



Depth Perception™

Commentary from Design For Ministry™
Los Angeles - Milwaukee - Philadelphia

Youth Convention Reflections 15 September 2005

Speaking at a number of youth gatherings over the years has been a privilege. Whether a church basement with five or a large convention hall where thousands have gathered from many places; whether a gathering of Pentecostal young people, mainline teens, or adolescents from my own Anabaptist family, I find these gatherings have a common mission – to invite young people to commit themselves to follow Jesus as did the Galilean fisher folk of old. The intent is to help them grow in this commitment so that there will be more merciful servants who spread the good news, visit the sick and imprisoned and care for widows and orphans.

In spite of this stated mission that consumes thousands of volunteer hours and lost income for youth sponsors who take vacation so their church youth group might attend, we report on and evaluate everything else. We hear about whether the speakers were any good, the lack of sleep, and how “awesome” it was. The church press prints complaints about the cost,

music choice and volume. We tell stories about misbehavior and interesting people. We spend little time, however, reporting on whether we achieved the mission.

I know first hand the mission is being achieved. I’ve witnessed young people giving their lives to Jesus, and I’ve met them years later as deeply committed Christians who trace their decision to follow Jesus to these events. The problem is that the churches that plan these wonderful events are overlooking this most crucial of all reporting elements in the middle of the expense reports, food surveys, worship song mixtures and speaker ratings.

The events are worthless if we are merely unoffended, comfortable and fiscally solvent. They are worth every penny and every dollar in lost income to youth sponsors if the result is a larger core of deeply committed believers. Can we please start celebrating when our young people decide to follow Jesus?

- mark I vincent