

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING CREATIVE IN YOUTH MINISTRY

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CREATIVE AND RECREATIVE EXISTENCE

God could have created a flat and grey world: a world without any flavors or aromas, devoid of textures and tonality. However, He decided to fill the spring with numerous colors and to give every snowflake a unique design in winter. What is the reason behind a squirrel's bushy tail, food's delicious taste, the birds' chirping or the fragrance of flowers? Life is still possible without any of these things (we wouldn't have noticed any difference if the world had been created that way *in the beginning!*), or so we could think; **but God could not imagine an existence without creativity.**

Now, don't think that being creative is synonymous with being 'cool' or trendy, or that it has anything to do with having a mega-super-duper-awesome idea for the Sabbath afternoon program. Creativity is a process that must be present and imbued in your youth ministry so that the latter can be effective and transforming in order to connect people and give sense and purpose to every youth in their experience with Christ. Being creative is not just about the container but also about the content. It is not a superficial ornament but a profound principle that brings life from within to whomever puts it into practice. Thus, a youth ministry lacking creativity is like a body without emotions and joy, or a show of fireworks in black and white, or a flat mountain, or a saltless sea. Furthermore, God asks us to be his ambassadors, his active representatives, willing to serve and collaborate in the recreation of this world (*1 Corinthians 3, 2 Corinthians 5-6 and Ephesians 4: 22-24*); to be the light and the salt for others (Matthew 5: 13-16); to be a living body through which Christ can manifest himself. Creatively. Recreating. Reconciling. Reconnecting. Being One *with* and *within* us (John 17). God's creativity has no other purpose but to bring us closer to Him. In a similar way, His creative gift to us must be guided in the same direction: **creativity for recreation.**

So, let's cut to the chase and get to work. We are going to review what creativity is and we will see how we can bring it to life so that it is not mere workings of our mind, but rather a practical guide. My prayer is that these 4 items are of help to you, to your ministry and to your life:

1. YOU HAVE IT, YOUR YOUTH HAVE IT

We are all creative. It is neither a superpower nor the magical touch of a fairytale muse. From a Biblical perspective, the equation is simple: God is the Creator + We have been

created in His image and His likeness = Human beings are creative beings (*Genesis 1:27*). So we all have creativity, but in different amounts, just like what happens with our lung capacity or our elasticity. And we can all stimulate it. More than being a divine privilege, creativity is a feature that we all share. It is important that your youth feel that they are “capable” of developing their imagination and that they can put their neurons to work in the quest for creative solutions.

2. ORGANISED CREATIVITY

Whether you are organizing an evangelism activity, drafting an annual youth project or rethinking how to make the youth feel “welcome” at your Sabbath School, I recommend you create a **Roadmap**. It will help you organize your thoughts and develop your ideas, and you will be able to access it at any time.

- a. **Problem or Motivation:** creativity is born when there is a problem to be solved or when you want to improve or change something. Write down what worries you and what inspires you.
- b. **Target group:** define whom you want to reach. Do a complete profile, with as much information as possible: age group, lifestyle, location, cast of mind, etc., whether it is your youth group, the adults of the neighborhood or your friends from university. This is essential in order to empathize with the addressee and succeed in your future strategy and plan of action.
- c. **Goal:** set one or several goals; what it is you want to accomplish; what it is you want your target group to think or remember.
- d. **Idea:** Write down what you would like to carry out. This is similar to the previous point, but not as detailed as the next one; it is an intermediate step. Here you have to jot down what you want to do in a general way. From now on, your neurons and your youth’s have to be working 100%. The last piece of advice in point 3: **#The process** will be useful.
- e. **Strategy, plan of action and evaluation:** this is how we are going to develop our idea and fulfill our goals. This is the phase when we go for broke. No manual will have all the answers, only a few tips, so rest in the assurance of the promise of the Holy Spirit and be courageous and put your creativity into practice. “Let every worker [...] **study, plan, devise methods**, to reach the people where they are. We must **do something out of the common course of things**. We must **arrest** the attention.” – Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 122.
“They must make use of every means that can possibly be devised for causing the truth to stand out clearly and distinctly, [...] plainly and decidedly...” – Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 40.

3. TIPS

#Trial and error: This is all about trying and experimenting. Trial and error is a part of

our life journey and our process of learning. Did you know that every year more than 20,000 products reach the market, and yet over 90% don't survive their first year? If an activity or a project does not work, keep trying. There is no one methodology that will ensure your success. Creativity always has to do with a quest, a journey, of uncertain results. There is no textbook that will make your ideas creative, only practice can do that.

#Do not tie yourself to an idea: Attachment to certain specific ideas tends to block the way for improvement. You need new ways of thinking. Interact, exchange ideas and ask your youth for their opinion. *“Whatever may have been your former practice, it is not necessary to repeat it again and again in the same way. **God would have new and untried methods followed.** [...] surprise people.”* – Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 125.

