

The Other 166 Hours

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When there are games to plan, sermons to write and young people to disciple, what role should the foreboding 'social media' play in the never ending story of youth ministry? The average youth ministry runs once a week for one to two hours during the school term. With that in mind, what happens to the other 166 hours of a young person's week? Is there something we can do to effectively reach and connect with them outside of the program?

Rather than re-creating the wheel, I believe there are great platforms that young people already spend too much of their time on, namely, social media.

Thanks to the new Screen Time information Apple has provided, I can now see how much time I really spend behind the screen of my phone. To my disgust, I am averaging around two hours a day on social media alone. I checked with a few of my young people and they spend anywhere from two to five hours daily on some form of social media. If we were to run with those numbers, that is close to **35 hours a week**. That is well over a full day these young people spend looking at the highlight reel of other peoples lives or random cat videos on Instagram explore.

Now, if you compare 35 hours to the two hours a young person spends in youth ministry, we've got a lot of time to catch up on. As youth pastors, youth leaders or youth volunteers, we would be missing an incredible opportunity if we didn't tap into the social media system.

Here are 3 reasons why we gotta amp up our social media game. Social media:

1. REMINDS

For the non-consistent and not-yet-loyal young people, social media is a great way to remind them about your youth ministry and to ultimately keep Jesus in their worlds. If they are spending 35 hours a week on their phones looking at Instagram and Facebook, then let's get the best news they will ever see onto their news feed.

2. REACHES

When someone mentions a name I don't know or a place I haven't been to, the very first thing I do is look it up on Instagram or Facebook. If a friend has recommended a café, but I've seen their profile on social media and discovered a visually disgusting atmosphere - there is no way I am going to try out that café.

Whether you like it or not, your social media profile or church website is one of the first places a young person is gonna check to see whether your youth ministry is a place they want to be. We've got an opportunity to reach young people for Jesus, so keep it fun, keep it fresh and show the world just how good life with Jesus is.

3. RAISES

The Bible talks a lot about the importance of faith, it even says that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Of course, a faith built upon social media would not be a very stable or deep faith, but when social media is done well it gives ground to raise faith and expectation for what God is doing and for what He is about to do. Advertising an upcoming youth event on platforms like Instagram and Facebook not only builds up anticipation, but creates an eagerness within the young people to bring their friends and to spread the word.

2 Kings 13:21 says; "Once, while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet."

Social media may seem like a dead object with no life or ability to transform, but when a simple post encounters a young person who's emotionally drained or spiritually absent from their creator, the connection can bring forth life and a new-found hope. In a technology-owned graveyard for joy and black hole for affirmation, we have the opportunity to demonstrate joy and fulfillment that can only come from Jesus.

We all have the same mission in youth ministry - to see young people who are far from God draw near to Him. So: why can't social media be the Elisha bones of our generation?