

Ultimate - Guide for Leaders

Overview of the Ultimate programme:

Ultimate is a programme that will encourage young people to encounter the challenge of living the whole of their life to the glory of God. In Romans Chapter 12 Paul says:

'Take your everyday, ordinary life - your sleeping, eating, going to work and walking around - and place it before God as an offering.' (*The Message*)

What is the Ultimate concept?

The material in the **Ultimate** programme will help young people to see how God can be involved in all that they do.

It will help them to discover what this means in their daily living, in their leisure time, in their decision-making, in the development of their skills and talents and in their engagement with the world they live in. Look through the **Ultimate** resource. It is full of challenges which will help young people to realise that God has something to say about every aspect of their lives. The challenges will inspire and encourage them to engage in a range of activities through which it's hoped they will look at life from the perspective of God. It's a challenge, but it can be fun and it can certainly be life changing!

The young people are encouraged to track their progress through the pages of their **I-chievement journal**, recording how things are going at school, college, in the home or wherever they find themselves, as well as what they have achieved and what they have learnt through the challenges.

Programme needs

At this stage in their development it is important to provide challenge, adventure and responsibility as well as space to come to terms with some of the many decisions that need to be made. When providing a programme for this age group try to provide for these needs by:

- Introducing additional challenges e.g. involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh's Hillary Award scheme
- Inviting them to help with younger IFG age groups or in at their church
- Becoming involved in Young Leaders' Training programmes
- Allowing the group to plan and undertake a local community project
- Empowering them to take responsibility for their own programme
- Establishing/working with church and local projects
- Ensuring that they are challenged to make a response to the gospel message.

When using the Ultimate programme:

- Allow the young people choice
- Avoid repeating things they have done before e.g. in previous age groups
- Remember that they are shortly going to be independent members of society
- Encourage them to create their own syllabi
- Help them to understand how Christ is interested in every aspect of life
- Give them the opportunity to do things for themselves
- Work alongside them, mentoring and guiding but NOT directing and dictating.

The guides on the following pages will help you, the leader, to:

- Find out how the **Ultimate** programme works
- Understand the characteristics of this age group
- Learn how to empower your young people
- Mentor your young people effectively
- Use discussions effectively so that options can be explored and consensus reached

Characteristics of 13 - 18s

Young people in this age group may still have many of the characteristics and needs of 10-14-year-olds, but will also be faced with a number of other emotions and experiences:

- They may be enjoying deeper relationships with special (same sex) friends
- They will be exploring relationships with the opposite sex
- They may be making key decisions about their future options - work, university
- They are capable of abstract thought and will question many things
- They will be under increasing pressure to do well - from school, parents, themselves
- They may be emotionally insecure
- They may well be very knowledgeable and will not 'suffer fools gladly'
- They will be very aware of current affairs
- They will be at a stage when they want responsibilities
- They will use their peer group to explore their response to the issues that surround them
- They need challenge and adventure
- They will be part of an instant society - fast food, instant communication, last minute decisions
- They will live in a digital world with electronic communications, information, music, data
- They will be well travelled and well informed about many things
- They will gravitate more to the 'grey' areas between the 'black-and-white' issues of their early years
- They can think and have thoughtful discussions about war, college, the economy and their visions of what would make the world better
- They will be better able to understand other people's points of view and more open to other perspectives and ideas.

Spiritual development:

The younger teenagers will:

- Begin to see contradictions in the world and in religious and spiritual beliefs
- Often confront and frequently question the practices they observe
- Frequently question or reject their childhood beliefs as they move beyond 'black-and-white' thinking
- Develop strong, even contradictory beliefs as they 'try on' different ideas and beliefs
- Begin to identify or develop interests or gifts about which they are passionate
- Begin to rely more on friends and other adults to shape their spiritual beliefs and practices.

