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Youth Ministry Academy

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SESSION 18

Youth Ministry Shepherding:
Equipping Leaders

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

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SESSION 18

Youth Ministry Shepherding: Equipping Leaders

SESSION OVERVIEW

Identifying and Recruiting Volunteer Youth Leaders

Leadership Commitment and Training

Empowering and Encouraging the Youth Leader

Application

Exam

Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

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

• understand the importance of deliberately preparing for succession in ministry.

• identify, recruit, and equip adult youth leaders.

• express greater appreciation for the ministry of shepherding.

INTRODUCTION

This session gives a general introduction to the theoretical and practical Christological and biblical model of shepherding and equipping leaders.

IDENTIFYING AND RECRUITING VOLUNTEER YOUTH LEADERS

NOTES

Setting a Biblical Foundation

Identifying and recruiting adults as volunteer youth leaders can be a challenge. Dan Chow, in *No More Lone Rangers: How to Build a Team-Centered Youth Ministry*, notes that youth ministers must develop volunteers as team members to overcome a leader's temptation to do everything on their own. Moses relied on Aaron, Hur, and Joshua. Jesus called twelve and later seventy to extend His ministry. The New Testament Church teaches us that everyone has gifts and roles in the Body of Christ, so we should expect youth ministry to be a collective effort.

Four images of ministry surface from four sections of the New Testament and provide a theological base for church volunteers. Each of these perspectives remind us leadership may change based both on context and also our understanding of God's kingdom at that moment. Balancing these approaches may seem best but often leaders and communities express certain strengths and limitations based on the setting. As you review the traits of a leader, which descriptors tend to be the greatest strength in your setting? The greatest challenge in your setting? Why?

- *The Servant Leader* (John 13:14-16). Those who carry leadership positions in the church also carry (first and foremost) the responsibility of serving volunteers in whatever lowly manner may be necessary.

- *The Holy Priesthood* (1 Peter 2:9). There exists no hierarchy of vocation; however, all function as priests, although clearly not all are involved in church work. For Christians, there exists no secular vocation. As we build our theology of volunteers, we must respect the sacredness of volunteers' weekday work. Their calling to their jobs carries no less godliness or need for commitment than the pastoral vocation; it is within those callings the royal priesthood minister.

- *The Body Concept* (Romans 12:4-5). God uses the physical body as an image of the Church to drive home this point: No one with this holy priesthood may consider himself or herself unessential to the ministry of the whole. The structure suffers harm and inefficiency when parts of it remain inactive and do not contribute to the health and work of the whole.

- *The Equipping Leader* (Ephesians 4:11-16). Servant leadership does not seek to force volunteers into service or to heap guilt on them so they reluctantly take their places, but to equip them so they serve with competence.

A true theology of volunteers believes the work of God's kingdom goes on even when the formal or informal programs of the church may seem inadequately staffed. As equippers, we must ensure that God's people have an adequate knowledge of Scripture and an adequate unity in Christ so they can grow to maturity.

Leadership in History

Historically the Church has adopted a number of leadership models based on context and need. Robert Banks and Bernice Ledbetter, in *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches,* offer a range of approaches from the rise of the abbot, who shepherded monastic communities, to Lutheran and Reformed pastors who challenged contexts yet also established innovative new communities, to Quakers who trusted community guidance, and Pentecostals who put tremendous emphasis on individual gifts. Banks and Ledbetter note each generation of leaders seems to negotiate three different tensions:

- tradition and adaptation

- preservation and innovation

- stability and change

Each tension calls leaders to both look to the past and anticipate the future in light of the needs of their communities and the conditions of their context.

The general study of leadership in North America, particularly in the 19th century to today, changed over time. Banks and Ledbetter note that early studies emphasized the lives of great leaders (biographical study). However, researchers later applied scientific methods to leadership to discover if leaders held common biological traits or possessed a particular character. By mid-century the focus moved away from the person of the leader to their particular style. Often studies in this period noted that leaders must balance their emphasis on meeting certain tasks while also maintaining relationships with followers. By the late 20th century the human resources movement expanded the style question as it focused on follower readiness. By this point researchers, like Paul Hershey and Kenneth Blanchard, in *Management of Organizational Behavior,* emphasized the need to adapt leadership based both on the goals in mind and a follower's ability to attain those goals in relationship to the leader. Balancing tasks and relationship proved crucial if one wanted to extend one's leadership throughout the organization.

NOTES

Banks and Ledbetter observe leadership includes at least four important elements:

- the person of the leader.

- the relationship between leader and follower.

- the task a leader is attempting to accomplish.

