

# Sunday School Lesson Connection

## You're a "Youth Minister"

Copyright 2008

*Whether you know it or not, you're influencing our kids.*

We know that the family environment has the most influence on a child's development: emotionally, scholastically, and spiritually. A church's "youth program" actually has comparatively little influence over the life-affecting spiritual choices an adolescent will make during these formative years. The most a "youth leader" can hope to do is slip a little Biblical knowledge into the overall makeup of a kid's maturing personality. Studies are showing that even peer pressure runs a distant second place in lasting effects on a child's future adult patterns.

In his earthly ministry, Jesus frequently refers to His disciples/followers as his family (Mark 3:31-35). The church is pretty much synonymous with an extended family. This makes you a family member with every youngster in our midst. Every week you see scads of kids at church. Have you ever thought of yourself as their older brother or sister? Did you know you are exerting great influence on their development via your interaction with them? Even if you've never talked directly to a younger person at church, that lack of interaction models for them an adult characteristic they'll consider proper for mature Christian adults.

The factor that influences the character development and emotional stability of a person most is the quality of the relationships he experiences as a child with parents foremost but then other family members. This includes relationships with "extended" family members. That's you.

As you mature as a Christian becoming more Christ-centered than self-centered, don't forget the influence you're having on those around you, particularly the kids.

So here's the heart of this letter: I need your help to have a positive youth ministry at our church. Here's what you can do: Form *intentional* relationships.

When in church, notice the kids that sit around you. Introduce yourself. Remember their names and greet them each time you see them. Meet their parents. Include the kids in your conversations with adults.

Value the kids as if they are your own. Ask them questions about themselves and remember what they say. Look them straight in the eyes when talking, even if you have to crouch a little. Pray for their needs specifically as you get to know them.

You never need to teach Sunday school or attend a chaotic youth event to have a strong positive effect on the spiritual and emotional development of these precious souls.

What's in it for you? You might get a letter one day from one of them like we just did that says: "Thank you for your prayers. Thank you for your love. Your family has been such a blessing. It is so nice to know that you are praying with me for my future, and my family." "...you are so inspiring. Thank you for your witness." Wow. How sweet is that. A treasure and a relationship I will have forever.



Members of many families built strong relationships on a mission trip. Encouraging church members to view one another as extended family is a great way to have kids rooted in their Christian community.