THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S HOUR

A Meeting Manual for Young People's Societies

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INTRODUCTION

There comes a time in the life of most Young People's Societies when vitality is at a low ebb. The members who care very much realize that something is necessary to bring back the glow of health. They might suggest a shot of spiritual adrenaline, or a blood transfusion of new members, or perhaps a good electric shock to recall the members from their state of complacency. Drastic methods may have an immediate effect, but it will be only temporary. Human nature usually absorbs a shock and life returns to its previous status. A young people's society cannot be kept running at a fever pitch. When too fast a pace is established, before long the momentum retards, and a period of depression follows.

The aim therefore is not to rejuvenate the Young People's Society until it has energy to burn, for in due time comes the discovery that there is nothing left but smoke. The purpose is to establish a healthful society out of one that has been a semi-invalid, feed it upon the necessary vitamins, and enjoy the fruit it will produce over the years.

To inject into the society and its meetings a stream of new ideas will not produce as lasting a result as to work over the old practices and learn how they may be carried out most effectively. Yet new thoughts slipped in with the old will produce a delightful flavor.

Therefore in the following pages the attempt is made to reconstruct the old, seasoned with a bit of the new. No effort has been made to cover the broad scope of a society's activities. These pages are confined to the society's main activity, the weekly (or weekly) young people's meeting.
PART I: THE LEADER

His Appointment

The leader should know of his appointment at least two weeks in advance. This will give him time for serious consideration of the subject and will eliminate excuses for lack of preparation.

His Responsibility

Upon him rests the responsibility for the success or failure, profit or uselessness, enthusiasm or listlessness of the meeting. If it is dull, the leader is largely at fault. If it is enjoyable, the credit is the leader’s. Those present will go no farther than the leader in enthusiasm and effort. The leader’s attitude is contagious. At no time should he sit back and say, “The meeting is yours; we will be glad to hear from anyone.” He cannot toss off the responsibility to others and expect gratifying results. He must keep hold of the reins and guide every minute of the time.

There are some obvious, yet often neglected requirements that a leader must obey. By all means, he must be at his own meeting and be there in good time. In church work, it is a serious offense for the leader to be absent from his own meeting. Yet this very thing occurs more often than we suppose. The acceptance of responsibility is a Christian’s duty, and the quality of dependability needs further development in many of us.

His Preparation

A good meeting does not “just happen.” Meeting time well spent requires thought and work on the part of the leader. An unprepared meeting is like an impromptu sermon; too dull for enjoyment and too common place for profit. Leader, take time and prepare, prepare! Prepare! Think ahead on the subject, keep it in mind for a week or two in advance. You cannot expect to have an interesting meeting by merely looking up the topic and reading over the comments on Sabbath afternoon a short time before you go. A program planned an hour before is seldom a brain child that anyone cares to coddl. Too much cannot be said in urging upon you the necessity of preparation. The success of a meeting depends upon preparation and not on the subject or the leader’s personality.
PART II: THE SUBJECT

The national young people's topics are given to help the leader in getting a start for his meeting. There is no law that says the leader must follow the suggested topic. If the leader decides to follow the general topic, then let him use the accepted comments or help as a spring board and not as a bed on which to lie. Keep in mind that published comments are intended to stimulate you to further thought. Go a little farther and prove that you have some mental ability of your own.

If the assigned subject seems hard, too deep, not easily developed, or unattractive, then branch off to something else. The time is too valuable to be spent in arguing points which might not be settled even after hours of debate. But we should not give up too easily on an assigned topic. A little deep study is good for all of us and may uncover a chest of hidden treasure.

Should the subject be particularly lacking in appeal, take a new one and surprise the members at the meeting. But exercise great care in selecting this new topic. One tendency is to pick a broad subject because the material for its development is easy to find. This leads to a general discussion that covers everything in general and nothing in particular. Choose a subject narrow enough that will require a discussion of particulars, one which has the possibility of being fairly well exhausted when the meeting is over. The discussion for one meeting should not have a "thousand acres" subject like "The Bible," "The Psalms," "Prayer," or "Christian Principles." The surface of such subjects cannot be scratched in an hour's discussion. Choose a subject in which you can mine deeply and extract all the gold possible in the time allotted. A leader who fears being unable to fill up the time may purposely choose a big subject so that there will always be something more that can be said. With preparation a limited subject will prove more interesting and helpful.