- the influence of the context or setting in which a leader leads.

Often the quality of our leadership rests with how well we communicate trust in our personal actions (that we will be consistent), assess the ability of our followers in the tasks they must accomplish, maintain a vision for ministry, and continue to study the context of our ministry. Assisting others to accept their responsibility with these four tasks remains an important part of leadership development.

Dale Carnegie was a master at identifying potential leaders. Once asked by a reporter how he had managed to hire 43 millionaires, Carnegie responded that the men had not been millionaires when they started working for him. They had become millionaires as a result. The reporter next wanted to know how he had developed these men to become such valuable leaders. Carnegie replied, "Men are developed the same way gold is mined. Several tons of dirt must be moved to get an ounce of gold. But you don't go in the mine looking for dirt," he added. "You go in looking for gold." That's exactly the way to develop positive, successful people. Look for the gold, not the dirt; the good not the bad. The more positive qualities you look for, the more you are going to find.

Chris Folmsbee, in *A New Kind of Youth Ministry*, observes that people tend to volunteer their time due to four contributing influences:

- a sense of calling and opportunity to make a difference.

- a chance to do something they do well.

- being encouraged and empowered along the way.

- serving with like-minded people with a real sense of community.

Holderness and Hay, in *Teaming Up*, note that parents may be involved with the ministry. However, many parents may not always be leaders since youth need to develop relationships with other significant adults.

NOTES

Discerning Gifts and Graces

Part of recruitment must include self assessment. Many adults remain interested in working with youth but they must also be able to identify key gifts and graces that they offer to a youth ministry. Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster, in *The Godbearing Life*, offer a series of helpful questions to help adults and youth leaders discern one's disposition and ability to work with youth.

- Can I model for youth the meaning of a happy, healthy, and whole adulthood?

- To what extent have I been able to forgive my own parents and reflect their positive attributes and not reacting to my negative experiences?

- How do I deal with loss and learn to let go and speak of my experiences openly?

- What is my theology of friendship and is it reflected in healthy and faithful friends?

- Do I find time for solitude, feeling comfortable with myself in these moments?

- Do I maintain adequate boundaries with other people, keeping them neither too distant nor too close for my personal needs?

- Have I realized and accepted that I can't save every young person?

- Do I focus on experiences of gratitude and cultivate a sense of being grateful?

- Can I accept not doing everything right? Do I learn from my mistakes?

- Am I able to maintain a sense of integrity even when I am called to make difficult decisions that may demand sacrifice?

These questions help adults in self-assessment but there are other means of identifying and cultivating adult leaders. Often we must review a number of considerations when recruiting volunteer youth leaders, such as:

- Give volunteers the options of short, medium, and long-term periods of ministry service.

- Identify the different areas of responsibility that volunteers can commit to (e.g. adult chaperons on field trips, Bible Quiz ministry coaches, study partners).

- Allow for potential volunteers to meet informally with current volunteers to share experiences and ideas.

- Always give as much detailed information as possible to help potential volunteers with their decision making.

- Use statistics and other vital information to inform volunteers of needs and the results others have had.

Ultimately positive qualities must align with the overall goal of ministry. Developing a ministry match includes discovering the unique gifts in leaders and also providing the basics of what is required in ministry. Often called job descriptions, one is actually providing a form of ministry profile that provides the skeleton on which the ministry often takes flesh as the Holy Spirit gives life. Traditionally ministry profiles include the following:

- Position title.

- Position purpose. How does the role fit into the mission of the whole church?

- Description of roles. How could the ministry be summarized?

- Qualifications. What characteristics will be required of the minister?

- Responsibilities. What are the specific assignments and expectations?

- Accountability. To whom and for whom will the person in this position be accountable?

- Committees or teams. Does this position involve serving on any committees?

- Goals for the year. What measurable objectives will be used to evaluate job performance?

- Share with each other your ministry profile.

Ministry profiles should include mutual responsibilities. Not only what the church or ministry expects of the new leader but also what the church or ministry will provide, in resources, training, prayer, encouragement, or support. Mutual commitment establishes a climate for better ministry.

LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT AND TRAINING

Commitment and training often operate as two inseparable realities. Although commitment is a personal attitude, leaders who are trained are likely to be more committed than those who are not. When working with volunteers in the church we will need to address three basic responsibilities:

- Motivating people.

- Guiding them into the right ministry.

- Supporting and supervising them as they minister.

In addition, adult leaders often have to fulfill specific roles very similar to the youth minister. These roles include being a significant adult friend to youth, serving as an advocate for youth, being a partner and guarantor (someone who provides a sense of security) with youth, as well as being a role model for youth (Holderness and Hay). Each of these roles proves crucial with youth but often require coaching with new adult leaders.

