



# PROGRAMMING, TEACHING, AND CREATIVITY



## **1** REMEMBER: Caring adult + JHer = Good stuff!

This book is chock-full of thoughts, tidbits, and transformational ideas! But if you try to implement everything on these pages, you'll drive yourself crazy. It's junior high ministry; don't overthink it! The reality is that as long as you are connecting junior highs to caring adults who love Jesus, good ministry will be the result. The rest is icing on the cake.

## **2** THE DEFINITION OF PROGRAMS: The stuff your ministry does.

In recent years, programs have gotten a bad rap. Uttering the word *program* in some junior high ministry circles has become taboo. Let me redefine the word. Programs = The Stuff Your Ministry Does. That's it! Every ministry does stuff, and the stuff you do can accurately be defined as programs. If you don't want to use the word *programs* to refer to your camps, fun outings, Bible studies, strategically informal gatherings, and the like, I suppose that's fine—even though that's what they are.

## **3**

## **LEVERAGE THE POWER** of the “one-two punch.”

Over the years, I’ve discovered that God often uses a one-two punch to grab a hold of the hearts of junior highers. The one-two punch is the powerful combination of a relationship with a caring adult (see Thought 1) and spiritual markers. Spiritual markers are those special moments at camp, on a retreat, during a mission trip, or in a seemingly normal midweek program when the Holy Spirit does something memorable in the heart of a young student. As you organize your ministry to young teenagers, think about the power of the one-two punch and how you can best create an atmosphere for it to happen.

## **4**

## **INSTEAD OF WORKING** to keep students’ attention, work to keep their interest; if they’re interested, they will pay attention.

I have a confession: I’m not interested in knitting. And because I’m not interested in knitting, if an old lady tried to lecture me for 20 minutes on “The Joys of Knitting,” I would have a hard time faking like I cared. The same thing is true in your junior high ministry—specifically, when it comes to your lesson time. Junior highers will give their attention to stuff that interests them.



Work to make your lessons interesting, and you'll be shocked at how well students actually pay attention!

## **5** YOUR LESSON DOESN'T NEED TO BE LONG to be good—but if it's going to be long, it had BETTER be good!

I'm convinced that the only people who like long sermons are preachers. Longer isn't better—better is better! When you are prepping a lesson, ask yourself, "What is the best way to help junior highs grasp this truth in around 20 minutes?"

## **6** INSTEAD OF SETTING ONE BAR for all of your students to reach, set lots of bars and challenge students as individuals.

It's tempting to set one goal—one bar you hope every student will grab for—and program toward that end. There's nothing wrong with saying things like, "This year, we want everybody to invite a friend" or "Our goal this summer is that every one of you would go on a mission trip." But by doing so, you set one bar for everybody in your group, and it's a bar that may be too high for some and not high enough for others.

Because every junior higher in your ministry is at a different place developmentally and spiritually, I think it's more beneficial to look for ways to get to know each student God has placed under your care and to see how you might be able to set a "bar" that is unique to each of them.

## 7

### **WHEN TEACHING,** put yourself in your students' shoes; don't always expect them to put themselves in yours.

Your junior highs haven't gone to college yet, so limit your college analogies. They aren't married, so use stories about your marriage sparingly. They aren't as interested in Mosaic law and how it affects a New Testament view of grace as you are, so avoid the temptation to write small group curriculum on the subject. When you teach, don't expect them to enter your adult world; instead, it is your job to enter their world—their world of insecurities, strained friendships, problems with mom and dad, and wondering if there is such a thing as too much Axe® body spray.

