



*called out. set apart.  
equipped.*



youth ministry as an extension of our life with Christ.

**DRAFT**

# Philosophy of Youth Ministry

God calls ordinary people to do extraordinary things in his kingdom. If we look at what that looks like, we see Moses (Ex 3:4-12) interrupted in the middle of his daily routine to have an encounter with the living God, who had a job for him to do. And who was Moses? No one. God doesn't actually say that, but when Moses asks, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" God doesn't build him up, or try to tell him what a great personality he has or what a great leader he is. In stead, God replies, "I will be with you." That's the first thing that we need to realize as we step into this ministry that God has for us: we are nothing, but He will be with us.

When God puts something on our heart, we have to take action, for even though He will be with us, we still have a job to do. When Nehemiah went back to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Neh 2:11-20), he first took action, returning in the first place, and then scouting out the walls and the task that needed to be done before he talked to the people (see Neh 2:12, 13, 16, 17). After he had a grasp on the situation, he cast the vision to the people and the leaders and also told them about how God had made the way for him to come back and do this. After the people agreed, they started on this task. Hence we come to the second thing that we need to realize in ministry: God has called and equipped us, but we still need a game plan and the people of God to recognize the vision or nothing is going to get done.

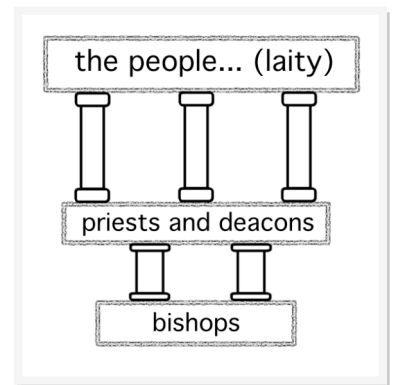
There are three primary places in the New Testament where the gifts are mentioned: I Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4. Each of these times it is clear that it is not the specific gift that is important, but rather, what is emphasized is that everyone is needed in the body. One gift or calling is not more important than another, for the body cannot survive without its internal organs that no one sees.

Despite that fact that God is no respecter of persons or of callings, there is the need for leadership roles. The leader is supposed to be the shepherd (I Peter 5:1-3). As I Peter says, this is not a position to be flaunted, but rather, it is one of service where the leader is given the opportunity to be an example to the people God has placed under his/her care.

Combine these thoughts on leadership and gifts with the idea that we, the body of Christ as a whole are a royal priesthood (I Peter 3:9), then we get the idea that ministry is not what happens up front, rather, it ought to be a part of every Christian's life every day. The job of the leaders is to equip, model, and serve the rest of the people in the body so that they can do what God has called them to do.

# 1. All Christians as ministers.

- a. The catechism in the BCP lays out what I think is a necessary understanding of how ministry works. In answer to the question: “Who are the ministers of the Church?” we find this answer: “The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.” This goes along with Ephesians 4:11-12 when it puts the responsibility of the “apostles, prophets, evangelists, and the pastors and teachers” to “equip God’s people to do his work and build up his church, the body of Christ.” Notice the laity is first. The laity are the primary ministers, all the others are supposed to support and equip the laity in their work.
- b. We are the church, “the community of the new covenant” BCP p. 854. Church means “called out” ones. We affirm the church as “one, holy, catholic and apostolic.” This means the church invisible—no one organization can be said to be the sole representative of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic.
- c. One=one body under one head (BCP p. 854).
- d. Holy=set apart. The church catholic (universal) is holy, because the Holy Spirit dwells in it. We as members of the church catholic are set apart and anointed for ministry because the Holy Spirit dwells in us, consecrates us, and guides us to do God’s work, or the work of the ministry (cf. BCP p. 854 and Eph 4:11-12).
- e. Apostolic=sent out. The church is called apostolic because it “continues in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles and is sent out to carry out Christ’s mission to all people” (BCP *ibid*). That means that we as the church are “sent out” and entrusted with the message of reconciliation with God (BCP p. 855 2 Cor 5:18-21).



## 2. Recognizing the gifts God has given to us.

- a. What do you love to do? What makes you come alive? If we take seriously this idea that God has not only set in motion the cycle of life, but personally knit us together in the womb (Psalm 139:13), then perhaps we need to take seriously the idea that who we are, our personality, our interests, the things we love to do are along the areas that God has gifted us in.
- b. This concept of “spiritual gifts” is sometimes made into this lofty, other-worldly kind of thing when in fact the very nature of the incarnation tells us that our gifts from God are in fact very worldly in the sense that they are practical and can be used every day, in all sorts of contexts.
- c. One body, many parts (1 Corinthians 12:14-27). We’re not all intended to have the same function. In fact, it would be disastrous if we did! Imagine if you had eyes but no brain, great skin, but no heart to give it life, or a tongue but no throat. All ridiculous to think of, and deadly if they were true. And yet all too often we focus on the external, or in the case of the church, those with recognized roles, and we don’t think of the others as important.

# Nice Liver! Recognizing how God has gifted you.

What is your vocation? Different than a job, vocation is your calling in life, that thing you do that gives you a sense of purpose, gets you out of bed in the morning and so forth.

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What is your job? What do you actually do for a living? \_\_\_\_\_

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Is there a difference between your vocation and your job? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, why do you think that is?

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What are your hobbies? \_\_\_\_\_

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What ways can you think of that you can involve youth in any of the above categories?

(Eg. If you're an accountant, perhaps you could help with math homework...)\_ \_\_\_\_\_

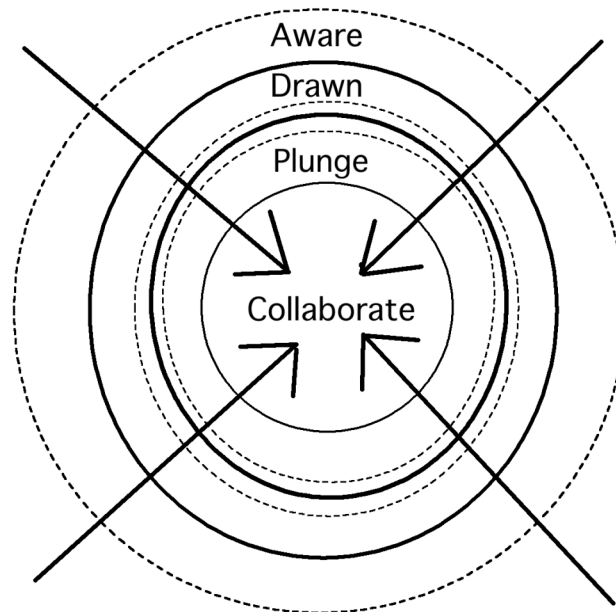
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### **3. The purpose of youth ministry is discipleship.**

- a. **Discipleship is both ordinary and extraordinary.** It takes place in the midst of “normal” life, and yet has amazing and eternal implications.
- b. **No more “vampire Christians.”** There’s no place in Scripture for separating Jesus as Savior and Lord (great omission p. 14)
- c. **Discipleship starts with you and me.** If we are not committed to being Jesus’ apprentices/disciples, then there’s no way we can make disciples. You can’t minister out of what’s not there.
- d. **No superior knowledge needed.** The painfully obvious and yet tricky fact that: We’re making disciples of Jesus, not of us, this means that we can walk with people along the road of discipleship, learn from the teens we mentor as much as teach, really just be a part of each others’ lives. It actually is ineffective at best—destructive at worst—to try to take a position of superiority. That doesn’t mean we can’t speak into kids’ lives—this is needed—but it does require a humble posture towards those we are discipling.
- e. **What would a process of discipleship look like at our church?** Once a process of discipleship in place, programs can then have purpose and focus. And the good thing is, we can eliminate programs that aren’t fulfilling that purpose. Programs are tools that are only as good as their fit for a job. If they don’t fit, re-vamp or discard.

