

THE  
DISCIPLESHIP  
PLACE

Youth Ministry Academy

*Created by Nazarene Youth International (NYI) and  
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**SESSION 1**

Introducing Youth Ministry

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# Introducing Youth Ministry

## SESSION OVERVIEW

**Introducing Youth Ministry:  
A Ministry, A Method, A Map**

**Youth Ministry Method:  
Practical Theology Exercise**

**Map of Youth Ministry:  
The Four C's of Ministerial Training**

**Outlining the Module:  
Identifying Strengths and Challenges**

**Application**

**Exam**

**Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant**

## LEARNER OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you should:

- possess preliminary knowledge concerning youth ministry.
- model the method of theological reflection in practical theology.
- understand the importance of the four C's in youth ministry.

# Introducing Youth Ministry

## INTRODUCTION



This course provides a basic introduction to providing ministry to and with young people. This module incorporates both a general introduction to the scope of youth ministry education as well as a basic method of theological reflection known as practical theology. By the end of the session you should have a basic understanding of the different topics and skills associated with youth ministry whether one is a lay worker or local minister.

## INTRODUCING YOUTH MINISTRY: A MINISTRY, A METHOD, A MAP



### NOTES

Before you begin, reflect on the following questions. Record your responses so you can refer to them later.

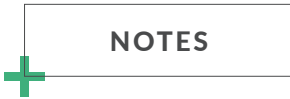
- What do youth leaders need to know about youth to make them good youth leaders?
- Name three key personal traits essential for a youth leader.
- What is the difference between a Christian youth leader and a community youth worker?

### *Defining Youth*

Entering into youth ministry brings a person into the very heart of a church. Young people represent not only the future of the church but also the congregation's present heartbeat. Kenda Creasy Dean notes in her book, *Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church*, youth often supply the kind of passion that gives life to the congregation. Youth provide fresh visions of what the church can accomplish for the kingdom of God. Many times youth display compassionate care for people that often challenge other members in the church to reach out as well. Youth also represent an emerging independence, the ability to be both weak and strong at any given moment. At times youth seem more fragile, like children, needing extreme protection and guidance. At other times young adults demonstrate a kind of seasoned maturity and resiliency that allows them to meet challenges more mature adults struggle to overcome. No longer fully dependent on adults, but not completely independent of adult guidance and support, youth provide a type of semi-dependence that allows them to exercise their gifts while relying on the guidance of others. Youth embody the term relational. In their most independent moments, they still recognize the need to be in relationship with other people. In their weaker times, they recognize relationships support their lives during tough moments.

### *Defining Youth Ministry*

In one sense youth ministry, seeks to help youth define the quality of their relationships through the gospel, understood as holiness or Christlikeness. Youth ministry focuses on work both for and with youth. Following the Apostle Paul's confidence in Timothy we can say with confidence: "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). Youth ministry involves supporting youth in areas where they still depend on adult guidance, but also empowering youth to live out their own Christian lives to the fullness of their potential, in their witness, lives, loves, faith, and purity.

Review your answers to the questions asked at the beginning of this session. How does the information defining youth and youth ministry support, challenge, or change your initial responses? How will you change your approach to ministry based on this information?

### *Methods and Maps That Guide Youth Ministry*

Throughout this module you will discover various insights on the nature of youth and youth ministry. Hopefully the modules will provide you with resources and skills to be a better minister with young people. Before moving to the rest of the course we need to review two basic approaches that should undergird most of your ministry. The first approach represents a particular way of thinking about ministry (and even about life) that takes God seriously in everything we do. This approach, or method of reflection, frames our thoughts and decisions about faithful ministry practice, whether you are a dedicated lay worker or a youth pastor. The second approach involves gathering a basic understanding of the different abilities needed for a comprehensive understanding of ministry. Reviewing these abilities provides a basic framework, or a map, for organizing the different aspects of ministry into a coherent plan.