Training requires working positively to build a sense of commitment and motivation toward the ministry. Both tasks require disciplined engagement to encourage volunteers while resisting the temptation to manipulate for our own desires, rather than God's direction. There are some basic steps we can take to accomplish both tasks.

Screening Youth Workers

First and foremost we need to screen youth workers. Before anyone joins church ministry they should go through a period of discernment. The beginning point may only be a willingness to be active in a local congregation for several months to a year before gaining a leadership role (though new members may participate much sooner). Leaders may also want to meet with adults to determine how their gifts, personal tendencies, and even experiences might influence their approach to youth ministry. In many settings youth leadership need to have more formal procedures that screen potential sponsors and youth workers before they enter the ministry. In many countries, specific instances of child abuse mandate this careful process. Refusing to undertake this type of formal screening may reflect poorly on the witness of a local church, leaving the local community with the impression that the congregation does not value the welfare of youth and children. Churches need to take seriously their responsibility to offer a safe sanctuary for youth and children. Steps for screening youth workers include:

- Use a written application.

- Do criminal background checks.

- Ask for references, particularly paid staff, and check those references.

- Conduct a personal interview.

- Use a team to decide who serves the ministry.

If you make no exceptions to these steps it reduces resistance and instills confidence with the parents and youth. Keeping youth safe is more important than any worker's feelings.

Training

Volunteer training encourages ongoing leadership development. Even adult leaders changing from one ministry role to the next require new skills in order to have confidence for ministry. Volunteer training often undergoes several stages. First leaders must focus on preparation, setting the climate of the training, defining the task within the context of the ministry and motivating volunteers who attend. Second leaders need to determine the best way of implementing the training. Implementation should invite continuous improvement and eliminate fear and barriers between volunteers. Implementation should result in a sense of competency and a desire to take what is learned and transfer it into the volunteer's ministry. Finally training must allow time for personal evaluation of one's abilities in light of the new knowledge. Trainers need to include themselves in this process; inviting short accounts of new insights, encouraging demonstrations of the teaching, offering themselves as mentors, and engaging in loving confrontation as they encourage volunteers to grow through the training.

As trainers we must remember Christian commitment remains crucial for everyone since it serves as the foundation for all improvement. Commitment ultimately includes young people, adult leaders, parents, church, and the pastor(s). We must ask for commitment, there is a difference between interest and commitment. People interested in doing something often do it only when it is convenient. People committed to something accept and offer no excuses.

Holderness and Hay, in *Teaming Up,* remind us to value and see adult leaders as team members in the ministry. When we create opportunities for them to share in leadership and decision making their commitment grows. As people know clearly what they are supposed to do, as we show them how to be leaders, and as they experience joy in accomplishments as they use their God-given gifts, adults become key contributors. Our responsibility is to motivate them toward ministry rather than manipulating them to achieve our goals.

EMPOWERING AND ENCOURAGING THE YOUTH LEADER

Empowering and encouraging youth leaders reflects the best of contemporary leadership. Banks and Ledbetter, offer the following observations about leadership in our current context.

- Leaders frequently define leadership as a potential in everyone, not just a special group.

- Leaders see authority as shared, distributed, or pervasive throughout the ministry.

- Leaders emphasize the servant-leader paradigm or the image of the leader as a steward or trustee.

- Leaders use the language of ministry purpose and vision rather than merely exercise power based on their position in the group.

- Leaders focus on transformational language, attitudes, and practices.

- Leaders model what they want to accomplish and focus on encouraging others.

- Leaders serve as key figures on a team rather than as soloists.

- Leaders accept a reciprocal relationship with co-workers as vital.

- Leaders emphasize the importance not only of ethics but also of wider values in relation to their ministry.

Motivation and training serve only if volunteers are empowered to do their ministry and receive continual encouragement along their ministry. Too many volunteers and ministers are set in a position but not given the authority or ongoing encouragement to see their ministry flourish. Burnout often comes from the struggle that rises when one sets out to accomplish what one has been trained to do but is not given the power or encouragement to do. Holderness and Hay observe that team-based ministry and open communication help overcome burnout. We need to cultivate our ability to empower people and also constantly remind them of their value to our ministry. Jim Burns and Mark DeVries, in *An Uncommon Youth Ministry*, remind us that effective ministry to a wide variety of young people must be done in the context of a team.