# A Model for a Process of Discipleship



**Aware:** This person is aware of the church, may attend sporadically, or at least is in contact with disciples. They are interested to a certain extent, and find themselves asking questions of Christians in their life. Or they came in contact with something about Jesus somehow and seek to discover more about him. They are open to friendships with Christians and won't necessarily feel threatened by an invitation to church.

**Drawn:** This person is drawn to Christ. They begin to participate in church and other "Christian" activities. They are interested in everything from retreats to mission's trips, but may or may not have come to a place of consciously choosing to put their faith in Christ.

**Plunge:** This person has made a conscious choice to choose Jesus as Lord, and is aware of being actively discipled and is participating as a disciple. This person has chosen to become an "apprentice" of Jesus. The difference between the "plunge" stage and the "drawn" stage is more nebulous than the step from merely being aware of Jesus to deciding to follow him to some extent, and thus is represented by a solid line surrounded by two permeable lines as the person may be hard to locate on this scheme until they reach the "collaborate" stage.

**Collaborate:** This person is not only an active disciple, but then chooses to take part in making disciples. This is everyone from the person in the pew who starts mentoring/discipling someone in their world who is in the "aware" stage to lay ministers, to clergy.

## 4. The state of youth today.

- a. What youth need and what they think they need (felt needs and real needs).
  - Youth today don't want to hear that high school was the best time in your life. Regardless of the nostalgia you may possess for that era in your life, high school today is nothing short of tortuous for some, and a challenge for all, and I don't mean academically. The world has changed. Junior high can be even harder on the student. So youth need to know that you actually like being an adult and that there's something to look forward to. I once heard a kid say that if high school was as good as it got then they might as well kill themselves.
  - They don't need someone who is "cool." They need an adult. You don't need to dress like them, talk like them, and in fact, you should do neither of those things if it requires changing how you already act and dress.
  - They may simply be looking for someone who can help them with a college application, proof an essay, or help with math homework because they don't have anyone else to ask that sort of question.
  - They want independence, what they need is trust and someone to believe in them.
  - They want to be taken seriously in everything from their opinions to their heartbreak over their latest 6-day long relationship (for junior highers, longer for high schoolers), and they need to be taken seriously, but also shown a higher ideal of relationships without belittling what they feel.
  - There's more, but you have to discover what they think they need before you can hope to help them with what they really need, and this comes by listening. You can't just ask them, "what do you need."
- b. Looking for something to die for (Harry Potter and *Practicing Passion*)

called out. set apart. equipped.

# What Harry has to say about youth ministry

I recently finished reading the long-awaited final installment of the Harry Potter series, and discovered several things the church could learn from Harry about what teenagers are looking for.

As early as the first book in the series, we learn that Harry is destined for a fight that could prove deadly. A terrible villain is looking for him and trying to kill him. Certain adults recognize this battle cannot be fought exclusively by them and that this young man eventually must face this villain. However, these adults, especially Dumbledore, some teachers, parents of his friends, and his godfather all work to make certain that Harry is equipped with what he needs before he faces the final battle that could kill him.

Starting at the age of eleven, Harry lives in constant awareness of the danger facing him. But he knows that unless he faces his enemy eventually, people he loves are going to get hurt and killed because his enemy won't stop pursuing him. So he involves himself wholeheartedly in this fight, both being prepared by these mentors and helping teach other teenagers what he has learned.

And here's the thing, the adults don't prevent the teens from taking part in the struggle against evil. Wherever they can, they protect them. Whenever they can, they equip them, but they don't pat them on the head and tell them to wait until they're older and can be "real" members of the fight against evil.

Here is where we the church need to take notes. Kenda Dean, in *Practicing Passion*, talks about how teenagers are looking for something that they would be willing to die for. Teenagers are passionate, less cynical than most, and are still crazy enough to think they can actually make a difference in the world, something a lot of the rest of us too often forget.

And teens are not blind to the cost of such passion. Fighting for something means battle wounds. Teens are okay with that because if it's worthwhile, it will always be worth it, even when it's not fun.

This means that teens should be flocking to Christianity left and right because after all, where else do we see such a rich heritage of people willing to lay down their lives for what they believe it, or people persecuted for the simple act of claiming Jesus as Lord?

And this Jesus we claim is none other than the one who laid down his life for all of us, the ultimate act of a loving God. The passion of Christ both led to the cross, and was embodied in the cross. Jesus did battle against evil by giving up his life and then coming back again from the dead, thereby defeating the power of death. Sound familiar? Harry goes willingly to his death in order to stop Voldemort from continuing to do battle against

the people he loves. As it turns out, this was the only way to destroy Voldemort (read the book for an explanation). And of course, it doesn't kill Harry, he comes back to defeat Voldemort and save the day. While he didn't defeat death itself or rid the world of all evil, the end of *The Deathly Hallows* shows us a teenager willing to die for his friends.

So if the parallel between what teens want and Christianity is so strong, where are they? Dean suggests the church "has largely sanitized love of suffering, leaving Christianity with a mealy-mouthed niceness that fails to ring true to young people who know in their bones that love and heartache go together" (p. 4).

How do we reach teens and draw them into the community of faith? We must rediscover the passion of Christ and the passion of martyrs all over the world who know all too well that love and suffering go together. Not only will we reach teenagers who are longing for something to be passionate about, but I venture a guess that we'll discover something that's been missing in our lives for far too long.

Thanks for the object lesson, Harry.

(for more discussion on this article, see <http://ymcafe.org> topic "Harry Potter")

# The World Beneath:

## The growing gulf between youth and adult culture.

Music video "Wonderful" *Songs from an American Movie vol. I* Everclear.

How we got here: abandonment of our youth in pursuit of our own success. Now children and youth are only valuable for what they can do for the structures that adults have put into place.

Abandonment in every sphere: school, sports, family even church.