PART III: THE USUAL TYPE OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S MEETING

ADVERTISING

The principle of advertising should not be monopolized by the commercial world. Advertising should play an important part in the Church as well as in the world. Business depends much on advertising; why should not the Church which is in the business of saving souls?

We would have better attendance at our young people's meetings if we adopted a few modern methods of publicity. "It pays to advertise." Advertising the meeting will help to remind the members, catch their interest, encourage the irregular attenders, attract new members, and let the rest of the Church know that your organization is alive.

Here are some common ways of publicizing the meeting: (1) a catchy announcement read from the pulpit on Sabbath morning, (2) a poster on the bulletin board or church door, (3) a notice in the public paper, (4) simple posters distributed about the community in conspicuous places, (5) a word to each of the members, (6) special invitations to irregular members and strangers, (7) hand-made slips of invitation to be handed out, (8) telephone calls. This does not exhaust the variety of ways by which people can be made conscious of the occasion.

Usually a leader does not advertise because it takes a little extra effort, and requires a well prepared meeting before he feels confident enough to invite others. Some are afraid they will not have an interesting meeting because they "just couldn't find the time" to make much preparation. Therefore they will not advertise the fact of a poor meeting. Some leaders openly hope that there will not be
many at their meeting. This is an admission that they expect to make a failure of things. When we have something really worth while, we want others to enjoy it too. So develop the spirit of wanting everyone to come instead of hoping that only a few will be there.

BEGINNING

Start and close the meeting on time. Waiting on late comers before starting is an encouragement to tardiness and a theft of time. If there are too few present when it is time to begin, do something as you wait, such as sing, read, or pray. Make late comers feel that they have missed something by their tardiness.

SINGING

Select the Psalms ahead of time, chosen for their suitability to the subject. The leader should choose the numbers unless there is to be a song service in which the members announce their favorite selections. For the leader to say, "Now, does anybody have a number they would like to sing?" is not only poor grammar, but is an invitation to an embarrassing pause in the meeting. And if one is finally suggested, it will probably have no bearing on the subject. Such a procedure is an admission that the leader has not made adequate preparation.

The leader should appoint at the beginning the preacher to lead the singing. If there are several capable of starting the tunes, they will hesitate and wait for someone else until a specific command is given to begin. All this would be eliminated if only one person could be the recognized preacher.

Let the society be reminded that in the singing they are praising God, who abhors any frivolity or half-heartedness. Sweet melody must originate and flow from the heart even though the voice is incapable of musical harmony.

PRAYER

This is the young people's prayer meeting. A young people's meeting without prayer is as bad as a church service without prayer. Devote plenty of time to prayer in the meeting. It is desirable for the leader to offer an opening prayer, asking the Lord for His presiding Spirit to guide all thoughts and actions.

We make preparation to talk to men, why not prepare to talk to God? We should have a few thoughts in mind before starting to pray, and then our prayers will be more intelligent before God and men.

Do not hesitate to call for prayer; it is proper at any time during the meeting. There may be a season of prayer in which one is asked to open and another to close, with several voluntarily taking part in between. Or a number may be asked specifically to pray, either consecutively or at different times. It is wiser to ask these people early in the meeting so that they will be better prepared to offer careful prayers. The leader may ask for prayer on definite subjects or allow others to suggest topics for prayer.

How ever it is done, be sure that the prayer time is stressed, that the proper attitude of prayer is maintained, and that the nearness of God is felt. There cannot be too much prayer in any meeting. This may be the only opportunity that some young people have of learning to pray in public, so emphasize the prayer period.

INTRODUCTION OF THE SUBJECT

It is a trying experience for all concerned when one attempts to make a speech or lead a discussion on a subject about which he knows little or nothing. The leader must have a clear conception of his subject. He should know more about that particular subject, generally speaking, than any of the others at the meeting. Therefore let him make a few remarks at the beginning, to open up the subject for the others. It will be a general, defining, and explanatory speech. Enough should be said to start the ball rolling, but not so much that all of the good meat is stolen and little left for anyone else to say.

REFERENCES

The reading of Scripture verses that may have bearing
upon the subject under discussion is intended to increase each member's knowledge of what the Bible has to say on that matter. But too often this part of the meeting has not been very helpful. References help greatly to fill in the time, are easy to find, and give each member something to do. But this need not be the main reason for the reference period.

The purpose of references is unfulfilled unless everyone hears what is read and notices its connection with the discussion topic. It occurs often enough that the only verse a person hears is the one he reads himself. He has been too busy looking up his verse to listen to any of the others. If he had no reference to occupy his attention, he may have felt no responsibility at all and allowed his mind to wander into tempting pastures of dream-land.

