

THE
DISCIPLESHIP
PLACE

Youth Ministry Academy

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SESSION 19

Youth Ministry Shepherding:
Empowering Youth

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Youth Ministry Shepherding: Empowering Youth

SESSION OVERVIEW

Inviting Youth to Leadership

Discerning Leadership Gifts and Temperaments

Organizing Youth Leadership Teams

Empowering Youth

Encouraging, Supporting, and Nurturing Youth

Application

Exam

Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

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

- articulate the importance of deliberately informing and preparing youth for leadership.
- teach, guide, and counsel youth leaders for effective team ministry.

INTRODUCTION

Youth ministry requires more than ministering to young people; we must also minister with youth, by cultivating their leadership abilities. This session helps you to develop a sense of some of the practical aspects of empowering youth for ministry.

INVITING YOUTH TO LEADERSHIP



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From a Christian perspective, leadership describes a dynamic process where men and women use the ability God provides to strategically influence people (congregation, community, or group) to fulfill God's vision in their context. One of the initial steps to empowering young people for leadership entails getting them to respond to God's general call on their lives. Youth can be invited and challenged to leadership through several avenues:

- The need for godly leaders.
- The privilege to represent Christ.
- The opportunity to serve others in the ways of Christ.
- The blessing of influencing others to become all that God wants to make them.

Often a sensitive process, empowerment requires much care in ensuring we do not use guilt, coercion, or any other means which does not respect the right of the potential young leader.

DISCERNING LEADERSHIP GIFTS AND TEMPERAMENTS

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Any attempt at discerning one's gifting and temperament can be confusing for most persons. It would be helpful to guide a young leader through this process. Thankfully, youth workers possess a large pool of material when helping a young person become a leader. Ginny Ward Holderness and Robert Hay, in *Teaming Up: Shared Leadership in Youth Ministry*, encourage youth leaders to investigate Scripture and draw themes that relate to young people and to youth ministry. They offer several passages that relate to themes of caring, reaching out, acceptance, invitation, community, challenge, and leadership.

- Jesus and Woman at the Well (John 4:3-30)
- Calling Andrew and Simon Peter (John 1:35-42)
- Parables of Prodigal Son and Lost Sheep (Luke 15)
- Jesus the True Vine (John 15:1-5)
- Jesus Calms the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)
- The Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-26)

A study of these passages can aid youth leaders as they prepare to help youth explore the meaning of leadership. Sometimes, different persons within God's story can offer a fresh vision of leadership. The following biblical giants demonstrate key principles for youth.

Jesus: Closeness with a few. Undoubtedly Jesus modeled the ability to work within the close community of the disciples. His ability to teach and model authentic devotion to God by example invites us to consider the importance of this approach to leadership development. What are some of the benefits and challenges of this kind of leadership?

Isaiah: Wanting to lead. Isaiah's vision in chapter six reveals a God "high and lifted up" whose holiness both humbles and calls Isaiah to exercise his role as God's prophet. One must note Isaiah did not accept this prophetic call based upon his own ability but out of God's forgiveness. Was your response to God's call to ministry or leadership similar to Isaiah's?

Peter: Enthusiasm covers a multitude of missteps. To say that Peter was impulsive may be an understatement. Peter seemed to be a man of extremes,

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willing to die but also capable of denying Jesus. Ultimately the Holy Spirit tempered Peter's passion and gave him a God-centered desire. Do you think it is good to err on the side of passion?

Joseph: Don't play God. In Genesis 50:19, Joseph offers the fateful phrase to his brothers, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?" Joseph had known the worst of times and the best of times. Now given incredible power from Egypt's pharaoh, Joseph still recognized God's ultimate authority. Even at our best, do we recognize God's authority over our leadership?

Hosea: The strength of vulnerability. Perhaps no other prophet embraced the pain and sadness of a people like Hosea. Hosea's vulnerability served a greater purpose, revealing the holy love of God rather than the personality of the prophet. Is your strength more on the side of being impressive?

Deborah: Women can lead. During the crucial period of the Judges of Israel, Deborah accepted and fulfilled her role as leader (Judges 4) both as a leader and prophet in her own right. Deborah represents many women throughout the Bible who fulfilled God's call as a leader. What is your personal position on women being in leadership in the Church?

Amos: Champion of the weak. Amos announced God's love and justice on behalf of the poor. How important to you is ministry to the poor, the hungry, the powerless, the widows, the orphans, and the oppressed?

