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What I Wish I Knew

I've been doing this youth ministry thing for a long time. Long enough to have teenaged friends whose parents were in elementary school when I first got involved in youth work. I was only 21 years old when I first became a youth pastor. Twenty one.

No wonder I was intimidated by parents back then!

I definitely sided with my students on kid-versus-parent issues. I tended to view parents through very young and immature eyes. I saw parents as hopelessly out of touch, unbending, irrational, and above all—OLD. They were scary because they could make my life miserable. Their phone calls were intimidating. Actually having to meet with parents was something I avoided at all costs. I definitely had an adversarial attitude back then.

Then a strange thing happened: my own children became teenagers. And I was still a youth minister. By this time, I was doing what I do now—helping churches get their youth ministries up and running—so I wasn't THE youth pastor at my home church.

I discovered how valuable youth leaders are to a parent. I discovered that I was praying every day for the youth leaders who were befriending my own children. I was looking for ways to help, for concrete actions I could do to benefit the youth leaders. I wanted to be involved in the youth ministry—and with my kids' permission I was—but I knew I couldn't be the youth leader for my own kids that I had been for so many others. I wish I would have known how parents viewed me back when I was a rookie. I could have had a ton of more assistance, support, and camaraderie than what I allowed. I could have seen more results in lives of those students and their families. I could have saved myself much headache, worry, and work. I wish I would have known then that youth

ministry can't exist separated from ministry with the entire family system.

So maybe this issue of *Youth Leaders Only* will help YOU to learn what I wish I would have known. Here you'll find a bunch of insightful articles written by other youth ministers who've been there and done that. You'll discover a bunch of other helpful resources too: Bible studies written around a song from each album in the YLO box; the massive pull-it-out-and-hang-it-on-your-youth-room-wall Comparison Chart; re:Tuned discussion starters that use secular songs as a hook; Heart Of The Artist interviews with Delirious?, P.O.D. and Natalie Grant; Leadsheets for your worship band; Thematic Listing of all the songs on all the YLO albums, and more.

Godspeed,

Ken McCoy

PS. You'll want to take advantage of two incredible opportunities that are happening RIGHT NOW:

Graduation time is HERE, and the absolute best thing you can do for your graduating Seniors is to give them the *ConGRADulations!* grad gift!

The Disney film *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian* represents an amazing opportunity to reach new kids and to encourage your students to think deeply about their faith. Find the info in this magazine about becoming a Narnia Insider!