Some new order for the reference period should be instituted to glean from it the precious grains of truth and help make the application. To start with, it is advisable to have the references written on slips of paper and handed out. In this way the one who is to read will not have to ask the leader a time or two what his exact reference was. Of course if the leader is looking for the easy way, he can merely read off the references and hope for a little cooperation. But there is always a degree of confusion in this method. People hesitate in taking them; two persons may start to take one at the same time, causing embarrassment or amusement. And then we find it hard to remember the reference that we have taken.

After the references have been given out, make sure that all have found their respective places and that their full attention is available for the general reading. If the references have been written out, they may profitably be numbered so that each will know when he is to read.

The big problem is how to direct the attention of all to the reference being read. Sometimes the reader, after he has read the reference, is requested to tell it in his own words. Or, the person sitting next to him may be asked to give the gist of the reference read. If the verse being read seems to be familiar, the reader might stop at key words and allow the others to fill in the word. This keeps the attention and tests the knowledge of the others. However this involves the looking up of all the references beforehand by the leader so that he can indicate which verses are familiar enough for this exercise.

Still another way is to have the group guess in which book the reference is found, after it has been read. Or the leader might announce that after each reading he is going to call on someone to tell how that verse applies to the subject under discussion.

All this-lengthens the reference reading period, but of what value is the practice if no one knows what is being read? Regardless of the method used, an effort should be made to see that the reference period fulfills its purpose, and that due respect is given to God's Word.

Topics for Discussion

The answering of previously handed out questions, known as topics, consumes a large portion of the meeting. Topics are valuable in stimulating thought, but by all means they should be given out before the meeting time. If they are distributed just before the meeting starts, the leader may expect nothing inspirational or unusual from the speaker. The leader may blame himself, if the speakers have only a sentence or so to offer instead of a real discussion of the topic. Have topics given out at least by Sabbath morning. Giving them out much earlier than that has its disadvantages, as the matter is apt to be forgotten. The amount of time usually spent in preparing a topic is probably no different for having had four days or only one afternoon to prepare.

There are often some suggestions in the published comments as to topics for discussion, but these are not intended to mark the limits of discussion. In some societies it is a matter of pride among the leaders to think up and hand out topics not already suggested. The comments are meant to be sign posts pointing us on to original thinking. Carefully consider the suggested topics, use the best ones, and then make up others. The introduction of some of your own thoughts makes the meeting individual and distinctive.

If you can think of a topic that may cause a little controversy or upon which there are varying opinions, it will
help to achieve interest and produce discussion. Perfect agreement may never be reached, but the members will invariably think that it has been a good meeting.

One meeting stands out in my mind because of a lively discussion in which nearly everyone took part. It was over the age and origin of the earth. It seemed to me that the people were being
general subject. Then in the meeting, each one dis-

go of the picture and tells how it fits into the discussion.

plays might be used instead of pictures. One time the

topic was "The Wonders of God." The leader asked each

one to bring to the meeting an object that he considered a

one for God. Several brought flowers, another brought

a wonder stone, and another, a piece of wood. One fellow

seem to have anything and when the leader asked

why he hadn't brought anything, he said that he had

brought himself, which was wonder enough. It

He had an interesting meeting.

was you can devise some sort of a demonstration, you will

find your eyes and ears more alert and minds more active.

One society found that its leaders were having a hard time

filling the one hour allotted for the meeting. Therefore a

plan was worked out by which the last fifteen min-

tutes of the meeting were given over to something differ-

tent. On the first Sabbath of the month they would spend

the last quarter hour in singing practice. On the second

Sabbath of the month they would play Bible games. On

the third, a study of a portion of a good book. In this way

one book might last for as long as a year, with only one

study a month. On the fourth, a special speaker was en-

listed to talk either on the subject or on anything he chose.

This speaker was never a member of the society. If a fifth

night is found in the month, it could be used in memorizing

Bible verses.

A contest, too matter how simple, is always good for

stimulating interest. Divide the group into two or more

teams and pit them against each other. Many a dull sub-

ject has been enlivened by a game or contest.

A change in physical setting will give the meeting a

brighter start. Most societies have two rooms to meet in

time and one arrangement of the furniture. For a change,

have the meeting in another room of the church or in same

other section of the building. If the weather is nice, carry

chairs out into a quiet part of the church yard, but it is

usually best to keep the meeting on the church premises.

should there be no other place as well suited as the ac-

ustomed place, change the furniture around. Face all

the chairs in the opposite direction, or from time to time see

how many different ways the seating may be arranged.