Creating a leadership team includes empowering others to their potential. First begin by evaluating potential leaders, by helping them to know the knowledge, skill, and desire they possess for the ministry. Second you need to model passionate leadership, thereby, giving them the opportunity to see leadership qualities but also see your humanity and humility before God. Third, give them permission to succeed as well as to fail. Expect success, verbalize what success might look like in a given situation, and reinforce their efforts when they are successful rather than penalizing their failures. Fourth you must transfer authority to them, either in short term projects or in specific aspects of ministry. Fifth, publically show your confidence in what they do. Make sure other people know they have leadership and respect their decisions. Make sure you supply your new leaders with feedback, providing praise and loving challenge where needed. Finally you must release them to continue on their own. Leaders need opportunity to develop their own leadership style, their own passions, and their own sense of being part of a team where they contribute at every level. Good leaders also serve as good followers; that means you must learn to follow at times as well. Ultimately leaders feel empowered when they know they are part of a shared leadership team where they can step in when the situation calls for their expertise and direction.

While these specific guidelines assist our efforts with specific leaders, we can also create a climate of empowerment among all volunteers. We need to reward volunteer effort with public or private affirmation. Hand-written notes of appreciation, personal compliments that identify specific actions, pictures of volunteers in action posted in a prominent place, acknowledgement made in worship services of specific volunteer activities, gifts of gratitude, and appreciation dinners all serve as means of acknowledging volunteers. We should constantly observe volunteers in action, looking for strengths upon which to build. We can also support volunteers by providing them resources to complement his or her skills. Our efforts need to focus on volunteer development. We might use different strategies and methods for development such as general education, sponsorships, personal coaching, counseling, and even direct confrontation with suggestions for improvement.

Ultimately we may help in creating volunteer communities. Methods may vary but leaders may well use the following:

- Use Scripture to teach the importance of loving, caring ministry teams.

- Draw upon church life to illustrate the viability of supportive volunteer groups.

- Feature people who are part of encouragement teams by allowing them to testify in public services.

- Stimulate the development of new teams by putting people with similar passions together in ministry.

- Demonstrate the importance of mutual support by being part of a small group that provides strength and encouragement for each other.

As Chris Folmsbee observes, real leadership is not about what I do best. It is about discovering what volunteers and parents do best and helping them find ways to contribute.

APPLICATION

1. Write down your own approach to leadership; include scriptures, historical perspectives, and contemporary concerns that inform your understanding.

2. Develop a written process for recruiting new leaders based on the information given in this session. Set criteria for screening volunteers in your setting.

3. Develop a written, one year, plan for training new leaders based on the session.

4. Identify a relational or team approach to ministry that would work in your context.

EXAM

1. A look at the Early Church reminds us that everyone has gifts and roles in the Body of Christ, and therefore, we should expect youth ministry to be a collective effort.
    A. True
    B. False

2. Examples of leadership in the Bible include _____.
    A. holy priesthood
    B. equipper
    C. servant leader
    D. all of the above

3. People tend to volunteer their time due to _____.
    A. a sense of calling and opportunity to make a difference
    B. a chance to do something they do well
    C. being encouraged and empowered along the way
    D. serving with like-minded people with a real sense of community
    E. all of the above

4. Recruitment of adults interested in working with youth must include self assessment.
    A. True
    B. False

5. Although commitment is a personal attitude, leaders who are trained are likely to be more committed than those who are not.
    A. True
    B. False

6. When working with volunteers in the church basic responsibilities that need to be addressed include _____.
    A. motivating people
    B. guiding volunteers into the right ministry
    C. supporting and supervising volunteers as they minister
    D. all of the above

7. Only people called to leadership with young children need to go through some form of screening process.
    A. True
    B. False

8. Good volunteer training _____.
    A. encourages ongoing leadership development
    B. instills confidence for ministry
    C. creates a desire to take what is learned and transfer it into the ministry
    D. allows time for personal evaluation of one's abilities in light of the new knowledge
    E. all of the above

9. When we treat adult leaders as team members in ministry and create opportunities for them to share in leadership and decision-making their commitment grows.
    A. True
    B. False

10. It is vitally important to reward volunteer effort with public or private affirmation.
    A. True
    B. False

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT

NOTES

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. What guidelines do you have for screening, educating, investigating, and preventing abuse in your context? Have you investigated your responsibilities as well as resources available in your context?

2. Which areas of training does your church or ministry do well? Where are they challenged to provide better training? How do you motivate volunteers in your ministry?

3. Where do you see the greatest temptation for manipulation? What guidelines can you set to avoid this danger?

4. How well does your ministry reflect the team concept? How might you improve your understanding of shared leadership in your setting?