Nehemiah: A touch of organization. Nehemiah was called to rebuild the temple, no easy task. His leadership transformed a beaten group of refugees into a nation. How organized are you generally?

Elijah: A bit of drama. Few men would think to stand against the 450 prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18) but Elijah was willing to stand out for God's sake. It is important to remember that Elijah's willingness to take such dramatic steps served only to point to God, not the prophet. Is the use of the dramatic in ministry appealing to you?

Paul: Confidence is contagious. It is hard to believe how one man could command so much respect and controversy throughout his ministry. Whether being smuggled out of Damascus in a basket; rising from the dust in Lystra; standing before the council of Jerusalem; or giving witness to Herod Agrippa, Paul's confidence in God shows through. Paul always balanced his confidence with his deep awareness of his need of God's grace. Do you think self confidence is healthy, and if so, when does it become unhealthy?



Ultimately a review of leadership in the Bible reminds us that youth need to be grounded in the total story of Scripture. The Bible clearly portrays the strength and weaknesses of these leaders, so that our confidence will remain in God. Perhaps our attention to Jesus, the first model presented, should remind us that we need each other since no one person can really reflect all of the aspects of leadership portrayed in Scripture. Teamwork provides youth the means for learning from each other while discovering their individual gifts.

ORGANIZING YOUTH LEADERSHIP TEAMS



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Ultimately empowering youth includes providing a strong relational environment where they can work together while developing their leadership abilities. Often youth workers accomplish this goal through teamwork. In his book, *Developing the Leaders Around You*, John Maxwell gives 4 C's for forming a dream team of leaders.

- Common goal: The goal must be clear and kept as the focus of all that is done.
- Cooperation: Each team member must be prepared to share the work.
- Communication: There must be agreed channels of communication and these must be kept open.
- Commitment: This is the glue which keeps the team together even in difficult circumstances.

When teams work well together they develop traits that demonstrate strong ministry. These traits include a sense of cooperation, the ability of persons with differing opinions coming together in agreement for the sake of a greater cause. In addition, teams focus on clear communication. Churches can be damaged and even destroyed when communication is poor. Growth may require change since nothing growing stays the same. Teamwork also requires contribution. Winning teams all have members who make equal contributions in effort. They all give their best. Finally teamwork requires commitment. Commitment is necessary for your own spiritual growth as well as the growth of your church. John Maxwell also lists qualities of a dream team:

- Team members care for one another.
- Team members know what is important.
- Team members communicate with one another.
- Team members grow together.
- There is a team fit; an attitude of partnership and trust.
- Team members place their individual rights beneath the best interest of the team.
- Each team member plays a special role.


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- An effective team has members ready to substitute in key roles when needed.
- Team members know exactly where the team stands.
- Team members are willing to pay the price.

The better a team works together the stronger the leadership capabilities. Individual leadership abilities surface within a team; however, constant teamwork also develops general skills needed for leadership. Leaders, particularly young adult leaders, grow and develop as they learn from each other, pray for each other, and encourage each other in the development of their abilities.

Establishing a Covenant of Standards

One way of establishing a sound foundation for youth leadership emerges through the use of covenants. Covenantal language is important in both the Old and New Testament. John Wesley, founder of the Wesleyan tradition, employed a covenant with the Methodist people each year and called his ministers to make covenantal commitments before they served the movement. One of the earliest forms of youth ministry in the United States, Christian Endeavor societies, also created covenants or a pledge to guide their actions.

For the sake of the God's kingdom, a youth leadership team needs to hold each other accountable for their leadership. Consider the following covenant guidelines for your youth leadership team.

- The covenant should reflect the standards of Scripture.
- Each team member must be prepared to commit to the tenets of the covenant.
- Encourage each team member to appreciate the value of the covenant as a means of bonding and strengthening the team.
- Each team member should have a copy of the covenant in digital and hard-copy.
- The team should remind itself of the covenant by repeating and reading the covenant in unison at meetings.

Youth should also focus on the preamble and purpose of the leadership team when developing a covenant. It should describe what God has done in bringing the youth together and might include statements such as:


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- Because God has brought us together . . .
- Understanding God's grace supports our ministry . . .

Statements like these remind youth their leadership always begins with what God has accomplished. Likewise young people need to remember the purpose for their leadership. Purpose statements may include:

- Desiring to follow Christ's ministry for God's kingdom we will . . .
- Recognizing God's vision for youth in our church we will . . .

