THE
DISCIPLESHIP
PLACE

Youth Ministry Academy

Created by Nazarene Youth International (NYI) and distributed through Continuing Lay Training (CLT)

+

SESSION 6

Philosophical Foundations
of Youth Ministry

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

NOTICE TO CLT PARTICIPANTS AND EDUCATORS

This is a contract. By using these materials you accept all the terms and conditions of this Agreement. This Agreement covers all Leader's Guides, Student Guides, and instructional resources included in the Continuing Lay Training (CLT) website.

Upon your acceptance of this Agreement, Continuing Lay Training grants to you a nonexclusive license to use these curricular materials provided that you agree to the following:

1. **USE OF THE MODULES.**

   - You may distribute educational materials in electronic form to students or other educational providers.

   - You may make and distribute electronic or paper copies to students for the purpose of instruction, as long as each copy contains this Agreement and the same copyright and other proprietary notices pertaining to the Module. If you download the educational materials from the Internet or similar online source, you must include the CLT notice for the Module with any online distribution and on any media you distribute that includes the educational content.

   - You may translate, adapt, and/or modify the examples and instructional resources for the purpose of making the instruction culturally relevant to your students. However, you must agree that you will not sell these modified materials without express, written permission from CLT.

2. **COPYRIGHT.**

   The material is owned by CLT and is protected by United States Copyright Law and International Treaty provisions. Except as stated above, this Agreement does not grant you any intellectual property rights in the Module.

3. **RESTRICTIONS.**

   - You may not sell copies of these educational materials in any form except to recover the minimum reproduction cost of electronic media or photocopy expense.

   - You may not modify the wording or original intent of the educational material for commercial use.

THANK YOU

Continuing Lay Training would like to thank Nazarene Youth International for granting permission to modify and adapt their course of study materials for our educational purposes. Their willingness to partner with us is sincerely appreciated.

Philosophical Foundations of Youth Ministry

SESSION OVERVIEW

The *Why* and *What* of Youth Ministry

Philosophy of Ministry

Philosophy to Model

From Models to Programs

Application

Exam

Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you should be able to:

- demonstrate how a philosophy of ministry lends itself to particular models of ministry.

- articulate why ministry models are important.

- identify the various models available.

- implement models based on their current context and beliefs.

INTRODUCTION

While many youth workers share a common theological heritage, each local church will have differing views on many of the elements of a philosophy of youth ministry. This session assists you in understanding how one's philosophy of youth ministry directly impacts the model of ministry that guides your efforts.

THE *WHY* AND *WHAT* OF YOUTH MINISTRY

Why should the church have youth ministry? What are the most important values that define quality youth ministry? Answering these questions may not always be easy. Many youth workers carry a set of assumptions in their head that might be understood as a working philosophy of youth ministry, basically a set of assumptions that justifies and guides their ministry efforts. However, while different youth workers may agree on some reasons for youth ministry and even on many of the values it should be built upon, we know there is a diversity of opinion on the why and what of youth ministry. Often careful investigations of the basic assumptions help as we put our assumptions in writing and organize our thoughts for a working philosophy of youth ministry.

PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

A youth ministry philosophy in written form describes the basic values upon which a youth ministry model and program are built. Basic values include the ideas and commitments that shape and mold a youth ministry. They reflect what is important including:

- a theological perspective of ministry

- a view of what is real (metaphysics)

- a view of knowledge (epistemology)

- a theological and philosophical view of persons (anthropology)

- a view of learning and the nature of teaching

- leadership roles

- a reason for doing youth ministry

- the basic components of sound youth ministry

- how the components relate to each other

- the place of youth ministry in the whole church's ministry

- a commitment to proper evaluation

In summary, a philosophy answers the questions, "Why have a youth ministry" and "What is youth ministry all about?"

Regardless of our common theological heritage each local congregation has different views on many of these elements of a philosophy of ministry. A suburban, long-term established Nazarene church may follow very traditional patterns related to issues like leadership styles, the rationale for youth ministry, or the place of youth ministry in the whole church. A smaller, new, inner-city congregation may have very different views on each of these subjects. These differences often surface based on many contextual issues: education level, location of the church, primary socio-economic group present, presence or lack of theological training, etc. These differing beliefs result not just in a differing philosophy of youth ministry but ultimately different practices of youth ministry from one another.

NOTES

Norman DeJong created a tool to help us better understand this issue of philosophy of ministry and how it impacts ministry. Visually he created a ladder that guides our climbing. Each step influences our rise to the next level of questions.

