that says 'GOD FIGURE OUT HIS PLAN FOR ME'.

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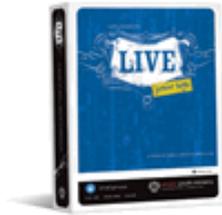
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The background of the bottom section is a dark landscape with a bright campfire in the foreground. The logo for 'echo THE STORY YOUTH' is in the top left, and the text 'God's story. My story.' is in the center. A blue button with the text 'REQUEST A FREE SAMPLE' is at the bottom.

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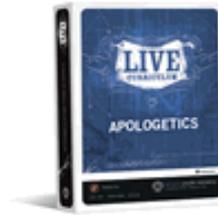
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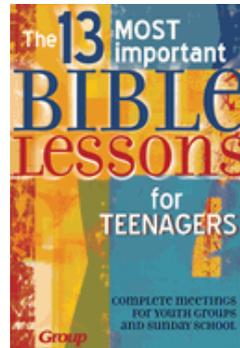
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