Ex. "How is *she* going to handle four classes full of this school rejects. Most people at this school doubt that we can even read or write.... She walked in her on 'I'm sweet and I care about you' mode. It's not going to work. We all know she's going to treat us like everyone else has.... With this class, though, she's probably going to have a fatter stack of referrals. I wonder how long she's going to put up with these punks; even I want to get out of this classroom. I'm sure one of these days she's going to go to principal and ask for her leave, **but then again what else is new?**" *The Freedom Writers Diary*, pp. 6-7 (bold added).

Ex. FCHS football game last season "Make some noise."

Ex. "It wasn't that she was a bad mother, she 'was just tired of playing the role of mother,' as she so bluntly told me one morning... Imagine being fifteen years old and feeling as though your own mother could care less about you. **I not only wanted but needed guidance.**" *The Freedom Writers Diary*, p. 189 (emphasis added).

Ex. SAS girls basketball "You're supposed to win."

Music video "Numb" *Meteora* Linkin Park

## Realities of the world beneath

Broken families, broken hearts: the state of today's family reinforces the tendency of teens to "try on" different identities in order to survive and please the adults in each of several environments.

Friends: the one resource for navigating the painful years from puberty to college.

## Values of the world beneath

Ethics: When cheating is right, and survival depends on not betraying your friends.

Sex, drugs and alcohol: understanding the party scene.

Always in a rush: stress and the teenager.

## **5. The nature and purpose of mentoring: sitting on the steps of the world beneath.**

- a. Bottom-up response: the most effective way to deal with all of this is one teenager at a time.

“...our cultural ethos of bigger, faster, and splashier does not apply to the issues facing contemporary adolescents. They need adults who are aware of **the power of small, deliberate, and consistently authentic applications of relational concern, care, and nurture.** As men and women who care about what abandonment has done to our young, we have the opportunity to make a significant difference if we but realize that the biggest need every student has is satisfied in one adult who is there for him or her.” Chap Clark, *Hurt*, 171 (emphasis added).

- b. Storytelling as teaching and relationship-building

# Starting a mentoring relationship

From *The Art of Mentoring* by Shirley Peddy, pp. 60-61. Used by permission.

[The notes in brackets [] are Anna Howard's additions.]

It is important to take the necessary time to establish a level of comfort. Building mutual trust is a critical issue in mentoring.

1. Look for common ground: Background, education, the weather, the traffic, family, travel are all possibilities. [For an adult/youth mentoring relationship look for shared hobbies, shared sports teams, favorite colors, love of shopping, pets, food, movies, TV shows, musical instrument played and so on].
2. Tell your story first. Disclosing something about yourself that doesn't put you in a highly favorable light is a powerful relationship-building tool. [Think most embarrassing moments or something. But look for a natural opportunity to slip this in, it's not a conversation starter!]
3. Ask broad, open-ended questions... That stimulate discussion rather than more direct questions [that can be answered with one word. This is tricky. Teens are adept at finding one-word answers for questions that you think are looking for in-depth answers. Don't be put off by this. It's only an indicator that the teen is not used to adults actually taking an interest in them. It might take some time to convince them otherwise].

## The Mentoring Spirit

1. **Has credibility** both with the young adult and the parent. That means he/she needs to
  - understand the young person's struggles, having experienced and overcome similar challenges, or
  - be accepted as someone who has helped others or has the capacity to be supportive in some significant way, and
  - be respected for his/her moral/ethical standards [I would add being visible in their love of Jesus and clear about the decision to be a disciple first].

2. **Communicates high expectations.** If you want to help someone, encourage her to set high expectations for herself. There is nothing so de-motivating for someone as having those who know her best believe she will not succeed no matter how hard she tries. On the other hand, a large amount of evidence shows the reverse is true, as long as the expectations are realistic. [Most kids just need someone to believe in them...]
3. **Is a good listener.** Probably the biggest complaint young people have is that most adults are more than willing to talk to them, but not nearly as open to listening. In particular, that means coming across as understanding, but not judgmental.
4. **Has empathy.** Sympathy can make a person feel like a victim because it implies tacitly that he lacks the will or power to act on his own. Empathy can be uplifting. It says we acknowledge the person is capable of solving his own problems.
5. **Offers encouragement without assuming responsibility for the results**—a simple premise, but *fundamental* for someone's personal growth. One who takes on accountability for another is not acting as a mentor but rather as a doing parent. this deprives the individual of the opportunity to learn from her own mistakes.

# Theology of Mentoring

Mentoring and discipleship are terms that we throw around frequently in ministry; however, too often we don't have an adequate Biblical understanding of what mentoring looks like, the logistics or thrust of mentoring and what the out come of mentoring should tend to be. An analysis of the life of Jesus shows the time that he devoted to the men who were following Him as well as the way He focused their attention on the things of God, followed by the things of ministry. I learned once in a speech class in college that people usually remember the first things you say and the last things you say the best. With that concept in mind, for this paper, I will look first at the last thing Jesus said on earth, as well as the first thing that He said to His disciples as a starting point for discussing what it means to equip, what the mode of mentorship is as well as what Jesus' time allotment looks like from the narrative that we have in the gospels. Then from Paul's epistles, I will look at selected texts that lend insight on the directional focus of mentoring as well as the dangers for the mentor in ministry.

First off, then, the last thing that Jesus said before He left the earth was "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:19-20 NIV). This is his commission to the disciples after they had been following Him around and learning from Him for three years during His earthly ministry. These are now seasoned followers of Jesus. Yes, they have much to learn as the book of Acts and letters of Paul reveal to us, but these are the most mature followers of Jesus that were currently in existence. The point of this is not to look for some sort of Christian super-star—for clearly, there are none if we are all truly seeking to follow Jesus. He is the only star that we can have. The point then is that the mentor should be further along in his/her walk with the Lord than the person that he/she is mentoring. This is more significant as an overriding principle than the age difference, though the very model of family that God initiated—children having parents to raise them—points to the importance of young people having an older person to mentor them both in the faith and in life.

Now that this instruction to go and make disciples has been established, the next thing we need to ask ourselves is "how do we go and make disciples?" Aside from the directives in the Great Commission to baptize and teach, where do we start? Going back to the beginning of the gospel narrative, we see the first thing that Jesus does in His earthly ministry was not to perform some miracle, hold a service, or even start teaching. Rather, he goes along and calls people to Himself to follow Him through His ministry and learn of Him. His words them are "Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Mark 1:17, cf. Matt 4:19 and Luke 5:1-11). The call to the disciple then is twofold: (1) Follow Jesus and (2) make other disciples. The two parts of this call must be in this order, but

both must be present. They are intertwined, inseparable concepts for we cannot make disciples without following Jesus ourselves, and we cannot follow Jesus authentically without doing what He did—make disciples. The call is to Jesus, as a person. He didn't invite the disciples to come follow an idea or to come because He needed volunteers to help Him lead small groups. He said, "Come follow Me." This is an invitation to relationship. The first question in our ministries then is not what program are we starting, but who are we taking into ministry with us as we make disciples. This is the foundational aspect of mentoring. A mentor must bring the person he/she is mentoring along in ministry/life with him/her. This does not have to be vocational ministry, rather, for the purposes of this concept, I would like to view ministry as following our calling be it in the church or in the secular work place. It is bringing the young person into our life and inviting them to walk with you.