1. Basis of authority. What is the basis of authority for the ministry philosophy?

2. Nature of persons. What does it mean to be human and how does this understanding shape a ministry philosophy?

3. Purposes and goals. This is the all-important question of destination. Where should this faith journey take us?

4. Structural organization. Regardless of our context which path is most likely to take us where we need to go? What supplies will we need to take on the journey?

5. Implementation. How can we use the resources God has provided (both people and materials) to pursue this goal?

6. Evaluation. Understanding we need to regularly look at where we are, where we are headed, and whether we are still on the right path to get there. Are the goals we've established for ministry actually occurring through our efforts?

The first rung deals with the issue of authority: upon whose authority do we do what we do? While that may appear to be a no-brainer the reality is too many people are doing youth ministry for reasons other than the fact God called and empowered them.

The second rung asks us to consider what it is we believe about the teenagers with whom we're working. Are they inherently good, sinful, or can God work through them regardless due to God's grace? Do we believe they are the Church of today or tomorrow? How do their developmental issues impact our understanding of things such as whether teenagers are capable of assuming leadership or even being sanctified?

As we continue to climb, the next rung asks us to have the end in sight. Where do we want to go? What does a fully-formed disciple look like? Next, we start addressing how will we get there? This is where we start thinking about specific models of ministry. We'll address this aspect more fully later in this session.

On the fifth rung are the available resources and how we can use them in order to reach the goals we have for ministry and our teens.

NOTES

Lastly, after we have put the ministry model in place, we then closely examine what we are doing to see whether we are meeting the goals we established. If not, then we work to discover why not and what we need to change in order to get there.

The creation of a philosophy of ministry is a time-consuming task. To help you with this task, let's look at a four-phase process developed by Aubrey Malphurs.

- Phase One: Mission—"Why?" Why does the ministry exist?

- Phase Two: Core Values—"How?" How will the ministry conduct its mission?

- Phase Three: Vision—"What if?" This provides a mental picture of what this organization or ministry should look like.

- Phase Four: Strategy—"What now?" How can we accomplish this mission?

Once we have a working idea of what we believe should go into our philosophy of ministry and the steps to move from philosophy to model, we can examine exactly what a model of ministry looks like.

PHILOSOPHY TO MODEL

A model of ministry tells us what the youth ministry philosophy should look like in real life. It helps us understand how the ideas and ideals of the youth ministry philosophy will be organized. Through the basic components of the model, one should be able to understand what the ministry's philosophy of ministry is about. However, a model is just a conceptualization. While it moves us from philosophy toward the real world, it is only an intermediate step. Models have to be lived out through programs. A program is the detailed, planned activity of the model and philosophy applied to a particular youth ministry in a particular local church. It is the doing of youth ministry. In one sense, we can say our philosophy of ministry establishes our goals while our chosen model of ministry provides the methods by which to reach those goals.

Philosophy of Youth Ministry	Model of Youth Ministry	Program for Youth Ministry
Why have youth ministry?	What should youth ministry look like?	How will our youth ministry operate?
What is youth ministry all about?		

In choosing a model, your experience of youth ministry and your theological priorities will predispose you to favor some approaches over others. We start with theology and philosophy of ministry. Then we examine current context (people and resources). Once we understand these, we can develop a response to our unique setting and needs. The resultant response will be a model of ministry. The model will help ensure we not only are moving toward the goals we laid out in our philosophy of ministry but will also ensure we are meeting the needs of youth at their various levels of commitment.

Basics of Youth Ministry

As we consider what type of model to adopt there are many things we need to consider. One core issue is an examination of the relationship between fellowship and missiology. In *Four Views of Youth Ministry and the Church*, Mark Senter notes that missiologist George Peters frames the discussion as centrifugal versus centripetal approaches to mission. Centripetal draws momentum toward a central point (in this case, the church) while centrifugal strategies spin energy toward the periphery (the non-churched). Historically church-based ministries have focused on nurture and discipleship (centripetal) while para church ministries have concentrated on evangelism (centrifugal).

A second core issue that's important in thinking about a model revolves around developmental issues. At what stage of a young person's life is it possible for evidences of spiritual maturity to appear so the young person can be a full participant in the life of the faith community? Are there theological issues that prevent adolescents from full participation in the life of the Church? Are youth the Church of the present or the future?