Change the leader's desk around to suit the general ar-

range ment. There are many pieces of novelty that may be injected

into the ordinary type of meeting to give it added attrac-

tiveness. The matter of an entire meeting of novelty will

be taken up later.

ROLL CALL AND COLLECTION

The roll call and collection are parts of the meeting that

should not be forgotten. The societies do not often neglect

the collection for they feel that they must have some money

upon which to run the organization. This is a free-will

offering presented to the Lord, but yet it is sometimes used

without the Lord getting any of the benefit. This money

should not be used for the defraying of the expenses of the

organization's social times. It ought to be understood each

time the collection is taken that the money will be used in

some way to further the Lord's work and not for personal

enjoyment. The parties and secular interests of the society

ought to be paid for in some other way. If it is a problem

to pay for the social functions when the money is not taken

from the treasury, then assess each member dues each

month or quarter. Nearly every other organization collects

dues from its members. But let the weekly collections go

for the work of the Lord.

While the collection is usually remembered, the roll call

is often forgotten. The membership of the society ought to

be down in black and white as a matter of good business.

The calling of the roll establishes a record over a period of

time as to which members are the most reliable. A roll call

has the possibility of making the members more sensitive to

the matter of attendance. It makes them feel that atten-
dance is required or at least expected of them. It makes

them know that their absence is a matter of notice and

record. In some places this record is occasionally made

public so that each one may be reminded of his attend-

tiveness. People are much more apt to be faithful when they

know that some check is being made on them. A good way

in which to answer roll calls is to respond with a verse of
the meeting, he is given a number, which refers him to the part he is to perform. Another way is to distribute numbered slips on which are written parts of the meeting such as "Announce a Psalm," "read the Scripture," "offer prayer," "answer a question," etc. Then let each one take his part in turn and conduct the meeting as if there were no leader.

Have a PICTURE MEETING, where each one brings a picture from which he will draw a moral or illustrate a lesson. The picture may be from a magazine, a book, or even one the person has drawn himself. Many enlargements may be made on the picture meeting if there is a projecting machine handy to be used. Perhaps the leader could gather a group of pictures to fit the machine and as he throws them on the screen, ask the members to draw out some spiritual meaning.

CONTEST MEETINGS are always good means of working up interest. It may be a contest between chosen sides, or between the boys and girls. It may be a contest on Bible questions, or on the special topic of the evening. It may be a contest on how well they have read the published comments or a variety of things that might come to the leader's mind.

If your group is well divided in numbers as to boys and girls, then make use of the opportunity by having two meetings, one for the boys and one for the girls. They would meet in separate places, and talk about things of special interest to each. Or let a meeting be conducted entirely by girls one night with only girls participating except for the singing. On another night let the boys have charge.

Sometimes try a GEOGRAPHY MEETING. Draw an outline of Palestine on the blackboard and call on different ones to mark the prominent places. They will make mistakes, but they will learn. Perhaps one could use carbon paper to make a small outline of Palestine for each person. Then let them fill in places which the leader names. A check-up later with the maps in the Bibles will show a need for a better knowledge of Bible geography.

You may have a whole MEETING OF BIBLE GAMES.

The new Covenanter Bible game recently published may be used with profit. Or you may do such things as describing Bible characters while the others guess the identity; a contest in finding places in the Bible; "Know Your Bible," a book of Bible questions by Amos R. Wells; a spelling match of Bible names; locating from memory Bible quotations; a Bible story telling contest; or any number of good Bible games that you might buy.

A BOOK MEETING has been tried where the leader has appointed certain ones several weeks ahead to give reviews of some good religious books. A knowledge of what is good Christian reading should also be developed as a part of this meeting. The pastor will have some suggestions as to what books are worthy of review.

A NEWSPAPER MEETING will be interesting, but the leader must make careful preparation. There are various ways of carrying this out; here are some suggestions:

1. Let the leader assign each one, or only a few if he chooses, different headlines such as might appear in a newspaper. These ought to be on some religious or moral matter. Then those who received the headlines are to write a story or article that might fit under that headline. These articles will be reviewed and criticized in the meeting.

