

# Why CDs Still Matter

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It happens in youth leader offices all across the country. Sometimes it happens on Monday at 10am and sometimes it happens at 4pm on Wednesday. Whether planning ahead or at the last-minute, most youth leaders sit down and ask themselves, “Ok, what am I going to do this Wednesday night?” As a youth leader I worked hard to plan meetings that would be effective, engaging and function inside our youth ministry purpose. Even after hearing dozens of speakers talk about purpose vs. programming and swearing an oath to keep my focus on our overall purpose... I still had to plan the program. So I’d pray, sweat over my talk, get creative to have a unique crowd breaker game and work to give our ministry staff a new opportunity to engage relationally with all the students there.

As we all strive to not be program-driven ministries, there’s usually one aspect that gets left in the “program only” thinking – Christian Music. No, I’m not talking about praise songs, I mean the bass-rattling tunes that you crank to let your students know that there is good Christian music out there. At interline, we work had to get the best music into the hands of youth leaders. That means a box full of CDs along with Bible studies, posters and even music videos. We leave the “how” of using Christian music up to the youth leader (CD library, giveaways, pass out to leaders, etc) but after talking to thousands of youth leaders, we want to encourage you to keep using CDs in your youth ministry. Here’s why.

Christian music can have a big impact in a student’s life, if the music can go beyond the walls of your youth room. In other words, having CDs allows the music to travel... not just getting stuck on your office computer or the sound board in the youth room. Sure downloading just the songs you want to play in the youth room will help make sure your program rock, but Christian music could be doing so much more.

## **Go Home**

There’s something cool about asking a student if they want to borrow a CD. You have the opportunity to communicate a couple things with this transaction. First you have the chance to say, “I know a bit about your musical tastes and I think you might like this”. Even if the CD is not a direct hit with their music tastes, you have demonstrated that you’re working to know them better. Plus, now you’ve got something to talk about after they’ve had the CD for a while. Second, you get to communicate trust to your student by allowing them to borrow a CD. Sure, not all the CDs will come back home, but theft aside, it’s probably a okay thing... especially if they really like the CD.

## **Have Tunes, Will Travel**

Probably one of the easiest ways to expose kids to music is during a road trip. I would encourage you to control the CD player in the church van – that means that you need to show up with a stack of CDs ready to DJ the trip. This is an awesome opportunity to introduce your crew to a bunch of new bands or even music styles. Get ready to play 1-2 songs of a disc then switch. I recall taking our crew on a mission trip to San Francisco. I told them that they couldn't bring their own CD players (yes, this was still pre-iPod) but I promised them that the trip would rock. As we drove up I-5 we cranked hours of Christian music. As I pulled a Tait CD out of the player, ready to insert another disc, a voice said, "Can you play that song again?" "Sure...why, did you dig it?" I asked. As I reloaded the CD player and hit play, one of my girls commented that she thought this song was really encouraging Christians to get out there and serve. And, bang, we had our mission trip theme song... identified and selected by a student, during a road trip. We really don't know the impact Christian music will have until we get the tunes playing.

## **We don't know which song will impact a student**

We still hear from youth leaders, "I just buy & download a couple songs from the album. That's enough for us." And yes, you'll have some cool tunes to rock the youth room. The problem is just like we can't dictate a student's spiritual journey, we can't know which song on a CD is going to have the most impact on a student. Just exposing your youth group to a one song may be limiting the impact of Christian music in their lives. I remember my youth pastor playing certain song every Wed night. My friend and I asked to borrow the cassette (yes, I'm that old). When we listened to the whole album we found an amazing song that became a battle cry for taking our campus for Christ. Getting the whole album into your student's can give them many more opportunities to discover songs to encourage and support all of your talks.

## **You'll still have the tunes to program**

As a youth leader, I loved finding something new and practical that will help me do a better job. There's no debate with us that programs like iTunes can help you do a bang-up job with programming and playing music from the computer at the sound booth. When you have the whole CD you can still load the songs you want into iTunes and be left with a CD to loan to students, play in the van or keep in your office. So, as a youth leader, I would take my YLO CDs,

load the songs I wanted into iTunes so that I could play kick'n walk-in mixes or have smokin' "game background" music ready to go, but the CDs and the lyrics would live (and be loaned out from) my office. There was something great about still having the CD insert and lyrics to check and reference.

So we encourage you to still use CDs...to let those little plastic discs go outside of the youth room and into students' lives... to let all the songs from an artist have the chance to work their way in to hearts... and to use both physical and digital formats to maximize impact on your youth ministry. Stack them on your shelves, put them in a library, leave a good stack in the church van or fling them from stage as prizes, but use those discs!