

ROOM TO PRAY - BACK-TO-SCHOOL PRAYER ROOM

As you consider hosting a Back-To-School prayer room this fall, here are some tips from Meghan Matthews. Meghan is a staff member with CBOQ's Next Generation ministry and a youth leader at Kingsway Baptist Church in Toronto. Meghan also spoke at April's conference.

Get the full Back-To-School guide in your May/June issue or go online at baptistwomen.com/resources.

Tip #1 Get youth involved.

This prayer room is a great project, an opportunity to go up and talk to teenagers. Invite a young woman out for a coffee. Sit down and ask her what she'd do for a Back-to-School prayer room.

Tip #2 Use Scripture.

Youth look for truth. Scripture is important because those words *are* truth. Use Scripture in impactful ways, whether it's one verse used in multiple ways throughout the room, or several different passages. Have Scripture written out at prayer stations—an important way for youth to connect their experience of a station with the Word.

Tip #3 Design your stations with flexibility and freedom in mind.

Time: Teens will do shorter, smaller things. Stations that have a set clock won't work. For example, at one prayer station some youth experienced, the instructions were to sit down and listen to a song that was looped to repeat. "One young person said they felt trapped. 'I didn't like the song, and if I moved, I felt it would look as though I couldn't finish the station.'"

Ways of interacting with stations: Design with many different ways to interact with the elements of the station in mind.

For Easter this year, the prayer team at Kingsway recreated the Last Supper for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. In the sanctuary on the dais, the team placed tapestries, bowls of fruit, unleavened

bread, bowls of nuts, a bowl of oil. The cross was also on the platform, pushed back, but looming.

Anyone could come and take their position at the "table." Nibble. Sit in silence or chat with friends. Look at the cross. Leave when they were ready to leave.

Tip # 4 Talk about the Back-to-School prayer room with youth when it's over.

Youth who are in the process of making their faith their own need an opportunity to talk about the prayer stations and their experiences in the prayer room after it's over.

Provide them with the opportunity to debrief; to talk about their experiences with you. Really try to check back in with your youth the day of or the day after if possible (not two weeks later!).

The important thing is to ask good, open-ended questions. Some examples:

- What did you think about _____?
- Do you feel any clarity over what you were praying about?
- Do you think God was moving in that space?

It's equally important to be open about our own experiences. As you debrief with them, you may say something like, "I went in with this question and God responded to me like this." "Here's how that prayer room impacted me and my relationship with God." When you share your experiences in these ways, that's the beginning of discipleship and transformation, not just for youth but for the entire church.

Meghan Matthews