#Ask yourself questions: were it not for questions, how would we find answers? Do not just ask your youth; ask your atheist or agnostic friends “what they think about...” Related to this, perform *brainstorming* activities with your youth ministry team. When confronted with a problem or when you need to organize an activity, sit down with them, pen and paper in hand, and write down all the concepts that come to mind. Write **everything**. Even what seems to be ridiculous and absurd. That will probably be the correct idea. Einstein said, and he was most certainly right, that “If at first the idea is not absurd, then there is no hope for it.”

#Do not put limits on yourself: there are times when we cut off our own wings whilst God is trying to fill us abundantly with his creativity and his blessings. Present your ideas with humility, but do not hide behind your fears or the typical “Humph, we can't do this; I don't think we're capable of...” Yes, you must be realistic, but you must also realize when you have to go on through thick and thin, firmly holding on to the Father's hand. The www.yopensabaque.com project was born in the tiny room of a student, and most of it was recorded in a garage. Today, tens and tens of thousands of people around the world have found encouragement and inspiration in its words and short films. Do not put limitations on the power of God. There is no limit to how He can use us, in spite of our awkwardness and great imperfections.

#Be a chameleon and adapt to the context: this tip is particularly relevant for evangelism activities. McDonald's serves sausage muffins with Teriyaki sauce in Japan; the McLox (a salmon sandwich) in Norway; spaghetti in Manila; and substitutes the Big Mac for the Maharaja Mac (changing the beef for chicken) in India.

#Copy: copying sounds wrong, so as advertisers we prefer calling it *benchmarking*. If you think you are not creative enough, or you feel limited in any way, use tools like the ones we suggest bellow and copy from others. But bear in mind you must copy from the good ones, analyzing how they have developed their projects and activities, and adapting them to your circumstances and possibilities.

#Journey towards excellence: take care of every little detail: the correct use of capital letters, punctuation marks, colors, make sure people can read your slides... “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” (Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV) and Colossians 2:17).

#Invest in money prayer: *“There is a necessity, it is true, for expending money judiciously in advertising the meetings, and in carrying forward the work solidly. Yet the strength of every worker will be found to lie, not in these outward agencies, but in trustful **dependence upon God**, in earnest prayer to Him for help, in obedience to His Word.”* – Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 128. Advertise your project or event only if you are willing to get down on your knees first.

#Be alert: read the press; be familiar with the current issues; get to know what is going on in your neighborhood; empathize with your fellow man; be inquisitive; pay attention to details; write down every single idea; run away from conventionalisms; be of a flexible mind; be self-critical. A good idea cannot appear out of the blue. Creativity is about combining old things with new things. That is why you should be familiar with your surroundings and pay attention to what goes on around you.

#The process: you will find many other techniques for unleashing your creativity on the Internet, but I am going to quote 5 steps that are usually a part of the creative process:

- a. Preparation:** gather as much information as you need to solve the problem.
- b. Filtering:** manipulate, elaborate on and chew on the information. Filter out what interests you.
- c. Incubation:** do nothing. Forget about the process and do something else (Relax! The idea **will** come; it is incubating.)
- d. Illumination:** the idea comes when you least expect it. If you have followed the previous steps correctly, this step will come to you naturally.
- e. Implementation:** Bring your idea to life, develop it, and define it so that you can put it into practice. Remember that creativity adds real and tangible value to the process of having original ideas. Creativity is not just about having a vivid imagination or great ideas; it is about “bringing” them down to earth, and transforming them from the abstract to the concrete.

4. RESOURCES

#Templates and quality images for cards, newsletters, slides...:

www.creationswap.com / churchmediadesign.tv / www.worshiphousemedia.com
www.freebibleimages.org / churchmarketinglab.flickr.com / churchvisuals.com

#Other tools:

To send large files: www.wetransfer.com

To store and share documents: www.dropbox.com

To convert all kinds of files to other formats: www.cloudconvert.org

To create posters: Phoster (APP Apple y Android)

#Projects to inspire you and share: www.jovenes-cristianos.com / www.multiply.com
/ www.basicseries.com / www.nooma.com / www.danstevens.com/tienda /
www.digma.com / www.laverdad2minutos.com / www.yesheis.com /
www.iamsecond.com / www.yopensabaque.com

MY PRAYER

May God pour out His Creativity on you and your young people. May God give you courage and constancy, and He «equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.» (Hebrews 13: 21).



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Post-Congress Resources

Resources will be available on our **website** www.lucyouth.org under **2016 Congress - Resources**. This includes evangelism resources, materials and the ministry presenters' and speakers' presentations.

Contact the Lake Union Conference Youth Ministries Department or Center for Youth Evangelism after the Congress if we can do anything to support your evangelism goals and dreams:

Ron Whitehead and/or Alexandra Mora

(269) 471-8380

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You may also contact your Youth Directors and Ministerial Directors. See page 6.



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