If you focus more on fellowship than mission but also believe youth are developmentally ready, you will adopt a fellowship now approach. If you focus more on mission, engaging the world in youth ministry but feel youth are not developmentally ready to handle these encounters, you might emphasize mission later preferring to focus on training. In considering any model of youth ministry, one must decide where you fall in regard to these two axes.

Models of Youth Ministry

Let's look at three models which have proven themselves particularly helpful in youth ministry.

> *Purpose-Driven Youth Ministry (Doug Fields)*
>
> Drawing from the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39), Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Community Church, has suggested there are five primary purposes or domains all churches should practice. Doug Fields, youth pastor at Saddleback, has applied these five purposes to youth ministry as found in his book, *Purpose-Driven Youth Ministry*:
>
> - evangelism
> - discipleship
> - ministry
> - fellowship
> - worship
>
> This model of ministry seeks to create programs and ministries which give students at all levels of commitment the opportunity to engage each of these purposes.
>
> Christian Practices (*Kenda Creasy Dean, Mark Yaconelli, Tony Jones, Mike King, Dorothy Bass*)

NOTES

One growing model advocated by a number of current youth ministry specialists begins with the assumption ministry occurs primarily through practices or disciplines that shape the spiritual life rather than through general activities or programming. Particular attention is given to basic spiritual disciplines such as worship, celebrating communion, prayer, Scripture reading, compassionate service, and witness. The primary ministry focus in this approach is to teach youth to appreciate and engage in different spiritual formation disciplines as individuals and as groups. Kenda Dean and Ron Foster note as youth participate in the soul-shaping practices of faith; their life begins to look like Jesus' life. In many ways these practices define the shape and call of Christian living. A major goal is to encourage young people to develop a rule of life or series of commitments to maintain both certain Christian values and specific spiritual disciplines that cultivate youth devotion and guide their witness in the world. Mike King writes, "A rule of life is an intention to place Jesus Christ at the center of life, community, and ministry."

Incarnational-Relational (Andrew Root)

While the previous models rely primarily on programming or practices, one other prominent approach begins with relations, particularly between adults and youth (but sometimes also between young people). This model trusts that Christ becomes manifest in the middle of open, honest relationships shaped by Christian intention and guided by the Holy Spirit. As noted in the previous session, Andrew Root cautions that relationships must take seriously the lives of youth and calls for creating a space or place where youth can authentically share their pains, hopes, and passions. Root writes:

> "Just as Jesus incarnate, crucified and resurrected was fully our place-sharer, so we too, as Jesus' disciples, must ourselves become place-sharers, suffering with and for young people. When we rethink and reimage relational youth ministry as place-sharing, we will be able to see human-to-human relationships as the location of God's presence in the world, and therefore honor the broken and yet beautiful humanity of adolescents (and ourselves!)."

Ministers in this model trust that Christ may work not only through adults but also through youth, even those who have yet to embrace the gospel. Root offers the following guidelines that provide a sound beginning for this approach in *Rules of Art for Meaningful Relationships as the Presence of God*.

NOTES

- The youth pastor should have a connection to all adolescents in the congregation but be in a relationship with a few.

- All adolescents should be invited into relationships of place-sharing.

- The youth pastor is to support, encourage, and assist adult and adolescent relationships of place-sharing.

- Relationships should be built around shared interests or a common task.

- Relationships should develop as organically as possible, in which adults are authentically human (in an open-and-closed manner) alongside adolescents.

As one might imagine, each of these models acknowledge programs, practices, and people are all important in youth ministry. However, in each model one of these domains guides the efforts of youth ministry more than the other two emphases. Where one begins and what one trusts makes the most difference and establishes the model.

FROM MODELS TO PROGRAMS

Unfortunately many youth workers find themselves in churches or other settings with programs already in place. At other times we experience a lot of pressure to do something about an issue by starting a new program. Unfortunately we often inherit or create programs that do not fit our overall design for ministry. If we have a good working model of ministry, we can gradually adjust programs to match our philosophy of ministry. We are in much better shape when we have a working model first and then select programs that match our goals and structure.

Choosing a model of ministry that fits is not as easy as one might think. It requires us to ask good questions.

- Does the church have a distinctive philosophy of ministry that must be reflected in the youth ministry?

- Is the church willing to hire and capable of employing a youth pastor?

- Will the church provide a budget sufficient to support the model?

- How well developed are the communication skills of the youth worker, especially in front of large groups?

- How competent are the organizational skills of the youth worker?

- How adept is the youth worker at meeting and gaining a hearing from non-Christian students?

- What kind of vision does the church have for ministering to the community immediately surrounding the church building?

