



A service of the
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Youth Supports

A resource to encourage and empower youth
leaders for the expansion of the Lord's kingdom.

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- Planning is a part of "First Fruit" Giving
- Youth Ministry Resources

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Planning is a part of "First Fruit" Giving

I'm sure I'm not alone when I say that I was recently involved in planning a big event. Also, I'm sure that many of you have experienced the feelings that accompanied the planning... extreme frustration. I've done a lot of reflection, and I think I've finally hit on where all that frustration came from.

As Christians, we often proclaim that we need to give our first fruits to God. We struggle with making it a reality, but most of us realize that it's our duty. What are those "first fruits" though? They include our tithes, our time and our talents. During a Stewardship Sunday or in the aftermath of a natural disaster, we tend to be reminded about the importance of our financial "first fruits," rededicating ourselves to tithing, or giving deeply to ease suffering. We may often fight to offer our worship as a "first fruit," trying to ensure that God receives our time above sports, work or recreation. I've finally realized that at the root of my frustration is the last of the areas of giving to God. So often, we fail to give the very best of our talents and abilities to God.

Now, I recognize that many who play instruments, or who sing, or who have strong acting abilities may use those talents to bring glory to God. Those who play sports or who teach in our schools also may be offering their first fruits as they use their God-given gifts to point to the Lord. But what about having meetings or planning activities for our youth groups? Are we using our God-given talents and gifts to the glory of God? We're told in I Corinthians 12 that there are "those with the gifts of administration." What does it mean to have and truly use this gift?

I think I know what it means to NOT use this gift. I've been hearing phrases like these a lot lately (perhaps you have, too): "We can't do that. It costs too much." "We can't possibly make that happen. That's out of our league." "If only we had more people we could do that." "If only we belonged to a bigger church." A glum and pessimistic outlook on what is possible, limiting and constraining ourselves

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because of fear or shortsightedness, is not a God-pleasing exercise of the gift of administration.

Our God is the one and only Lord God Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth. All things are possible for those who love Him and are called according to His purposes. Limiting ourselves because of our earthly perspective is to place limits on God. We create these limits or boundaries and then say “Here’s what we’ll be able to do.” Can’t we dream bigger and let God be God? We need to say “This is what we want to do” or “This is what we’re being called to do,” before considering the cost or the difficulties. Then we look at those costs and difficulties and ask not “Can we do this?” but rather “How do we now make this happen?”

To truly do this, we probably need to start planning further in advance for many activities — throwing things together with whatever time happens to remain is not “first fruits.” We might need to look much further ahead for resources to tap than we ever have before. Our churches have budgets, parents have checkbooks and we can always do fundraisers — but what else is there? Thrivent is always a place to turn, but let’s not stop there. Many corporations are eager to give to community projects. Many corporations have a sizable amount set aside for community activities and often have major difficulty giving away all the money they have. Home Depot and Lowes are often more than willing to donate to projects. Red Robin, The Keg, Olive Garden and many other companies will donate crayons by the case or will give gift certificates or other resources for projects. The list goes on and on. To pull off the activity we think we need to do, we may need to team up with another church or two. We need to place the dream or the call first, then look for all the avenues God gives us to make those dreams a reality. Sometimes, to use the old cliché, this means “thinking outside the box” to be able to see all those openings God provides, but I think that’s what it means to give our talents of planning and administering as “first fruits.”

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http://www.nowlcms.org/educational_services/YouthSupports.aspx

E-Newsletter from Synod Board of Youth Ministry

The Board of Youth Ministry for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has a monthly e-bulletin with youth ministry information. To subscribe to it, go to <http://www.lcms.org/enews/> and follow the directions.

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