## YOUTH MINISTRY METHOD: PRACTICAL THEOLOGY EXERCISE



### NOTES

Let's first look at the method. This session began with questions around your working knowledge of youth ministry. In a sense we began with your personal experiences and then began to raise questions through reflection about what is considered important for the sake of ministry with youth. The session then provided a definition of youth ministry that included both a definition of youth and a Christian goal for youth ministry. You were asked to assess your responses in light of this broader definition and to envision what else you needed to add to make your view of ministry more comprehensive. The opening exercise actually modeled the method that guides all youth ministry, a method known as practical theology.

Practical theology describes both a domain within the broad field of theology as well as a particular method of theological reflection. When ministers use the term theology, they primarily describe a particular approach to exploring and talking about the nature and actions of God in the world. Christian theology begins with the assertion that God has been revealed in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Ministers, using 1) the resources found in Scripture, 2) core Christian doctrines, 3) the history of the Church, and 4) the experiences of day-to-day Christian living seek to name the grace of God, offer salvation through Jesus Christ, and discern the movement of the Holy Spirit in the world.

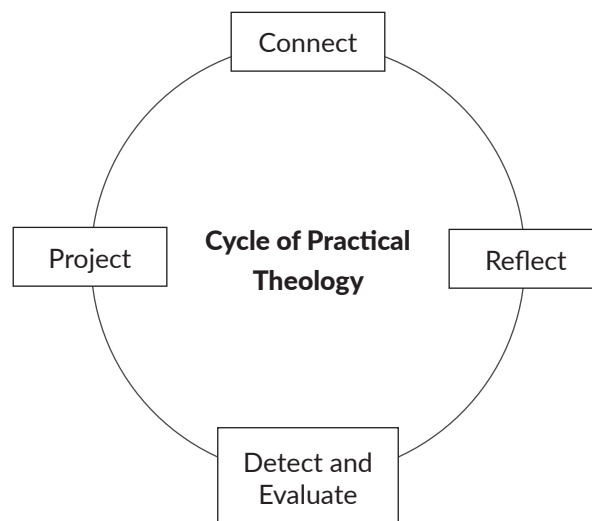
Over the years different specializations grew up around certain resources that inform our understanding of God and God's work in the world. Different ministers and academic theologians began with a certain resource to guide their thinking. Some ministers began by studying Scripture and seeking to find connections between God's actions in the Bible and the world today. Other ministers choose to focus on historical periods of the Church or specific Christian doctrines as a key resource and attempt to explain their meaning for today. Some specialists focus on how we think, particular philosophies, and relate those ideas to life and meaning. Other ministers choose to begin in the pastoral practice within the Church or in the practical concerns of daily Christian living as the beginning point for seeing and understanding how God is at work today. Like the overall framework of a house, all of these approaches provide the basic architecture of theological study. Together they lift up important points for our consideration: Scripture, Church history, doctrine, philosophical assumptions, pastoral concerns, and daily life.


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For this module the final two approaches provide our beginning point. That does not mean we ignore Scripture, or Church history, or doctrine. We will find the contents of the Christian faith remain vital or else it will be hard for us to call our ministry a Christian ministry. However, the method we will employ begins in daily living and our ministry responsibilities in the life of the Church. This method has proven a powerful resource for both youth workers and youth alike. While we begin in everyday experience and ministry practice we also take advantage of the full experience provided within the life of faith as well as God's revealed will found in Scripture and formulated through the doctrine of the Church. Nevertheless, experience while not the final teacher, becomes the context to shape our questions for learning.

