

Ministry Team Meeting 3: So why ARE we here?

(Supplies needed: Poster board or projection of the "Golden Circle" to talk about as a team, markers (if using poster board), Bibles, pens, copies of this discussion guide for everyone)

Opening Prayer: "Almighty God, we give thanks that through the varied gifts of this team You provide for the ongoing care of this congregation. Cause us to recognize and to act on every opportunity for fruitful service. Send Your Holy Spirit that everything we think, say, and do may be for the common good of the Church and the glory of Your name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."
(Prayer from LSB, pg 307, #141)

A Team Activity:

If members of the team had a chance to jot down some ideas on the golden circle from last meeting, take some time to share those with each other together. One way to do this is to make a big golden circle on a poster board on the wall. Start with the "what" category. It's typically the easiest and the one for which your answers are likely to be very similar. Have everyone share what they thought of and add all those ideas (and any more that you can think of) to the "what" circle on the poster. Repeat this process with "how" and "why," being sure to hear from everyone along the way.

After your circle is complete use one or more of these questions to talk more about it:

- What are your general reactions after doing the activity on your own or in seeing all our responses together?
- While we may have all different ideas, what are your first thoughts on what our "why" is?

Something to Consider:

Teens LOVE to ask "why." Whether they do it with their words or through actions, they long to know why things are the way they are. Like a 2-year old constantly overwhelming their mom and dad with "Why? Why? Why?", it can sometimes get annoying to constantly explain "why," especially when sometimes we unknowingly feel as if teenagers should already "get it." What I've found over time is that MOST of the time when a teen is asking why, they aren't trying to rebel or be annoying; they're just trying to figure out life.

The fact that teenagers are longing for answers in every part of their life means that our "why" as a ministry team has to be pretty solid. "Why" can also lead to some great conversations and be a very positive thing. Thinking back to the outreach I mentioned in the last discussion guide at our local university, we get asked "why" a lot from the students we serve. In short, the main element of our ministry involves handing out free coffee and homemade snacks to students with no strings attached. We set out the food, open the door, and start conversations with whoever walks in. At least once or twice a day we get asked, "So why are you guys here? Why are you giving out free stuff?" That opens a door wide open to explain our why: "We care about and love college students and just want to serve you." Yes, we want them to know Jesus. Yes, we hope that they'll sit and chat awhile or come back even though there is no expectation of that. Yes, we have a lot of "whys", but we've also learned (over time) the best way to communicate our "why" to whatever audience we're talking to. If we're talking to Christian students our "why" explanation might go a little deeper: "We want to encourage you and pray for you and help you grow stronger in your faith. We hope this can be a place you would feel comfortable inviting your non-Christian friends as well."

As you can tell from that example, you probably won't just have one "why" and the way you explain the few that you do have may change depending on whether you're reporting to the ministry council or talking to a teenager who just walked in off the street. However, either way, having a clear picture of that as a ministry team is crucial.

Scripture:

Before we get deeper into defining that as a team, let's spend some time in God's Word. While our ministry team may be a small part of our congregation and God's Church worldwide, some of the things we learn from Scripture about the function of the church can be helpful to figuring out our ministry team's purpose.

One passage that talks a lot about communities of faith is Romans 12. Read through that chapter individually or as a group. After you do go back through and come up with as many ways to finish this sentence as you can. "This is church: _____"

Here are a few examples to get you started:

- This is church: loving one another (vs 10)
- This is church: overcoming evil with good (vs 21)
- This is church: letting people use the gifts God has given them (vs 3-8)
- This is church: _____
- This is church: _____
- This is church: _____
- This is church: _____
- This is church: _____
- This is church: _____
- This is church: _____

Discussion:

- Share any reactions to the Romans passage or the "This is Church" activity.
- So, do we think the whys we listed in the Golden Circle are good? Do we need to narrow them down more? Get rid of them all and start over? Change some? Add some?
- If we could pick out three core concepts of why this ministry area exists what should they be?

Practical Action Step:

If you didn't already narrow down to three main "why" statements, get to that point. You might do that as a team or spend some more time brainstorming before you come back together. In any case, get that narrowed down.

Here are some questions that might get you focused on that:

- If a student walked up to you and said "why does this ministry exist?" what would you say?
- If teenager at a local school walked up to one of your students and asked "Why should I come to your youth group?" how would you hope they would respond in a way that would make sense to that student?
- Fill in the Blank: If nothing else we want to be about _____?

Closing Prayer:

Use this prayer or say your own; perhaps ask if anyone has requests of things to pray for together. *Jesus, we thank You for Your love for us and that because of that love you came to die for us and have now given us this ministry of showing that love to others. Give us wisdom as we narrow down the focus of why this ministry exists and then show us how to communicate that in ways that truly help connect people to You. In Your Name we pray, Amen!*