What then does mentoring look like? If it had to be summed up in one word (other than relationship, see above) it would be equipping. Jesus doesn't send the twelve out to do ministry until they've been with Him for a while and been equipped to do what He is sending them out to do. In Luke 9, it reads, "When Jesus had called the Twelve together, He gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases" (v. 1). He empowers and equips them and sends them out. Later (v. 10), they return and give a report on what their experiences had been. Then Jesus, takes them with Him again. Here you have not only teaching (prior to this chapter, and in the parallels), but also empowering, equipping, the giving of authority for a task, a commission, and feedback. All of these are essential to a healthy mentoring relationship for mentorship is not a stagnant process, but a dynamic one. One where the person being mentored is not only growing personally, but is also then equipped to start the cycle all over by being ready to disciple others.

What does Jesus mode of discipleship look like? Two key things must be noticed about the overall ministry of Jesus throughout all four gospels. (1) He takes His disciples everywhere with Him, BUT (2) He doesn't neglect alone time with His Father. Again, both of these are essential. One cannot maintain longevity without the second one, and one will not develop deep relationships without the first. Jesus never seemed to be at a loss for teaching materials for His disciples were observing His life. When an event happened, Jesus responded to it, or Jesus taught the crowd. After, He turned and taught His disciples, helping them to better understand what He was trying to say (e.g. Luke 9:18-27; Matt 5:1-2; Luke 6:20).

In the gospels we can even get a feel for how Jesus proportioned His time between the crowds and His disciples. The crowds were always following Him, but frequently we see Jesus spending the majority of His teaching time with the disciples. He often leaves the crowds and turns and spends time with his disciples (e.g. Matthew 13:36, 14:22; Mark 7:17, 8:10). It is interesting to note that the word disciples is found 240 times in the gospels,

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while the word crowd or crowds is only found 125 times. It is also interesting to note that while there are some mentions of Jesus leaving the crowds with or to be with His disciples, He only leaves the disciples to be with His Father. In our day, the crowds represent the overall crowd of the youth group or church along with the programs. We spend too much time focused on this and not on the disciples. When I was in seminary, a man by the name of Chuck Miller was a guest speaker in one of my classes and used an illustration I found to be a very helpful image and it has stuck with me ever since (Fuller Theological Seminary, Spirituality and Discipleship: College and Young Adult, Lecture on May 29, 2003). He used a model of the pitcher, cup, saucer and plate, wherein the pitcher is God, the cup is you, the saucer is the people and the plate is the program. With the cup, saucer, plate stacked on top of each other, the life of God should flow from the cup—from its overflow—to the saucer to overflow onto the plate. This is the same idea that we see when looking at Jesus' time allotments in the Gospels.

Next we need to look at the directional focus of mentoring along with the pitfalls that mentoring has for the mentor. The two do actually go together. The key passage for this concept is seen in excerpts from 1 Corinthians 1:18-3:19. The focus is not about the knowledge that the mentor has acquired, but rather that the mentor knows Christ (see 2:1-5). Likewise, it's not about the perceived spirituality or wisdom of the mentor, for God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise (1:27). Paul also reminds the Corinthians to remember what they were when Jesus called them. Not many of them were wise by human standards, not many were influential (1:26). A great pitfall of ministry is that in a position of leadership, people perceive the leader as a wise, spiritual presence. This can very much be true of the leader if he/she has been spending the time with the Father to work on his/her relationship. However, once this spirituality is perceived, people credit it to the leader, not seeing behind the scenes. It is easy for the leader to get wrapped up in the perception and forget from where he/she came. This is why this reminder is in this book. The mentor has to constantly remember that mentorship is about pointing to Jesus.

This idea of pointing to Jesus seems like such a simple, obvious concept, yet it's so easy to slip into wanting to be perceived as spiritual, to come with the eloquence and superior wisdom (2:1). But Paul says, "No, don't be like that. Resolve to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (2:2, my paraphrase). It's not enough even to just resolve to know nothing but Christ, we must constantly point to the crucified Christ. It's tempting to only point to the resurrected Christ, the Palm Sunday Christ, the triumphant-over-demons Christ, the raising-of-Lazarus Christ, the walking-on-water Christ. But we must resolve to know nothing but Jesus Christ *and Him crucified*. Remember the cost of our freedom. Remember that following Christ means dying to ourselves, means taking up a cross and following Him (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23).

Successful mentoring is not about what we can do, but it points to God's power (2:5). If it doesn't point to God's power, then the faith of the people we are mentoring doesn't rest in God, but rather on human wisdom, which is a shaky foundation (see also 3:11). So the directional focus is toward God and His power, teaching on the foundation of Christ (3:11-15). If we build on any other foundation than that, it won't last when things get difficult and it won't last in the Day (3:13).

Lastly, there has to be a passion for the person or persons that we are mentoring. All of the other things mentioned above are vital, but useless if there is no passion for the person. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul is separated from the people, and he is longing for them. He is so bonded to them that separation cause grief (1 Thess 2:17). His passion is shown by his intense longing for them, and that he feels he has been torn away from them (2:17-18), language which paints a verbal picture of a painful parting. And why is this? The people are his crown (2:19). This is Paul's lasting accomplishment—the people he has taught! He says, "you are our glory and joy" (2:20). To borrow from Chuck Miller again, in the end, it's not about what we've done, but who we've brought (clearly, we can't bring people if the things we are doing are not in line, but ultimately the people are what matter). Books and speaking engagements are important, but can be forgotten. True relationships last.

Passion for the people we mentor involves keeping track of their faith. Paul was worried lest they had fallen away (3:5), and sent a messenger to them when he couldn't go himself. Paul's satisfaction and encouragement comes from finding out that these disciples are still standing firm in their faith (3:7-8). His joy in the presence of God is contributed to by knowing that they are standing firm. But, he doesn't leave it at that, but, rather, continues in constant prayer (night and day, 3:10) for these people. It is an ongoing relationship even when Paul cannot be physically present with them.

Mentoring then is a multi-faceted process that is based upon a relationship that opens up our lives as mentors to the person that we are mentoring. This relationship draws them into our world where we intentionally teach and equip them to in turn make disciples. The people we mentor ought to be the primary focus of our ministry, with the programs and crowds as secondary focus. Always, the mentorship must point to God and His power, not to any accomplishments or wisdom of the mentor. But, all of this is worthless without passion for the person. Remember, it's not what we've done that matters as much in the end as who we've brought (Chuck Miller, see above).

