

Youth ministries need to enlist, affirm parents_71403

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By Marv Knox

Editor

CHARLOTTE, N.C.-Since parents are three times more likely to influence their children than the church, youth ministries must "pack the stands" with parents if they want to change teens' lives, youth minister Spencer Good told participants in a breakout session at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's general assembly.

Surveys of teens emphasize the importance of parents and family in shaping young people's lives, he reported.

"Forty-six percent of teens say their primary role model is a family member, not a pop icon or sports star," said Good, a youth minister at Lafayette Baptist Church in Fayetteville, N.C.

Asked to name their greatest influence, 47 percent of teens picked their parents, he added. The second-greatest influence is church (cited by 16 percent), followed by peers (8 percent) and a relative other than a parent (4 percent), he said.

"Teens care and want parents involved, whether they admit it or not," he

observed. "We need to get parents to 'pack the stands' (at church events for youth). If youth look to parents as role models, we need to get parents involved."

During dialogue, Good and many ministers in his seminar agreed a surprisingly high percentage of teens attend church without their parents. This factor limits the depth of influence possible among teens, he acknowledged.

"If we're working with youth only, and not their parents, then we're sidetracking and trying to become (their) parents, which we're not," he said.

So, youth ministries need to reach out to parents and partner with them in training and developing their teenagers, he said.

The best way to get parents involved in church youth activities is to "plan good stuff," Good said. He also suggested letting parents help plan some youth ministry events, as well as sponsoring meetings and ministries with and to parents without their children present.

A motivation for ministry to parents is acknowledgement of the fact many parents need to develop parenting skills and need more information to help them help their children, he said. "If parents are the influence, then we've got to educate parents first."

Youth ministry should "fuse" with family ministry in the church and focus on the five purposes of the church-worship, discipleship, evangelism, fellowship and ministry, he said.

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