Kenda Creasy Dean, in the book *Starting Right*, provides key terms to describe this process. First, we start by naming our concrete experiences, seeking to name and *connect* their importance to challenge our understanding of their true meaning. We *reflect* on those experiences, probing our assumptions and revealing what we think is the most important part of those activities. Once we explore fully the experiences of youth and our ministry with them, we will then bring the knowledge we have gained into direct conversation with Christian thought and historical practice. In this phase we *detect and evaluate* our daily practice with the Christian faith, allowing our core Christian beliefs to shape a more faithful ministry. Then we attempt to *project* what new ministry looks like that proves more faithful to the nature of God and what God is doing in the world as we implement this ministry. Obviously these new, more faithful, approaches to ministry create even newer experiences we can then connect, reflect, detect, and project to create an even deeper more mature approach to our ministry.

*Illustration: Cycle of Practical Theology*





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- *Connect*: Naming and connecting every-day experiences that are part of our ministry. (How well do we see what is really happening?)
- *Reflect*: Taking a step back to probe our assumptions, selecting those aspects of the experience that prove to be most important. (How well do we understand the various influences that shape our experiences and what we value about them?)
- *Detect and Evaluate*: Bringing the big ideas that surface from our reflection into direct dialog with Scripture, Christian doctrine, and the history of the Church. (How do the contents of the Christian faith critique or affirm our ministry actions?)
- *Project*: Beginning to imagine and implement new ministry strategies based on a more faithful vision of ministry. (How well do we learn from our experience as we plan the next ministry activities?).

While this approach seems pretty abstract, lay workers and ministers use this approach regularly. At the beginning of the section we asked you to connect to your everyday understanding of youth ministry. We asked you to name certain traits about youth and youth workers. Next we included a reflection question where you had to think about the difference between a Christian youth worker and a community youth worker. We then provided some basic definitions of youth and youth ministry to detect and use to evaluate your own understanding of ministry. Finally we asked you to think (project) how your ministry might change. Anytime we pause in our ministry with youth to ask: What is really happening? Why? Is it faithfully Christian? What do I need to change? We repeat the cycle of practical theology.

## MAP OF YOUTH MINISTRY: THE FOUR C'S OF MINISTERIAL TRAINING



### NOTES

As our method of practical theology suggests, youth ministry does not occur in a vacuum. Every act of ministry must always be in conversation with core Christian beliefs and in conversation with other skills and abilities necessary for ministry. The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene (Section 424.3) lists the majority of these competencies in its section addressing education for all ministers under the general section on Ministry and Christian Service. The list includes four major categories:

- **Content.** Knowledge of the content of the Old and New Testaments, the theology of the Christian faith, and the history and mission of the Church is essential for ministry. Knowledge of how to interpret Scripture, the doctrine of holiness and our Wesleyan distinctives, and the history and polity of the Church of the Nazarene must be included in these courses.
- **Competency.** Skills in oral and written communication; management and leadership; finance; and analytical thinking are also essential for ministry. In addition to general education in these areas courses providing skills in preaching, pastoral care and counseling, in-depth biblical study (known as exegesis), worship, effective evangelism, biblical stewardship of life resources, Christian education, and church administration must be included. Graduation from a validated course of study requires the partnering of the educational provider and a local church to direct students in ministerial practices and competency development.
- **Character.** Personal growth in character, ethics, spirituality, and personal and family relationship is vital for the ministry. Courses addressing the areas of Christian ethics, spiritual formation, human development, the person of the minister, and marriage and family dynamics must be included.
- **Context.** The minister must understand both the historical and contemporary context and interpret the worldview and social environment of the culture where the Church witnesses. Courses that address the concerns of anthropology and sociology, cross-cultural communication, missions, and social studies must be included.

The big four of content, competency, character, and context describe the primary domains that guide not only ministry preparation but also life-long learning. When you think about the range of material covered under these domains you realize ministers, either dedicated lay leaders or clergy, can never master everything they need to know. Mastery is not the issue. Gaining basic

 **NOTES**

competency should be the goal when we start ministry. We can then expand on our abilities throughout our ministry based on the wealth of knowledge God provides. Perhaps the key issue revolves around passion. Do we have the passion it requires to make these domains a focus for life-long study?

