

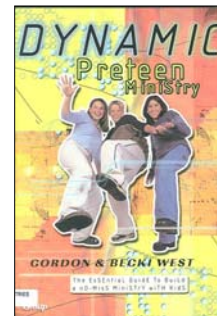


tips for youth workers

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## **PREPARING FOR PRETEEN MINISTRY**

Gordon and Becki West love preteen ministry and want to help others love and minister to these kids in a way that will meet preteens' needs. Their book, **Dynamic Preteen Ministry** (Group Publishing, ISBN 0764420844) offers up lots of advice and know-how for this exciting age group and ministry. Here are a few snippets, but you need to buy the book to find out all the details!



**Minister to Preteens' Physical Needs and Desires:** When planning your ministry keep in mind that preteens want to be active, but they need rest and tire easily. Allow them to burn energy in recreational activities and then provide opportunity for them to slow down their minds and bodies. Their bodies are growing rapidly so they need nourishment. This means have lots of food available and your event will be more attractive to them.

**Minister to Preteens' Social Needs and Desires:** Friends are so important that they must be key to the planning of any event. They want to know who will be there. Remember that preteens need to talk so plan for regular, meaningful times of interaction and discussion. They need to feel connected with their peers. Plan activities where they get to work with each other in groups. Preteens may be ambivalent about relating to the opposite sex. Provide them with opportunities to hang out with the guys (or gals) and with mixed groups. Create safe places for preteens to be together to talk; provide times to just stand around and socialize. They need to feel as though they have freedom, but they still desire safe boundaries. Although preteens are seeking independence from their parents, they are also looking for connections with other significant adults who are like their parents. They don't need you as a friend – they need you as a loving and mature adult who isn't related to them. Lastly preteens are in the process of internalizing and personalizing values. One of our greatest challenges is to assist preteens in the transition of following others' values to claiming and owning their own.

**Minster to Preteens' Emotional Needs and Desires:** Preteens need routine structure and clear limits. One of their most common questions is, "What are we going to do?" By providing them with clear instructions and expectations you will help to lower their anxiety. Preteens want to participate in classroom decisions. Be sure to involve them in planning, offer them choices and encourage them to live with the consequences of decision making. Preteens need to feel competent and able to achieve. It's important to program into our ministry challenging experiences where students can gain a sense of accomplishment and success. Preteens want and need to be involved at church in meaningful ways. They need to feel needed. Provide them with responsibilities that fit their age, experience and abilities. Finally preteens need to be nurtured emotionally to be their best. The hormonal changes they are experiencing cause them to be emotional beings. They need your help in maintaining equilibrium.

**Minster to Preteens' Intellectual Needs and Desires:** During these years our young people are transitioning from concrete to abstract thinking. We need to be aware that we are dealing with kids at a variety of intellectual levels and needs. Preteens need to be challenged with abstract thinking in a non-threatening way. They also need to connect new information with what is already known to them. It's helpful to start with what they know and relate that to new concepts. Preteens need to be motivated to learn through their curiosity. Hands-on learning experiences can help them do that.