Purpose statements help youth leaders maintain the focus of their covenant ministry. Often leaders become fragmented by trying to do too much or they become distracted by focusing only on their role within the team. Maintaining a sense of purpose reminds youth of the big picture and the primary goal of their ministry together. Ultimately the preamble and purpose guide youth to determine the specific covenant commitments they will make together. These commitments include specific tasks and strategies each member can accomplish for the overall good of the team. Establishing a covenant must include specific opportunities and challenges that any leadership team will face. However, the covenant should also reflect God's intent for the leadership team.

Encouraging a Youth Leadership Team to Live with Integrity

Leadership which flows from the inside out is not only biblical but it also emphasizes the need for us to *become* before we *perform*. Leadership activity without character leads to tyranny and chaos. Teams should demonstrate this characteristic as well as the youth within them. Stephen R. Covey, in *Principle-Centered Leaders*, gives eight characteristics worth consideration.

- Leaders (and teams) are continually learning.
- Leaders are service-oriented.
- Leaders radiate positive energy.
- Leaders believe in other people.
- Leaders lead balanced lives.
- Leaders see life as an adventure.
- Leaders are synergistic, constantly interacting cooperatively for a common purpose.
- Leaders exercise for self-renewal.



While character development remains crucial we must not allow our search for integrity to shift our focus away from community. Chris Folmsbee, in *A New Kind of Youth Ministry*, cautions that focusing on ourselves may inhibit the great emphasis of glorifying God. A leadership team must be motivated by a heart to reach out and empower others to pursue Christlikeness.

EMPOWERING YOUTH



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Initiative is an ability every person, leader or not, should aspire to have. Initiative allows a leader to be fresh and effective. Thinking outside the box is standard practice for this kind of leader. While initiative respects tradition, it is not afraid to go beyond tradition to be effective. Initiative also makes the leader dependable when they have to make tough decisions.

John Maxwell, in *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, lists several qualities of leaders who show initiative:

- They know what they want. It's the only way to recognize opportunity when it comes.
- They push themselves to act. Initiators don't wait for other people to motivate them.
- They take more risks. Good leaders are willing to take risks because they recognize there is a risk for not initiating too.
- They make more mistakes. Initiators make things happen, but they also make a lot of mistakes.

Demonstrating initiative may not always be easy. To improve your initiative, first change your mind-set. Recognize the problem comes from the inside, not from others. Once found, address it. Second, don't wait for opportunity to knock. Opportunity is everywhere. Where do you see needs? Who is looking for expertise you have? What unreached group of people is practically dying for what you have to offer? Finally, take the next step. Someone once offered: "Everyone has a great idea in the shower, but only a few people step out, dry off, and do something about it."

Empowering a youth leadership team may entail allowing them to take risks with decisions. We may need to allow them to fail on occasion, yet also help them learn from their failures. Youth leaders should be able to anticipate the consequences of good and bad decisions so they can anticipate the potential risks involved with decision. We should not let young adult leaders risk so much as to ruin their leadership or risk the reputation of the church. Nevertheless, some risks may well be worth the consequences if they fail. However, when the group shows initiative and succeed, they gain tremendous confidence. More importantly, even when they fail but learn and improve their ministry, they begin to understand that initiative may have additional benefits.



Remember that taking initiative is not the same as doing everything ourselves. Chris Folmsbee notes: “doing all the work ourselves might make us look busy and feel satisfied, but it certainly doesn’t help our ministry become more effective in fostering spiritual progress.” The goal always remains to cultivate personal initiative among team members. We need to encourage them in their tasks but also remind them to reach out to others as a community.

ENCOURAGING, SUPPORTING, AND NURTURING YOUTH


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A major part of the responsibility carried by the pastoral leadership of a church is the task of encouraging, supporting, and nurturing volunteers. It will demand much effort, great skill, and deliberate action of every pastor. Because volunteers are people their wants and needs cannot be disregarded.

Often adult and youth leadership develop in a similar fashion depending both on the adults readiness to hand over ministry and young people’s readiness to receive leadership roles. Holderness and Hay, in *Teaming Up*, note there may be stages to shared ministry.

Level	Adult Leader Involvement	Youth Leader Involvement
Zero	None	Youth are not involved; there is no real youth ministry.
One	1-2 Adults do it all.	Youth don’t know what’s going on. Many attend because their parents make them.
Two	Adults help the adult leader or the adult youth director or minister.	Youth are coming to activities because they want to.
Three	Adults work well as a team. They take responsibilities.	Youth are involved in planning and are in partnership with adults.
Four	Adults are in good relationships with youth. They ask young people to help.	Youth are involved in leadership and are partnering with adults.
Five	Adults are in partnership with the youth. They are supportive and encouraging of young people as leaders.	Youth are championing youth ministry.