- When it comes to *content*, do we have the passion to learn everything about the Christian faith God has provided through Scripture, doctrine, and Church history; particularly as they reveal God's vision of holiness?
- When it comes to *competency*, do we have the passion to develop all the skills we need to guide congregations as faithful ministers?
- When it comes to *character* do we have the passion to allow God to shape and form our personal, moral, and spiritual lives according to Christlikeness?
- When it comes to *context*, do we have the passion to want to learn everything about the social and personal circumstances people live in so we can lead and minister faithfully?

If we can say “yes” to these questions, if we can acknowledge a godly passion to learn everything we can about God and others, then we will be able to engage these domains throughout our ministry as life-long learners.

## OUTLINING THE MODULE: IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES



### NOTES

When we bring together our new practical theology method and our comprehensive map of ministerial preparation, we realize by rearranging the domains, we are left with a great resource for navigating youth ministry that guides the layout of this module.

#### Overview of the Course

- Context of Youth Ministry
  1. Introducing Youth Ministry
  2. Cultural and Social Influences in Youth Ministry
  3. Psychological and Developmental Influences in Youth Ministry
- Content of Youth Ministry
  4. Biblical and Theological Foundations of Youth Ministry
  5. History of Youth Ministry
  6. Philosophical Foundations of Youth Ministry
- Character of the Youth Minister
  7. The Youth Minister's Relationship with God
  8. The Youth Minister's Relationship with Others
  9. The Youth Minister's Relationship with the Body of Christ
- Competency for Youth Ministry
  10. Youth Ministry Discipleship—Worship
  11. Youth Ministry Discipleship—Witness and Evangelism
  12. Youth Ministry Discipleship—Nurture and Teaching
  13. Youth Ministry Discipleship—Compassion and Service
  14. Youth Ministry Discipleship—Community and Fellowship
  15. Youth Ministry Discipleship—Simplicity and Retreat
  16. Youth Ministry Shepherding—Offering Direction
  17. Youth Ministry Shepherding—Providing Care
  18. Youth Ministry Shepherding—Equipping Leaders
  19. Youth Ministry Shepherding—Empowering Youth
  20. Youth Ministry Craft—The Legacy of Long-Term Ministry

Rearranging the map of ministry preparation to match our method of practical theological reflection allows this course to provide a range of sessions that will help us become both accomplished practical theologians and competent youth leaders.

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Looking over the sessions, we begin with context, developing our ability to really connect and understand the contexts that influence our ministry practice including culture and personal lives youth live within. Reflecting critically and creatively on these contexts helps us to identify the opportunities and challenges we face as youth leaders. We can then bring this information directly into conversation with the very contents of faith that detect and evaluate our understanding of youth ministry via Scripture, doctrine, history, and even the philosophical assumptions that often influence our approach to youth ministry.

The outcome of this process calls for two different forms of projecting ministry into basic abilities. First we have to acknowledge how this information shapes who we are as ministers. In other words, we have to deal with our own spiritual journey and our relationship with God and those close to us as well as our strategies for youth ministry. Secondly the information shapes what we do as dedicated youth workers. We begin to fashion ministry practices, particularly those involved with discipleship and shepherding, by forming and empowering youth and youth leaders for the sake of faithful discipleship. Since there are a number of these practices we will dedicate a number of sessions to each of them, but all of these strategies and activities must be held in balance with our understanding of context, the Christian faith, and our own personal journey as ministers. As you look over the different topics, think about the basic categories, where do you feel most challenged to learn?

We will begin the journey of lifelong learning even as we travel through the different sessions in this module. No one module answers everything about youth ministry but should invite us to seek more information about the social forces that influence youth, the nature of our beliefs, resources for our own personal spiritual journey, and recommendations for stronger ministry skills. Hopefully we will see how even a module like this one begins to connect to the overall educational plan for ministry training. Ultimately we will get a sense of what it means to be a well-rounded minister who works to nurture and empower youth into Christlike relationships, which is the ultimate goal of our ministry.