The older teenagers will:

- Begin to make choices about where intentional spiritual practices fit (or don't fit) in their lives
- Become clearer about the activities and things that bring joy and energy in their life
- Often develop a sense of vocation
- Begin to internalise personal beliefs and practices, which may be similar to or different from those of their parents and their friends
- Start to develop strong convictions regarding social and political change
- Often become deeply committed to service and social change, even becoming activists for causes in which they believe
- Become more aware of different spiritual and religious traditions.

How are the challenges presented?

The Ultimate programme has 20 Apps. Each App reflects an aspect of life with which 14-18s might be involved. Within each App there are five exciting programmes, and each programme has a challenge! This means there are 100 different challenges from which to choose - each challenge can be undertaken for approximately four to six hours.

How does it work?

Each App will be open to different interpretations allowing the young people, while working to a specific remit, to make decisions themselves about content, pace and engagement. The young people may attempt the challenges as individuals, as a large group or in small groups.

Each challenge within an App is set out the same; these guidelines will help the girls/group unpack the challenge. Working out what to do and how to do it is all part of the experience. Leaders should beware of doing this for the group!

There is a lot of choice in the way in which any challenge may be undertaken. The Investigate the Christian perspective section has a spiritual element and it is expected that the girls will complete this.

What is the leader's role?

Young people in this age group are growing in their desire for independence, have an amazing range of knowledge about all sorts of things and demonstrate a strong desire to take responsibility and leadership roles. For this reason the leader is not there to dictate, to tell or to direct. However, this does not mean that the leader is not required. The role is a much more subtle one. Leaders working with this age group need skills in mentoring, facilitating, empowering and overseeing. They are there to work alongside the young people, to model good leadership, to be a friend in the true sense of the word and specifically to help them as they respond to the challenge of the gospel message.

Help! How do I make it happen?

Choosing the challenge

- First let the young people choose an App and show them the Overview page, which will display all the challenges available in the App.
- Let the young people read these and discuss which challenges inspire them.
- Allow them time to think how they might attack the challenges.
- What ideas do they have?
- What might they like to do?
- Encourage them to think outside the box, the whole thing is about challenging their thinking, their understanding of our world, their view of life and their understanding of the things of God!

Getting ready for the challenge

After this initial brainstorm when they have decided which programme they want to follow, give the group a copy of the relevant programme guide. This is designed to help them begin to root their discussions in reality. The *Ideas section* of the programme, for example, gives some practical suggestions as to how the group might out-work the challenge. The ideas will be good for those who are not creative in their thinking but they may have a much better idea themselves, something that links with their local church or community, or a project that is close to their heart. Allow them to be creative. The choice is theirs.

Using the programme guide:

The programme guide then takes them through the various stages of thinking and planning. This will help the young people to make it happen.

Ideas:

This section gives some practical suggestions as to how the challenge might be approached, although the young people may develop their own ideas if they prefer.

Set the scene:

This section encourages the young people to think through what the challenge involves. There are a few questions to get them started

Design:

This section encourages the group to start to make a detailed plan of how they are going to complete the challenge.

Investigate the Christian perspective:

In this section, the group is asked to find out what the Bible/other Christians say about the theme of the challenge. The group can investigate this for themselves or they could get someone to help them explore the theme. It is expected that the girls will complete this part of the challenge which may be undertaken by devoting a whole evening to it or by doing a little each week.

Respond:

It's crunch time! This is where the planning is put into practice and the challenge starts to take shape.

Evaluate

At the end of each challenge the young people should take time to think through how they did, what they learnt, how they impacted other people and what they would change if they did it again. This section outlines some questions to help them do this. They are asked to record their thoughts in their *achievement journal*.

Setting off on the challenge:

Once all this has happened they are ready to go. Using the two-page Challenge Plans attached to each App guide they can begin to make definite step-by-step plans and time frames for their challenge and get to work.

Empowerment of young people:

The whole of the **Ultimate** programme is based on the concept that young people in this age group should be given the challenge to manage their own programme.