Often a youth minister has to invite both adults and youth into casting a vision for the ministry. Sharing responsibilities for ministry must include the ability to dream together about the future of the ministry. Drawing from the arena of sports, John Maxwell notes that a dream-team coach displays several characteristics.



- Chooses players well.
- Constantly communicates the game plan.
 - Tell them what you expect of them.
 - Give them opportunity to perform.
 - Let them know how they're getting along.
 - Instruct and empower them when they need it.
 - Reward them according to their contribution.
- Takes the time to huddle.
 - Focus.
 - An opportunity to listen.
 - An opportunity to make personnel changes.
 - An opportunity to make play changes.
 - An opportunity to rest.
- Knows what his or her players prefer.
- Excels in problem solving.
 - Problem-solving issues with players.
 - Problem-solving issues with preparation.
 - Problem-solving issues with the game.
- Provides support needed for success.
- Commands the respect of the players.
 - Trustworthiness.
 - A caring attitude.
 - The ability to make hard decisions.
- Does not treat everyone the same.
- Continues to win.
 - Work on specific skills.
 - Make a change.
 - Reward the unrewarded.
 - Transfer the burden.
 - Above all, don't dwell on yesterday's victory.
- Understands the levels of the players.
 - Players who need direction.
 - Players who need coaching.
 - Players who need support.
 - Players to whom you delegate.



Maxwell's characteristics may seem more appropriate on a soccer field or basketball court than in a local congregation. Nevertheless, the idea of team members working together, like a good sports team, toward a common goal may well represent good team ministry. Young people demonstrate this kind of harmony when leaders trust one another, anticipate each other gifts and strengths, and work toward a common goal.

Christian leaders of the future have to be theologians, persons who know the heart of God and disciplined through prayer, study, and careful analysis to manifest the divine event of God's saving work in the midst of the many seemingly random events of their time. They should also be leaders capable of working together in covenant, demonstrating both initiative and integrity, advancing God's mission, and serving God's people.

APPLICATION



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1. Interview a pastor on his or her strategy for empowering youth for ministry.
2. Develop your own strategy for empowering youth leadership in your ministry context. Which scriptures and principles appear most important? Could you begin a young adult team that developed leadership capacities?
3. Write a sample covenant that might guide a young adult leadership team. Consider preamble and purpose as well as ministry commitments youth might make.

EXAM



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1. Youth can be invited and challenged to leadership through the avenues of _____.
 - A. seeing the need for godly leaders
 - B. recognizing the privilege to represent Christ
 - C. accepting the opportunity to serve others in the ways of Christ
 - D. knowing the blessing of influencing others to become all that God wants to make them
 - E. all of the above
2. It is considered appropriate to use guilt, coercion, or any other means to get a potential young leader to accept responsibility.
 - A. True
 - B. False
3. One of the initial steps to empowering young people for leadership entails getting them to respond to God's general call on their lives.
 - A. True
 - B. False
4. Because discerning one's gifting and temperament can be confusing, there is a need to work through this process with a young leader.
 - A. True
 - B. False
5. Based on Scripture, there is only one biblical model of leadership.
 - A. True
 - B. False
6. A strong ministry team needs to develop certain traits which include _____.
 - A. a sense of cooperation
 - B. clear communication
 - C. equal contributions
 - D. commitment
 - E. all of the above
7. The better the team works together the stronger the leadership capabilities.
 - A. True
 - B. False



8. A way of establishing a sound foundation for youth leadership emerges through the use of covenants.
 - A. True
 - B. False

9. Empowering a youth leadership team may entail allowing them to take risks with decisions.
 - A. True
 - B. False

10. Christian leaders of the future need to _____.
 - A. be theologians and persons who know the heart of God
 - B. be capable of working together in covenant
 - C. demonstrate both initiative and integrity
 - D. be advancing God's mission and serving God's people
 - E. all of the above

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT

**NOTES**

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. Evaluate the different traits and qualities that determine a good youth leadership team. Are there cultural issues at stake in your context? Would specific traits or qualities prove more helpful, harmful, in their setting? Could the students include other traits or qualities?
2. Have you ever thought about the preamble and purpose of your own ministry? How might you state them?
3. Where do youth have the opportunity to take the initiative in your ministry setting? What happens when they succeed or fail? How do they learn from their mistakes?
4. How would you evaluate the level of adult involvement with youth leadership in your ministry setting?