- How strong are the family ties within the church, especially as they relate to spiritual nurture?

- To what extent are mature and talented adults available to implement the model selected?

- Are the students presently in the youth group sufficiently eager to make the changes necessary to implement a model that would have a significant spiritual impact on their lives?

- What kind of facilities and resources does the church have that would enhance or weaken the model chosen?

- Does the model chosen emerge from your personal philosophy of ministry?

NOTES

While choosing a model is important, once the model is chosen it is equally important we continue to use our philosophy of ministry to continue to guide us.

Have any of you ever driven a tractor to plant seeds? When you do, it is important you find a point on the horizon to aim for and keep your eyes on the whole way in order to have a straight row. If you don't, when you get to the end of the row and look back you'll probably discover your row looks like a geometric figure.

The same thing is true once we've picked our youth ministry model. We still have to look at individual practices within that model and determine whether they fit the elements of our philosophy of ministry. Once we have established the model and put into place our programs and ministries, we then have to do good evaluation to determine whether the model and practices are moving us where we want to go. That means we have to plan ahead with our key principles in mind. We have to know when (and why) to say "yes" and when to say "no" to ministry programs and activities as not all programs (even really good ones) are the best fit for our context and philosophy of ministry.

APPLICATION

NOTES

1. Write down four big ideas that guide your philosophy of ministry. Can you provide a working philosophy of ministry you could explain to another youth worker or volunteer in five minutes or less? Try to create one.

2. Work on your model of youth ministry. Answer the following questions as you think about your local church:

   - Does the church have a distinctive philosophy of ministry that must be reflected in the youth ministry?

   - Is the church willing to hire and capable of employing a youth pastor?

   - Will the church provide a budget sufficient to support the model?

   - How well developed are the communication skills of the youth worker, especially in front of large groups?

   - How competent are the organizational skills of the youth worker?

   - How adept is the youth worker at meeting and gaining a hearing from non-Christian students?

   - What kind of vision does the church have for ministering to the community immediately surrounding the church building?

   - How strong are the family ties within the church, especially as they relate to spiritual nurture?

   - To what extent are mature and talented adults available to implement the model selected?

   - Are the students presently in the youth group sufficiently eager to make the changes necessary to implement a model that would have a significant spiritual impact on their lives?

   - What kind of facilities and resources does the church have that would enhance or weaken the model chosen?

   - Does the model chosen emerge from your personal philosophy of ministry?

EXAM

1. Most youth workers carry a set of assumptions about youth ministry.
   A. True
   B. False

2. A youth ministry philosophy in written form describes the basic values upon which a youth ministry model and program are built and include _____.
   A. epistemology
   B. leadership roles
   C. anthropology
   D. all of the above

3. The philosophy of youth ministry is the same regardless of local church context.
   A. True
   B. False

4. A philosophy of youth ministry includes _____.
   A. organization
   B. purposes and goals
   C. evaluation
   D. all of the above

5. A model of youth ministry _____.
   A. tells us what philosophy looks like in real life
   B. describes how ministries operate
   C. is a detailed planned activity
   D. all of the above

6. Models of ministry take into consideration _____.
   A. developmental readiness of students
   B. an emphasis on fellowship
   C. an emphasis on mission
   D. all of the above

7. A _____ focuses on place-sharing.
   A. *Purpose Driven* youth ministry
   B. *Christian Practices* youth ministry
   C. *Incarnational-relational* youth ministry
   D. all of the above

8. A _____ seeks to create programs and ministries which give students at all levels of commitment the opportunity to engage each of these purposes (evangelism, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, and worship).
   A. *Purpose Driven* youth ministry
   B. *Christian Practices* youth ministry
   C. *Incarnational-relational* youth ministry
   D. all of the above

9. A _____ begins with the assumption ministry occurs primarily through practices or disciplines that shape the spiritual life rather than through general activities or programming.
   A. *Purpose Driven* youth ministry
   B. *Christian Practices* youth ministry
   C. *Incarnational-relational* youth ministry
   D. all of the above

10. Many youth ministers inherit or create programs that do not fit their model of youth ministry.
    A. True
    B. False

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT

NOTES

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. Do you think it's important to really address all of the issues described in a philosophy of youth ministry?

2. In your opinion, should all Nazarene churches adopt the same philosophy of ministry? Why or why not?

3. How does your context influence your philosophy of youth ministry?

4. Can you answer the "why," "what," "how," "what if," and "what now" of your youth ministry?