# Curriculum

## Effectively preparing and adapting curriculum for your group

### 1. Prepare in advance

- There's no substitute for advance thought. Whatever day your group event is on, take the day after and think of absolutely nothing youth related! Then, the day after that, read over the lesson for the next week. (So, if your group meets on Sunday nights, take Monday off, and then Tuesday read the lesson).
- Do your personal devotional time from the Scripture that is used in the lesson at least once on Tuesday, if not several recurring reflections for the week. The more we soak in the passage, the more it becomes part of us and then we can simply communicate what has already become part of us to the youth.
- Pray for inspiration and lesson illustrations. If you've put the lesson the crock-pot of your mind, so to speak, then most of the time you'll either remember something during the week, or something will happen that can turn into a good, personal lesson introduction or illustration.

### 2. Curriculum is a tool, not the Bible

- Okay, this seems obvious, but the curriculum is not the Bible. That means, you don't have to use it exactly as it's written. If you read it and are sure something's not going to fly with your group, leave it out. If you read it and think something pretty good, but would be better like \_\_\_\_\_, change it. It's okay, you have permission! Add to it if there's a game, illustrations or whatever that you think would be perfect there.

## **Events**

**In a discipleship-based youth program, what is the place of events?**

## *Pensées:*

### **Thinking about things that come up in youth ministry**

#### **Soul Care is First Priority**

Read Mark or Luke and note the number of times that Jesus goes away to be with his father. He didn't heal every one who came in contact with him... Neither can we rescue every kid out there, or even every kid we come into contact with. If we are not in constant communion with our Savior, then we've lost sight of our priorities, and we will not be any good to the people around us.

#### **Family is first ministry**

Easy to say, hard to remember, but if we're not looking after our own family first, we've got no leg to stand on when it comes to ministering to any of the rest of God's family.

#### **We are called to faithfulness, not success**

I wrote a column recently for [newlivingtranslation.com](http://www.newlivingtranslation.com) that is a summary of what I feel is an important understanding of what we as ministers of the gospel are called to. Here it is:

<http://www.newlivingtranslation.com/04exploringchristianity/column2.asp?alD=231>

Recently, I was forced to evaluate the work I was doing as a minister of the gospel as it was called into question by those who were not seeing the "results" that they had expected. And I think that all of us from some time to another are sort of challenged or questioned about the "results" that we're getting as ministers of the gospel. For regardless of what your job may be, you and I as followers of Christ are his ambassadors and ministers of his gospel (2 Cor. 5:20).

And far too often it seems that we are called to account in ways that require us to give some sort of empirical account of our effectiveness as "good" Christians. Questions such as "how many people have you witnessed to?" or "how many people have gotten saved?" or perhaps how many are involved in some ministry you work with, and so forth. Yet today as I was reading the beginning of Ezekiel I was reminded that as minister of the gospel, we are not called to "success," but to faithfulness. After all, being faithful to what God has called us to is the real success.

In the first part of Ezekiel chapter two, God tells Ezekiel that he is sending him to a stubborn people who most likely won't listen to him, but that he is to continue proclaiming the message anyway. God gets very specific as to how Ezekiel is to carry out this mission in chapter 3 when he tells him, "Son of man, let all my words sink deep into your own heart

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first. Listen to them carefully for yourself. Then go to your people in exile and say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says!' Do this whether they listen to you or not" (vv. 10-11).

So then, there are two elements to success, that is, faithfulness from God's perspective. First, we must stay in step with what God is doing by meditating on his words. In the first part of this chapter, Ezekiel eats a scroll with God's message for the people on it, giving us a graphic representation of first internalizing God's word before proclaiming it. The second element is being faithful to the message, to the gospel, to proclaiming that in the way that God has called us to proclaim it whether or not anyone listens.

Now, this doesn't give us the right to be abrasive or nonchalant in our delivery since we have been entrusted with the very words of God and are enlisted in the ranks of ambassadors of Christ when we chose to take his name and announce to the world that we are Christ-followers.

But, and this is an important but, it frees us from whatever false empirical measures of success may or may not be imposed upon the ministry that we are engaging in. After all, God calls us to be faithful. The results have ever been solely his.

### **Three objectives to come out of every youth group meeting:**

1. Feel safe and welcomed
2. Have a positive encounter with an adult
3. Be taught something about Jesus (This is most important, obviously, but without #1 and #2, they'll never hear/understand #3, or worse, they will hear, but decide it's not true because they didn't experience it in the youth group.)

\*See also **Theology of Play**

### **Programs and meetings**

Programs are tools, plain and simple. They were never intended to be the end-all and be-all of ministry. If you've got a program at your church, it doesn't need to keep going just because it's always been that way, or has been going for a long time, or was a good idea when it got started. Most likely, all programs at your church need to be evaluated to see if they fit into your discipleship process, and if they don't, they need to be re-vamped or don away with. There's no reason on the planet to be sacrificing volunteers on the perpetually hungry alter of programs, which is what we end up doing when we throw people at a program just to keep it going.

### **Evaluating Programs**

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## Teaching

We aren't trying to change behavior before we see heart changes—that only leads to re-enforcing what kids already experience because of their abandonment by adults in general in that they will perform in order to win an adult's approval or attention, but without understanding the “why” of it, the change will be surface level at best. That being said, we can't allow behavior that will bother, hurt, offend other kids that are there in the group. So we can ask them not to say certain things, call people names, use insults etc, but it's in the context of making everyone feel safe and welcome. This needs to actually be stated to the youth you're correcting so that they understand the reason. Trust me, just having an adult actually take time to give them an explanation will be huge for them, and will help your overall cause.

Example: kid A calls kid B “retard” or something... We don't just say, no names, we make sure both kids know that we don't call people names because we want people to feel safe and welcomed, and so we respect each other. That means that not only will you not call kid B names, but Kid B won't call you names either...

We also need to model positive behavior as adult youth leaders and make sure we are showing them what respecting each other looks like.

Teaching isn't something that only happens in the “lesson” portion of any given youth gathering. In fact, you teach far more at every other time you interact with kids than you do in the lesson. They are picking up on everything you do, how you treat others, how you act in and out of church. They'll *only* really pick up and start to understand the Bible study portion if they see it as a part of you life. It goes something like this: you value them, so that attracts them. You value following Jesus and living out your life as his disciple, allowing yourself to be molded and shaped by the Scriptures, then they will start to want to know about that and listen to that because they see it in you.

Be intentional about studying the Bible when you do study it. It's not something to throw out to back up something you're saying. Actually help kids find the spot in the Bible, look at it and at its context. That way they can start to understand this story of God's heart for humanity straight from the source.

If we're going to use a fishing metaphor for this, our lives are the shiny lure that attract kids to the “hook.” You can't get fish to swallow a plain, bare hook, neither can you shove portions of Scripture down kids throat as you randomly encounter them on the street. If they aren't attracted to you because of your love and your life—the way you live out the gospel—you can't teach them what it means to follow Christ.