Paul writes a powerful challenge for all of us in youth ministry in the book of Ephesians. As you read these words how are you challenged in your understanding of what you need to prepare to be a faithful youth minister?

<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be



infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

The good news is we might not have to do everything on our own; we are part of a Church called to minister to and with youth. However, we do have a goal that we are all called to by God's grace. Let these words serve as both a word of affirmation and a word of challenge as you engage in youth ministry.

## APPLICATION



### NOTES

1. Spend the week talking with at least five parents of youth. Ask them what they consider key concerns for their children and for other youth. What do they look for from a good youth leader? Write a summary of your conversation.
2. Spend the week interviewing people in your church about what they believe ministers need to know (content and context), be (character), or do (competency) in order to be faithful youth leaders. Compare their observations with the overall plan for the session, what do they affirm as important for ministry? What seems to be missing? What does this exercise tell you about the church's expectations?
3. Select a particular experience in your ministry and work through the cycle. Summarize the event in a paragraph. Consider the implications of the ministry event, reflect on the implications and key observations, and write down key thoughts. Identify a Scripture passage or key theological doctrine that affirms or critiques your observations. Finalize your exercise by suggesting one or two action steps you can take to make your ministry more faithful.
4. Review the Session Overview and identify areas you feel comfortable with and areas you feel challenged to learn more about.

## EXAM



### NOTES

1. Youth ministry must focus on work both *for* and *with* youth.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
2. One of the best terms to use when describing and understanding youth is “relational.”
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
3. Youth ministry involves supporting youth in areas where they still depend on adult guidance, but also empowering youth to live out their own Christian lives to the fullness of their potential.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
4. Basic approaches that should undergird most of your ministry include \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - A. a particular way of thinking about ministry (and even about life) that takes God seriously in everything we do
  - B. gathering a basic understanding of the different abilities needed for a comprehensive understanding of ministry
  - C. both A and B
  - D. neither A nor B
  
5. Practical theology describes \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. a domain within the broad field of theology
  - B. a particular method of theological reflection
  - C. both A and B
  - D. neither A nor B
  
6. In practical theology, experience while not the final teacher, becomes the context to shape our questions for learning.
  - A. True
  - B. False





7. Youth ministers would do well to apply the process called “cycle of practical theology” which uses \_\_\_\_\_ to create an even deeper more mature approach to our ministry.
  - A. connect
  - B. reflect
  - C. detect
  - D. project
  - E. all of the above
  
8. The four C’s of ministerial training that guide not only ministry preparation but also life-long learning include \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. church, Christ, chosen, and charity
  - B. content, competency, character, and context
  - C. cooperation, celebration, centralization, configuration
  
9. The ultimate goal of youth ministry is to nurture and empower youth into Christlike relationships.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
10. Youth ministry occurs in a vacuum.
  - A. True
  - B. False

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT



### NOTES

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. What was the major influence in your life that called you into youth ministry?
2. What key knowledge do we need to possess before we work with youth as leaders?
3. Name three basic skills or abilities necessary for ministry to or with youth?
4. Does any of this knowledge or these skills change if we move from one ministry setting to another?
5. Review your answers with your mentor and ask how many responses focus on the supporting youth (particularly in areas where they are not yet fully self-reliant) and how many answers focus on empowering youth?

Which of these answers support the goal of living Christlike relationships? Why?

What do we need to add to our list to make our approach more comprehensive and more faithful to the role of the youth minister as one who both supports and empowers Christlike relationships with youth?

6. Review the four domains of ministerial preparation (content, context, character and competency).

Which of these domains seem to be emphasized the most in your youth ministry?

Which of these domains represent the greatest challenge for you to develop a basic competency for ministry? Which domain encourages ongoing, life-long learning?