

# leadership lessons learned lately

At my church, we get bonus points any time we can use acronyms or alliterations, so the title of this month's column just got me a quadruple word score!

So much of what I love about junior high ministry is rooted in things such as dodgeball, summer camps, eating mass quantities of pizza, and watching seventh-grade guys flirt awkwardly with eighth-grade girls. But there's so much more to it. Junior high ministry is also a breeding ground for leadership lessons. I hope you take mental notes—and maybe even physical notes—of the leadership lessons you're learning while you serve young teenagers. Here are a few random lessons I've learned lately:

- **The words you use matter.** In a recent conversation with my team, I defined certain aspects of our ministry as *clutter*—meaning the stuff that has slowly crept in and now overshadows some of what's most important. The analogy worked for me but not for a couple of people who had created, nurtured, and seen flourish the very things I classified as clutter. Leaders need to choose their words wisely.

- **Junior higher will rise to a challenge.** I've seen it happen time and time again, but I'm still surprised at how quickly kids will step up to the plate when asked. This leadership lesson hits home every time I give junior higher an opportunity to stretch themselves. A key role of a leader is taking people to places they never thought they were capable of going.
- **What's obvious to you may not be obvious to others.** As a ministry leader, you're thinking several steps ahead, so you usually see things that need adjusted, added, eliminated, and corrected earlier than other people do. Don't make the mistake of assuming that people you lead see the same things that you do.
- **Leadership is influence.** I first learned this lesson years ago when I served on John Maxwell's team. It was his leadership mantra, and I've experienced it a hundred times since. Which junior higher in your ministry seem to have the most influence over others? Which kids "set the temperature" (for good or bad) of your gatherings? Take notice of them because they're your student leaders. You can decide what to do with that fact and how best to develop them, but a good leader understands that leadership is influence.