## The Bible

The Bible is sort of conceived in general as a “rulebook” of sorts to kids that aren’t around the church. They’ve had things thrown at them saying “the Bible says…” and it’s usually followed by “do this” or “don’t do that.” Helping the kids understand the Bible as a love story about God’s pursuit of people’s hearts is a big concept shift for them… It’s not a rule book. That doesn’t mean that God doesn’t have definite moral standards—he does. BUT the purpose of God’s standards is not to kill people’s fun just because he’s God and he can. What God says “Don’t do” he says because he wants to save people’s lives. He wants them to really live, find true and abundant life—which is only possible through relationship with him. It’s not about rules, it’s about life!

There will always be a temptation in teaching to talk about what not to do especially as we see kids flirting with sex, drugs and so forth—things we know that could really damage them. But, hear this, it doesn’t help to just tell them not to do it. They have to understand and know God’s heart for their lives and how he wants them to live—really live—before they’ll care about God’s standard for anything.

## **Sex**

Never just tell a kid “don’t do it” when it comes to sex. Studies show that church kids are just as likely to have sex as anyone else, they just feel guilty about it. Instead, talk about God’s intent for sex and cast a vision of the way God intends it to be. Without a vision, people parish, and most people never hear the story behind the moral, so they just end up hearing rules. No one ever fell in love with God because someone presented them with a rule list.

## **Drugs**

Again, don’t just say, “don’t do it” but talk about how we are created in the image of God, and our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Also, drugs can keep us from getting to where God wants us to get, from living into his plan for our lives. Be sure to emphasize the life-giving nature of God’s plan so that it doesn’t end up sounding like God’s a control freak looking for a bunch of automatons or something… sharing from personal experiences about the awesomeness of jumping into God’s plan for our lives even when things didn’t turn out as we expected are vital here.

## **Rock and roll (and God’s quest for our hearts)**

Turn it up and play it loud!!! Music is an art, and intrinsically, there’s no such thing as “bad” music. There can be harmful and negative lyrics, but no style in and of itself is bad. Be sure that if a kid likes a certain style—even if you can’t stand it—that you don’t come down on the style itself. Try checking out the lyrics and seeing what might be attractive to the kid in them even if you don’t approve of the content. Art is a primary means of communicating a search for God. So look for the search for God in the music of the kids… you might be

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surprised where you find it. And instead of condemning something that's near and dear to their heart, you'll have a starting point for conversation.

Remember it doesn't matter how much of the external stuff they seem to change to win your approval, none of it means anything if they haven't had a heart change. God is always after people's hearts. The Old Testament chronicles this in amazing ways as time after time God tries to win the people back to himself. And what they do on the outside, such as sacrifices and such don't do any good if their hearts are not in the right place. So in all our teaching, we're aiming at the kids' hearts. We want them to encounter God in a deep and meaningful way so that they come back for more. A lot of the times, it will seem like they won't get it... But then, do we really "get it"? I think the best any of us can do is to get more than we did before. Look at the disciples in the NT and what God did with them. They were a pretty motley crew...

This same principle applies to movies and TV as well. Be careful about being quick to attack content without understanding what the attraction is. This doesn't mean be shy about holding up God's standards either, just remember the standards God gives us are not because he wants to spoil our fun, but because he wants us to have a rich and satisfying life—life to the full!

This doesn't mean you should just play whatever at youth group though... there's a difference between letting music start a conversation and condoning, say, an artist with destructive lyrics.

### **REAL Christianity: Sometimes life still sucks...**

There's a big danger in that trying to "sell" Christianity, we attempt market it to kids in such a way that makes it sound like if they just get saved, all their problems will be solved and life will be wonderful. This is a horrible lie and it drives kids away on two levels: (1) they won't "buy" it and take off, or (2) they do "buy" it, but later discover it's not true and are driven away and reject Christianity wholesale. If we look at the storm section in Mark, we see that Jesus promises to get them to the other side of the lake. The fact that they encountered a storm didn't mean that he wasn't keeping his promise. He doesn't promise to protect us from storms, only that he will walk through them with us. And when he promises that we will get to the other side, we'll get to the other side.

### **"I don't know" is a good answer when you really don't know**

Resist the urge to answer kids' questions with platitudes or try to throw a Scripture verse at a problem. If it's a complex problem, telling them "just trust Jesus" or "go look up this verse" isn't a real answer. While Scripture and trusting Jesus are things we need to develop, these develop over a period of time, not all at once. If someone asks you

something you don't have an answer to, tell them you don't know, but you'll help them explore the question more.

Don't promise to find them the answer. Some questions don't have good answers, and we need to admit that. For example, why does God let a helpless baby suffer? Either he could have healed it and thus he's mean, or he's powerless, and then what's the point of worshipping him? There's no good answer to this. All we can do is highlight that God never causes evil, bad things happen because our world is broken. And God can heal people, but sometimes he doesn't. We know from the Bible that God is always good, and we have to trust him even when what he does or doesn't do, makes absolutely no sense to us. God is not tame, after all, and he's not a genie who will grant us wishes if we rub him the right way. I've never seen a kid get turned off with that kind of a response. It shows them a God who isn't safe, but is oh so good as the Chronicles of Namia so wonderfully illustrate.

### **Theology of Play and Importance of Relationships**

Playtime is important. It is the celebration time for a community, and what we are attempting to build when we do youth ministry is a community of youth and adults who are committed to following Jesus together. Teens party because that is the outlet for communal celebration for the adolescent community, and if you look at an culture/community, there are parties and celebrations. In Scripture, we see Jesus at a wedding, performing his first major miracle (in John), and there are frequent communal meals and gatherings mentioned where opportunity for discussion and teaching presents itself.

Play is also important in that it is an essential element in any relationship, and what we are trying to foster with our youth is community. Obviously it's community centered around Jesus and helping kids understand what it means to have a relationship with Jesus, but a key to helping them understand a relationship with Jesus is first by helping them understand relationships. Many of them don't know what a good parent is supposed to look like, father or mother, so trying to relate to God as parent is difficult. Most have never seen a good marriage, so Jesus as bridegroom and the church as bride is not a helpful metaphor if they don't understand what marriage can be and is supposed to be. And probably none of them have ever interacted with sheep, so that metaphor needs to be carefully unpacked and explained in order for them to understand the relationship between shepherd and sheep.

### **An ounce of Preparation...**

There's no substitute for preparation. This isn't just lesson prep, or advance event planning either. Preparation extends to making sure the youth room is neat, orderly and clean before youth group starts. Think of this like the broken glass theory of crime: if the youth

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room isn't neat and orderly, it tells the kids that youth group isn't important because no one took the time to get ready for it. Then you have a bunch of kids who aren't valuing youth time, the group is harder to pull together, and infinitely harder to focus on the discussion topic/activity for the evening. Similarly, if the leader is not prepared to lead the discussion/talk, then it is often apparent to the youth even though the leader never admits it verbally.