2. Ask various members to prepare the different parts of the paper before the meeting such as an editorial, a headline, a news story (may be several of these), a cartoon, a feature story, a sports story, a society column, etc. All of these parts should have some relation to a general subject if possible. Then these could be pasted on a great newspaper sheet to make up the final paper, after each article has been orally presented.

3. The leader may go back over old issues of newspapers and cut out all of the religious articles that he can find. Have these reviewed in the meeting and the dummy sheet of a newspaper made up with them.

A FAVORITE VERSE MEETING is where each one comes prepared to give his favorite Bible verse and why. Each one may be asked to give a two or three minute sermon on his verse.
A POETRY MEETING has appealed to some, where poetry with such incitements has written, his announcements voice. He may also distribute among the members good poems that he has found for them to read.

In an ABSENT MEMBERS MEETING, those who are away from home or cannot attend are responsible for the program. This must be thought of several weeks in advance and letters sent to the members who are away, asking them to write a letter or communicate with the young people's group for a period of time. The program of the meeting guide from directions would consist of writing those letters sent by the absent members.

A PRAYER MEETING is so called because prayers are accompanied by their absence. A "Prayer Committee" is appointed ahead of time. Their task is to be ready with certain little items that they may utter whenever these seem to be a pause about to consume the meeting. The committee has to be on its toes, for when there is a pause of glory or sense of the Spirit in the meeting, the voice of God may be heard.

Most meetings have had SPECIAL SING MEETINGS, and the purpose of such meetings is not to praise the music, but the message is to get the message from the words that are sung.

A PRAYER MEETING is conducted with everything done in public. There may be two people who take part in the direction. Two people may sing a Psalm together, but now the Scripture, but now speak on the same topic and then throughout the space.

A MEMORY MEETING is conducted without any notes or reminder. The speaker enunciates the order of the meeting. The Scripture is given from memory, the Psalms are sung without books, the topics are given without notes.

It is often a good idea to conduct a BIOGRAPHICAL MEETING. Several people will present long-distance stories of notable persons of the church. Some may be famous characters or great persons in history. Biographies of these fine people in the information can make good stories.

For a QUESTION AND ANSWER MEETING, a box is placed before the group at least a week ahead and all are asked to contribute questions. Then competent members of the Church are called on to answer one or more of these questions.

To have an OBJECT MEETING, only one is asked to bring some object from which he may draw a lesson or insist as he displays it before the others.

A CHURCH ECHO MEETING is a good thing to have every once in a while. All of the members take notes, or pay particular attention to the pastor's sermon of the Sabbath morning. They let each one in the meeting tell what he remembers, what was most striking to him, what the matter was, or discuss the words of Paul. The pastor might begin by broadcasting so that he may have something that will best fit in with this plan.

A MOTHER'S MEETING or a FATHER'S MEETING is something out of the ordinary. Invite all the mothers at one time, and all of the fathers at another time to meet with the group. The parents may be asked to take part or not, depending on the leader's choice. It may be a meeting either to have the parents, or to learn from them.

Every society should have a TESTIMONY MEETING every so often. The testimonies need not always be about the same things. At one time the testimonies may be more general such as "What Christ has done for me?" or "What gives me joy in the service of Christ?" At another time, the testimonies may be confined to "The thing that helped me most to be a Christian during the last week." How is the evidence of the Lord's way?"

There is one thing about which we should be cautioned when we are developing a program for the young people's meeting, and especially when it is to be a season of any length. Make certain that it is centered about Jesus Christ. Do not let the program of the meeting overshadow the glory of Christ. The first purpose is not to entertain, but to glorify Christ, teach, and sanctify the people. But the mechanics of a meeting may make it very interesting, thus aiding the achievement of the primary purpose. Strove
to make every meeting interesting to the people and glorifying to God.

**A STANDARD OF EFFICIENCY FOR A YOUNG PEOPLE'S MEETING**

**CONCERNING THE LEADER**

1. Meeting well advertised beforehand .................................................. 5%
2. A good general preparation with time and thought given to the matter before the Sabbath Day .............. 25%
3. At least one point of originality or novelty in the meeting .................................................. 10%
4. Enthusiastic and interested himself .................................................. 10%

**CONCERNING THE OTHER MEMBERS**

5. All on time .................................................. 10%
6. Careful attention throughout the meeting .................................................. 10%
7. Quick and willing cooperation with the leader .................................................. 10%
8. Good preparation of previously assigned topics .................................................. 10%
9. Ninety per cent of membership present .................................................. 5%
10. Each one taking some part aside from singing .................................................. 5%