Of course the leaders will still be there, having responsibility for health and safety issues and offering advice and encouragement, but ultimately their role is to empower the young people to take responsibility for their own activities.

What is empowerment about?

- Empowerment enables young people to share in decision-making and offers them a level of influence and choice
- It involves partnership between young people and their leaders
- It gives young people a greater sense of belonging and identity
- Empowerment helps young people to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility
- It enables them to develop their potential leadership qualities within a safe environment
- Empowerment provides opportunity to develop important skills in communication, negotiation, assertiveness and decision-making
- Young people are encouraged to be active in creating the programmes and services they want to see developed. It enables them to have the initial idea and carry it out
- It enables them to plan from their own experience and perspective
- Empowerment prepares young people for decision-making and problem-solving within wider society and promotes democratic procedures
- Empowerment means 'to strengthen' and is scripturally based. In 2 Thessalonians Ch.2:16-17 it says: 'May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God the Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.'

The implications for leaders in empowering young people are wide ranging:

- Leaders need to understand the true meaning of empowerment
- Empowerment is not just about seeking the young people's views or allowing them to make some of the decisions
- Participation is not the same as empowerment
- Leaders have to get used to holding back and not taking charge, but still realise that their experience is invaluable and may be offered
- Leaders must stand back and watch the process carefully encouraging, commenting, suggesting, questioning and occasionally intervening
- Young people need to have a 'real' voice
- Leaders need to learn the difference between intervention (which may be necessary) and interference (which should be avoided)
- It may feel like handing over control, but in reality it is about enabling and strengthening young people's personal, emotional and social development
- As opportunities are offered to young people they may relate more effectively to the younger members of the Unit; this can be threatening to established leaders
- Leaders owe it to young people to ensure that they are properly resourced
- Leaders need to give the young people opportunities to attend seminars, training and events; and this may have financial implications
- Leaders must learn not to hold back experiences from their young people just because they do not think they will be interested
- However, ultimate 'control' is always the responsibility of the leader, otherwise there can be anarchy!

Mentoring young people:

One of the greatest gifts that we can give to young people as they develop is a secure and empowering space in which they are able to grow.

The Ultimate programme enables this. Its approach is holistic, positive and built on relationships. The activities provide opportunities for young people to contribute their gifts and understanding. The programme is built on an approach that is about facilitating young people. It is about being involved in their lives in such a way that enables them to discover and grow their gifts, their understanding of life and their relationship with God. **Ultimate** is about mentoring young people.

What does it mean to mentor?

The dictionary defines 'mentor' as:

- A wise and trusted counsellor or teacher
- An influential senior sponsor or supporter.

There are various styles of mentoring, ranging from informal support to professional schemes. In an **Ultimate** context the mentoring approach is generally based around informal facilitation and support.

We empower one another to grow as we stand alongside one another and encourage development by giving one another space to grow into all that God intends us to be and do.

Mentoring in the Bible

As with other aspects of Christian youth work the Bible is a key basis for understanding and developing a mentoring approach with young people. A few examples of mentoring relationships include:

- **Moses and Joshua** - Moses developed a framework in his relationship with Joshua that enabled Joshua to walk into all that God was calling him to. As you read through Exodus you can track how he invested time, energy, wisdom and insight into Joshua.
- **King Saul and David** - As you read through 1 Kings Ch.17-18 there are great questions to ask about how the young shepherd David was supported (or held back?) in emerging as the leader that God was calling him to be. Various people feature in his story as good and bad examples of empowerment and mentoring. Saul was in a position of trust in David's life. How did he release David?
- **Jesus and the disciples** - In Luke Ch.10-11 Jesus sends out His followers, receives them as they return from their mission and provides further input in their growing understanding and experience of leadership.

Someone once said that a leader knows the way, shows the way and goes the way. Perhaps the definition of a mentoring leader could, in fact, be someone who does all that AND who also walks alongside others as they discover how to know the way, show the way and go the way too!