### **Perfectionism and the Holy Spirit.**

So, where does the Holy Spirit fit into all of this? The answer is everywhere! We can literally do nothing without him, but that doesn't mean that with him we get to do nothing because he's really doing everything. I know most people "know" this on one level, but far too often the Holy Spirit is used as an excuse for not preparing: "Oh, we're just going to let the Spirit lead us tonight." Let the Spirit lead by all means. Let him lead in your preparation, in your planning, and definitely let him change things up the night of if he wants to, but be ready. It's sort of like the old sailboat metaphor: you can't turn a boat that isn't moving. So start moving with the leading of the Holy Spirit, and then he'll be able to turn your rudder.

### **And finally... some thoughts on conversion**

Also from a column for Tyndale House:

<http://www.newlivingtranslation.com/04exploringchristianity/column2.asp?alD=239>

I've struggled for several years now with the concept of conversion. Somehow in evangelical America we've gotten the idea that if you'll just understand the basics of Christianity—we're sinners, we can't do anything to rescue ourselves from sin, so God sent Jesus to die for us, if we "accept" him as our Lord and Savior, then everything will be good and our ticket will be punched for heaven—then you'll be a Christian.

The problem with this is I don't find this idea in the Bible. Yes, those concepts are there, but as Donald Miller so wonderfully pointed out in *Searching for God Knows What*, those concepts are spread out over a lot of text, and really don't do anyone any good outside of their relational context. Think about it in terms of falling in love: what steps did you take to fall in love? Can you make an exact list that you can guarantee will work for someone else? I'm talking about the process of falling in love, not what it takes to keep loving in a marriage. I think we'd agree that the process of falling in love looks different for everyone, and that we can't make a list of hard and fast steps, even though most of us can easily recognize what it looks like when it's happening.

My main problem with the evangelical concept of conversion is that it really isn't in the Bible, where you just do this believe these four or five things, and you're saved. Granted, Romans 10:9 everyone's favorite conversion verse, the end of the famed "Romans road"

says “if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” I’m not arguing with that. It seems we try to break out into steps what it takes for a person to get to this point and make it so clear and easy that we only present them with facts. No one ever fell in love with facts.

Finally, I’d like to examine the idea that the great commission says make disciples, not converts. Discipling is a long-term project, has little or no instant gratification, unlike getting someone to “pray the prayer” and “accept Jesus in to their heart.” I’ve got those in quotes because I’m hard-pressed to find the “sinner’s prayer” in the Bible. You know, that cute little formula you pray with people after they come up for an altar call, or you’ve stunned them with the four spiritual laws in the food court of your local mall... I’m not saying these things have done no good; I just don’t believe they are very effective. God can use all sorts of things to help people make decisions to follow him, but as some have pointed out, the church in the west is shrinking, not growing, while we’ve been employing those sorts of tactics.

And I think it’s because we’ve separated the facts about the gospel from the love story of the gospel. And that just doesn’t work.

# Theology of Youth Ministry

## INTRODUCTION

As I stood in the back of a worship service one Sunday morning I watched as the high schoolers filtered in. Some were early, bright eyed, and more awake than I felt after having come from the junior high service, which despite all of their energy, had failed to wake me up. There's a girl who got 1600's on her SAT's. And here comes a boy with hair spiked higher than I knew was possible. His gait has changed in the past few months. So has his dress. I knew he was a "wanna-be," but now I fear he's crossed over and actually joined a gang (and no, that theory has nothing to do with his spikes). I sneaked out of the worship service to go hang out with the junior highers in their clubhouse. I talked through relational issues with one of the girls, while some of the boys were playing the Lord of the Ring's trading card game in one corner, relational issues the farthest thing from their minds, and two of the students randomly (from where I was sitting, since I couldn't see what started it) decided to start chasing one of the other students, who proceeded to run out of the clubhouse with the other two hot on his trail (my original and wonderful response was to turn to one of the other leaders and say, "You go after them, they're in your small group;" what great leadership skills I've got!).

Random observations aside, what does a theology of youth ministry look like to all of those students from different family settings, different motivations, different drives, different ages, look like? What does it look like in a multi-cultural church, an African-American church, a Spanish-speaking Latino church, among a 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Asian kids? Regardless of the student, there are three overarching concepts that must be observed to have an effective theology of youth ministry. Youth ministry must be foundational, incarnational, and relational.

## FOUNDATIONAL

What foundation does a good youth ministry have? What basic understanding must be in place in order to provide a good foundation for the youth in that ministry? In both the Old and the New Testaments, we see examples of God using young people. We must buy into this idea as the foundation for our ministry: God wants to use people regardless of how old they are. Hence, we must then adopt equipping those young people, and building a good foundation for them, as our solemn responsibility as youth ministers.

In Jeremiah 1, the Lord calls Jeremiah to be a prophet, and he responds, "'Ah, Sovereign Lord, I do not know how to speak, I am only a child.'" But the Lord said to me, 'do not say, "I am only a child." ...Now I have put my words in your mouth.'" (Jeremiah 1:6,7, and 9, NIV). Paul instructs Timothy, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). Here we have two examples of young men in the Bible being commissioned with a huge task. God has not changed in His desire to use young people to

do His work, and we as youth ministers have been given part of the responsibility to first help kids to realize that they are called, and second, to help equip them for the task at hand.

Just prior to the verse in 1 Timothy, we find a training metaphor used. Paul urges Timothy to stay away from “godless myths and old wives tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.” He goes on to state, “For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promises for both the present life and the life to come” (vv. 7-8). This image that he paints for us is one of rigorous, daily practice. Exercise does no good if only done haphazardly. It must be done on a regular basis to affect our bodies. Paul is saying that the same thing is true of godliness. We must train every day, and train our young people to train every day. That is the only way that the rest of Paul’s commission can be true, for only when a daily practice of godliness is made is it possible to “Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.”

Paul also instructed Timothy, “devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid hands on you” (vv. 13-14). Here he not only outlines the habits that are part of this godly training and striving every day for godliness, but also refers back to the recognition that Timothy had been given as the body of elders recognized his gift. This highlights two elements that are often lacking to some extent (often to a great extent) in our youth ministries today.

The first element is the gift. All of the kids in our youth group have spiritual gifts, but often no one helps them to realize this. A college girl recently came to me after having taking a spiritual gifts inventory, which helped her realize that she had gifts. She said, “Wow, I have gifts?” And I asked her, “What, did you think God left you out?” She replied, “I guess I never thought of it that way.” It’s not enough to preach that the gifts are in existence; the youth in our churches need to realize that God gave them these gifts, and that they should be used. All of our youth have gifts, but many of them perhaps think that God somehow left them out. This must be addressed in our ministries so that the kids can realize that God has equipped them to do His work.

