



# Lessons Learned from Youth Summer Mission Teams

- 1. Leaders must be supportive.**

It is of utmost value for the top leadership of the church (senior pastor and elders) to have a mission outlook. Nothing can replace this. It takes faith in God to make big plans involving large sums of money. (We don't even have our own church building yet; we have rented out an elementary school for many years.) It also helps to have leaders that take obedience to the Great Commission very seriously. Acts 13
- 2. God can mightily use young people—when they are trained!**

There is no substitute for excellent training. When they are well trained, God can use people to accomplish much. We use Child Evangelism Fellowship training for summer missionaries. I Tim. 4:12
- 3. Expect the gospel to draw people to Christ.**

God wants to reach more than just the little children. John 3:16
- 4. Look beyond your own team to find co-laborers.**

We now seek to include others on our team, specifically those from churches and youth groups that are not yet involved in missions. We also try to utilize teens from our targeted ministry area. The purpose is to light a match, create a spark, and start fires for Jesus in other areas as well. Mark 9:40
- 5. The simple gospel message is powerful.**

We use the Wordless Book presentation. Rom. 1:16
- 6. We gain encouragement from each other.**

The Body of Christ picks one another up after each day. Gal. 6:2, Heb. 10:25
- 7. Prayer is a weapon!**

Prayer is a weapon and a tool! Learn to use it. Eph. 6:18-20
- 8. Youth teams need good supervision.**

Having another mature adult couple along makes a huge difference. Make sure there are enough chaperones, cooks, drivers, etc. Rom. 16
- 9. It is good to involve local people.**

We learn the unmistakable value of using on-site local youth group kids for crowd control and translation. Josh. 2
- 10. Involving outsiders helps to spread the fire!**

We brought a kid from a sister church on Oahu with us and he goes back to his youth group and ignites a fire! The next year they do a mission trip themselves. The Brooklyn youth also see that youth can minister to others and serve Christ, and they plan their own very first outreach ministry as a result. Bringing outside team members to join has always blessed us and those included, along with their sending churches (but this has also led to unforeseen difficulties). The Book of Acts

- 11. Sometimes a “Gideon’s band” is best!**  
Learn to make the most of little and learn to deal with abundance of helpers, resources, money, etc., in the ministry. We had to press a 10 year-old into service. He did well and sought to personally lead kids to Christ! We saw God open new doors as we were faithful. God can use anybody who is willing. Servant girl of Naaman, Phil. 4:12
- 12. When you go into battle, expect to be attacked.**  
Division is one of the devil’s tools. Others include distraction and discouragement. Every time he hits us somewhere, we are learning to recognize his schemes and to pray and plan accordingly. II Cor. 2:11, Eph.6
- 13. It is important to know the environment.**  
Knowing the environment in which you are to minister is invaluable. We did many things better the second time around, especially related to logistics: food, transportation, street ministries, etc. It may pay to have someone visit the ministry area beforehand.
- 14. Youth need to practice ministry at home first.**  
Following the Acts 1:8 model has been the key for our “kid leaders.” They have fought the “lion and the bear,” and now they can handle any situation, including this “giant.” Begin evangelism in your own neighborhood, and then slowly move out to new and more distant challenges. I Sam. 17:36
- 15. Early planning is essential.**  
Avoid conflicts with other schedules and agendas by planning and advertising as soon as possible. Communicate with other groups early, so the complete team can be assembled from the beginning. Planning, praying, and preparing together is non-negotiable. I Sam. 14
- 16. We learn from our mistakes.**  
Over the years, all growing ministers—including teens—learn to discern needs and circumstances for effective ministry. As they mature and step up, give them more responsibilities. Making mistakes and learning from them is part of the process. Heb. 5:14
- 17. The focus must be on ministry.**  
Encourage (if not enforce) brother-sister relationships between the sexes. This will aid in keeping focus upon the ministry goals. I Thess. 4:3-8
- 18. We can take advantage of our own culture.**  
Utilize your own culture and what makes it unique. Learn to laugh at it as well. We use Hawaiian clothes, songs, food, instruments and dance to gain audience. (Use the culture of the audience as well.) Phil. 3:1- 6
- 19. Flexibility is a requirement!**  
Often things do not go as planned. You and your team must be flexible. II Tim. 4:2
- 20. There are no shortcuts.**  
Weeds can grow up in a week, but it takes a long time to grow an oak. There are no shortcuts; it takes time to develop mature young people. It takes much prayer, sweat and tears, struggles and battles—it isn’t easy! Discipleship is a process, not meant to be copied. Sure, there are changeless principles involved, temptations that are not uncommon, satanic schemes that are recycled and yet are still effective. But each individual and youth group must learn to discern and follow the Lord for themselves. It is a difficult but joyous journey. Acts 14:22

God bless.

Now to him Who is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

*Edited from Lessons Learned, produced by Steve Knapp of Mililani Community Church, Mililani, Hawaii*