John Chapter 15 provides very clear insight from Jesus into the starting place of our Christ-centred relationship of influence and mentoring of others. It begins with our own relationship with Him, is based on utter dependence on God and includes openness, accountability, discipline and a commitment to purposeful growth in faith and Christ likeness. As we follow Jesus we model this as 'the way' for those we mentor.

Practical tips for mentoring young people:

Discovering examples of mentoring in the Bible helps with our understanding of God's loving and empowering relationship with us and our call to this in relationship with others. It's not just principle and theory though; the Bible is also very practical. Each of the examples listed on the previous page include clues about how to:

- Develop great habits that cultivate a mentoring relationship
- Avoid habits that crush or diminish a mentoring relationship.

Mentoring - cultivate actions and attitudes that:

- Accepts the person for who they are
- Shows unconditional love
- Listens well
- Is there to pick up the pieces
- Guides and advises
- Is aware of their world
- Encourages self awareness and honesty
- Asks 'God questions'
 - o What is going on for you in this moment/situation?
 - o What might God be saying to you in this moment/situation?
 - o Who/what is God inviting you to do/be?

Mentoring - avoid actions and attitudes that:

- Are judgmental
- Tell the person off
- Make choices for the person
- Always agree with the person you're mentoring
- Allow you to dominate (practically, relationally, emotionally or spiritually)
- Expects the person to be the same as you
- Is scared of letting the person make mistakes
- Patronises the actions, experience and opinions of the person.

A final note on mentoring

In Luke Chapter 24 the disciples are beginning out on their lives as Jesus' followers after His earthly death. They are the early leaders of Christian faith. Perhaps that's why Luke records just how they started out... walking, talking and facing open questions!

'They (the disciples) were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus Himself came up and walked along with them... He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"' (Luke Ch.24:14-17).

Holding discussions:

In planning their programme the young people will need to engage in discussions. Here are some tips to help the leader enable the young people to do this.

Purpose of discussions

- To enable young people to have an opportunity to express their view points
- To help them learn to accept that others may not hold the same views as they do
- To aid them in decision-making
- To explore their perceptions and ideas and to help them express their hopes and dreams
- To determine their values and attitudes
- To evaluate individual's view points
- To share knowledge, explore possibilities or challenge the status quo
- To plan and organise events
- To question, analyse and evaluate what has happened.

Styles of discussion:

It might be helpful from time to time to suggest a format for the discussion.

- **Circle approach:** Everyone is asked to complete a given sentence e.g. 'I think we should...'. The leader starts things off, going around the circle in turn with no interruptions. Only the person whose turn it is may speak.
- **Brainstorming (mind mapping):** A useful technique if you want lots of ideas. Pose a question or problem. Ask everyone to consider their response. List all contributions without comment. Accept them all.
- **General (open) discussion:** This is useful for discussing current affairs, for planning events and for dealing with conflicts.
- **Debate style:** Giving time to identify two opposing sides of any possible issue.

Practical tips:

Suggest that the group chooses a chairperson to help keep their discussions in focus

- A circular seating formation is best for discussion
- Be aware of the people either side of the chairperson; it is harder for them to catch the chairperson's eye
- About seven is the ideal number for a discussion group. Larger groups should be divided up
- Ground rules should be established before the start of a discussion
- For younger groups a leader may need to act as chairperson for them, but older groups can choose one of the group to fulfil this role.

Golden rules for discussions:

Each group will find it helpful to draw up their own code of conduct for discussions including such things as:

- Be open to hear all points of view and value the contribution of every member of the group
- Remember not to dominate debate
- Endeavour to involve everyone
- Keep the debate focused and do not go off at a tangent
- Encourage others to share their experiences, feelings, opinions and values
- Make sure you do not interrupt others
- Wait 'till there is quiet before you speak
- Respect other people's views

Notes:

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*The contribution from GB England and Wales in the production
of this programme is gratefully acknowledged.*

Girls' Brigade NZ Charities Commission No 26137