The second element is the body of elders. The church as a whole is not as committed to the youth of today being equipped for ministry as they are committed to the youth minister equipping the youth for ministry—when they are older of course and have learned how to dress like grown-ups do. This cannot be this way. The kids need the recognition from the body of elders, or just from the body of adults (since elder is often considered specific to leadership), that they are gifted. It’s not enough to merely have the youth minister or the adult volunteers recognize this, but the church as whole, the body, must be part of recognizing the gifts of our young people so that they can be empowered to step forward in the calling that God has placed upon them. Granted, most youth don’t know what they are doing exactly yet, and they often may not have a well-defined idea of what calling is. However, as they are given good mentorship by adults in the church, who will

continually affirm the gifts that God has given them, then they will be able to start actively walking the path that God has for them.

## **INCARNATIONAL**

Paul outlines what incarnational ministry should look like very clearly in his letter to the Philippians, chapter two. We then, as youth ministers, are to follow Jesus' example in that he made himself nothing, (Phil 2:7) being found in the appearance of a man, (v. 8) and was obedient. What does that mean in our world? He came into our world, assuming nothing. He emptied Himself of all His heavenly glory and authority to come into our world and meet us where we were. We, then, need to empty ourselves of all our "grown-up-ness," meaning that we must go against the stereotypes youth have of other adults in their world as possibly being aloof, uninterested in "kid things," authoritarian, among others (but not implying that we have to then start acting like the kids). There's also the insecurities that some adults also take out on kids in the form of unnecessarily displaying knowledge to the disadvantage of the youth (e.g. making the kid feel stupid for not knowing something). All of these things are potential barriers to us as youth ministers being able to enter the world of the youth.

Therefore, because of this, we have to consciously empty ourselves, and not consider our current position as something to be grasped (Jesus "did not consider equality with God something to be grasped (Phil 2:6)). Rather, we must let go of it and become obedient unto death (v.8)—death to ourselves, death to our pride, death to our insecurities—so that by our death, the youth in our sphere of influence might be exposed to life through Christ. In order to come across in the right spirit to these youth when we enter their world, we must have the mindset of a servant, the "very nature of a servant" (Phil 2:7).

Two other things that are important to notice are these: when Jesus came to earth, He *came* to earth and He came to *earth*. The first involves motion, the second location. He moved from where He was, but this move was more than moving from the sanctuary to the youth room, He came to where humans were, and not just the clean, nice-smelling respectable humans, but also to the blind, the beggars, the tax collectors, the lepers, the prostitutes, in short, the unwanted, the "unclean," the outcasts. Hence, it is not enough to be seen in the youth room of our church on a regular basis, though this is important. But we must also be seen in the malls, in the libraries, on the school campuses, at the talent shows, the basketball games, and anywhere else that youth gather. We must go because the vast majority of them will never come to us while we remain safely ensconced in the neat, clean youth rooms (okay, so somewhat clean and neat) decorated with posters of Christian bands and having Veggie Tales marathons and worship services (not to knock any of those things, after all, I like Veggie Tales).

## **RELATIONAL**

In the gospel of Mark, we find Jesus and many followers up on a mountainside. "Jesus... called to him those he wanted, and they came to him" (Mark 3:13). There are several

points that we can draw from this passage. First, relational ministry is not to the crowds. In verse seven of this same passage, we see crowds of people following Jesus. He went apart, and “called to him those he wanted.” He limited the group of people that he would spend most of His time with. Second, He called them to Him. This shows deliberate intention on the part of Jesus, and thus, we must also be intentional about how we go about our relational ministry. Third, they came to Him. This may seem obvious, but it is important that we are clear enough in our intentions toward people that we are investing in so that they want us to be in their lives in that capacity. It’s a waste of time to try to mentor someone if they don’t want to be mentored. Matthew 5:1 implies that Jesus left the crowds and went to teach his disciples. Hence, the Sermon on the Mount was more a private affair than the public one this is portrayed on movies and such.

In Acts, Paul is depicted as always traveling with someone: first Barnabus, then Silas, then Timothy joins with him and Silas (Acts 13:1-3; 15:40, 16:1-3). As Paul went through his ministry, he brought people with him. Despite the fact that it was a disagreement that separated him and Barnabus, Barnabus also followed this model in taking John Mark with him, (Acts 15:39) which increased the number of two-man teams that were modeling this type of ministry in that day. The discipling relationship came before the sending out. We see this also in Matthew when Jesus sends out the twelve (Matt 10). They had been with him, learning of Him, and then He sent them out. At some point, which is unclear in Matthew, the disciples come back to learn more. In Luke, the evangelist has them coming back to report to Jesus what they had done (Luke 9:10). When they did this, Jesus took them and they went away by themselves, or tried to, but the point is that they withdrew for more time with Jesus. Again in Luke, when Jesus sends out the seventy-two, He sends them out two by two, they return and tell Him what happened, Jesus responds with more teaching (Luke 10).

All of these examples point to a pattern in the Scripture of what relational ministry looks like. In the New Testament, we don’t find examples of people in ministry by themselves per se; they seem to at least be in groups of two. Also, as a pattern for discipleship, the disciples are taught, and then sent out. They return and give a report; they receive more teaching. They are not left cut off from relationships, and they are not left without feedback or teaching. This is key for our ministries today.

## **CONCLUSION**

A well-rounded theology of ministry, then, must include these three basic elements to provide a foundation for whatever context in which a youth minister finds him/herself. We must have a foundational understanding of God’s heart toward young people; we must have an incarnational approach to their world; and we must have a relational approach to ministry both with kids and with adult volunteers.

After all, we have an incredible model for ministry laid out for us in the life of Jesus. He first came (moved from His throne above) to earth (where the people were), and then He not only preached to the masses, healed the sick, and raised the dead, but He spent most of His time with a motley crew of twelve men, who, by the world’s standards, were not the  
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best choices. But that motley crew went on to change the world. And Jesus, king of glory, emptied Himself and came not to rule, but to die. What love is this! This Savior calls us to follow in His footsteps, regardless of whether the path that we've chosen makes sense to anyone else. We can follow His example with our motley crew of assorted kids in our context—and we can change the world!

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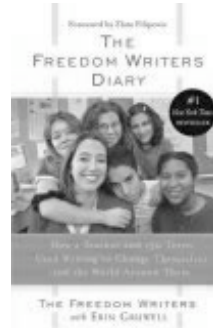
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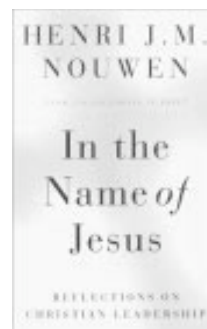
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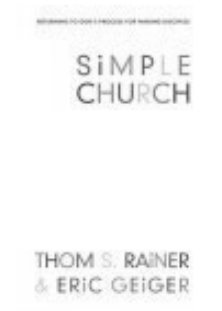


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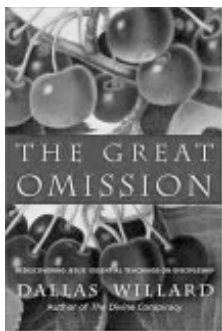
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