



Josh McDowell: Developing teens with **convictions** 36

# enrichment

Enriching and equipping Spirit-filled ministers

Fall 2006

## STUDENT MINISTRIES

Strategies for  
reaching & leading  
today's youth

**Life in the  
Youth Hall**

*interview*

44

**Are You  
Relevant  
or Just  
Recent?**

56





# Retaining Today's Youth

BY GARY R. ALLEN

Nearly two-thirds of our youth leave our churches after high school and fail to stay connected with a local church. Furthermore, many do not remain connected to their faith or profess a personal relationship with Christ. This fact and the percentage have not changed in 40 years.

As a pastor, I often felt frustrated as we celebrated high school graduation with church families each year because I realized that many of these graduates would not remain committed to God. During my 20 years in one church, while providing full-time youth pastors and wonderful youth programs during that time, I saw little change in the number of youth who transitioned well into adult Christian living.

There has been much finger pointing concerning who is responsible for this situation. If a student attends a secular college, it is easy to blame the college and its non-Christian influences. When a student attends a Christian college, the blame is laid at the doorstep of that college. The college responds that they only receive students that the local church sends them. The local church says their youth are products of dysfunctional families. Families blame negative social influences and peer pressure. Even if we could establish a trail of blame, we still would not necessarily arrive at the solution. The causes and solutions are more complicated than we first suspect.

I believe the solution can begin with the church. The church cannot assume all the responsibility, but it can be a facilitator and coordinator. The church has the unique opportunity to be the moral compass for the community and

to amass the biblical tools and resources needed to have a supernatural influence on people and the social climate of the community.

Among many things that could be suggested, two are top priorities:

## SUPPORT AND RESOURCE THE FAMILY

The family is God's intended provider of physical security, emotional well-being, and spiritual development; but the family needs support, encouragement, and resources. Today, with more dysfunctional and broken families, the challenge may seem insurmountable, but God is greater.

The church has the privilege of consistent contact with and influence on families more than any other social institution. The church can provide a physical environment and an emotional atmosphere where families can be nurtured. The church is a safe, secure place for families to experience God's presence and to develop spiritually.

Even the smaller church in the smaller community can have a tremendous impact on families. Supporting and resourcing the family is not about flashy events and big budgets; it is about loving and nurturing people. It is about relationships among all generation groups.

## CLOSE GENERATIONAL GAPS

Too often we have segmented the youth out of the main stream of church interaction and away from intergenerational relationships and influence. While attempting to provide specialized ministry, we have created a youth-only environment with little or no interaction with other age groups. Teens arrive at the end of their high-school and youth-group experience with limited abilities to connect with older age groups.

Mentoring and coaching have become important elements in the church during the last few years, especially among ministers. Intentional mentoring and coaching in the local church between youth and older adults could be a tremendous help, especially to youth of single parents and those lacking direct grandparent influence. When healthy relationships are established between youth and older adults, mutual trust and respect flourishes.

Most churches do not have full-time youth pastors and depend on committed youth leaders from the congregation. This is not a disadvantage. Often youth leaders in the local church understand the context of the church and community. Also, they usually remain in youth leadership for several years providing sustained influence.

The Assemblies of God has one of the most effective youth ministry departments of any church organization. Jay Mooney and his team have provided help and resources for this issue of *Enrichment*. This issue challenges the local church to better address the issues of its youth and strives to provide pastors, youth pastors, and youth leaders with strategies to better reach and retain the youth of their churches.

**GARY R. ALLEN**, D.Min., is executive editor of *Enrichment* journal and director of the Ministerial Enrichment Office, Springfield, Missouri.

## **STUDENT MINISTRIES:** Strategies for reaching & leading today's youth

- 14 ASK THE SUPERINTENDENT**  
**Impacting This Generation for Christ**  
**INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS E. TRASK**  
 General Superintendent Trask shares why he believes the church of tomorrow is in good hands.

- 18 The Generational Exchange**  
**BRYAN JARRETT**  
 Distrust between the generations puts the future of the Pentecostal church in a vulnerable state. Consider this challenge to both generations.

- 28 The Mosaic Generation: The Mystifying New World of Youth Culture**  
**DAVID KINNAMAN**  
 Consider these insights into the complex new world of youth culture.

- 36 Today's Youth Need Our Help ... To Go Beyond Belief**  
**JOSH MCDOWELL (WITH BOB HOSTETLER)**  
 What you need to know to help Christian youth stand strong in the face of today's culture.

- 44 Life in the Youth Hall: Perspectives in Youth Ministry**  
**INTERVIEW WITH SAMMY BAEZ, JIM AND LINDA KEERS, JEANNE MAYO, BRUCE RIDDLE, ELIZABETH COVINGTON-TAYLOR, AND BETTY ZALDIVAR**  
 Youth leaders share their views and experiences.

- 56 Are You Relevant or Just Recent?**  
**BRET ALLEN**  
 Adherence to MTV and Hollywood trends will ensure your ministry is recent, but never relevant.

- 62 Healthy Youth Ministry: Building Blocks to Long-term Success**  
**KEVIN BERRY**  
 Would you like to reap the rewards of long-term success in youth ministry? Consider these essential building blocks.

- 70 The Power of Team Leadership**  
**SCOTTY GIBBONS**  
 Embracing leadership as a team builder will lighten a youth pastor's load, increase his effectiveness, and make the whole process more fun.

- 78 Rural Youth Ministry: The Power of Networking**  
**TIMOTHY ELDRED**  
 God has blessed churches in rural communities with people who possess the assets needed for making young disciples.

- 86 Youth Ministry With a 20/15 Vision**  
**JAY MOONEY**  
 The ultimate challenge in every generation of the church is to win the lost and make disciples.

- 92 Avoiding the Black Hole: Making Youth Lifelong Followers of Jesus Christ**  
**ROD WHITLOCK**  
 Many students drift from the faith after graduation. A commitment to discipleship will help teens become lifelong believers.

- 98 Battle Plan for a Lost Generation**  
**RICK LORIMER**  
 The campus has become the crucial battleground for the church's future success. This plan will mobilize your resources and train your students for a spiritual campaign to reach the lost.

- 104 Ministering to Hurting and At-risk Teens**  
**T. SUZANNE ELLER**  
 Here are tools to help with the spiritual and emotional roadblocks of hurting and at-risk youth.

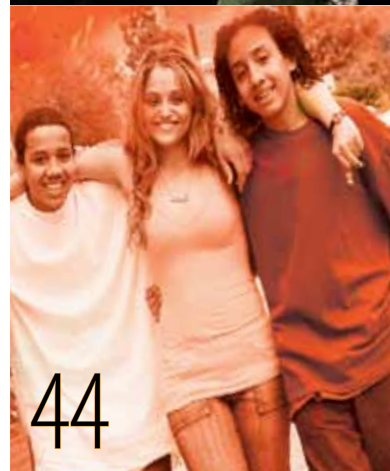
- 109 Youth Ministry Resource List**



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36



44



92



## STUDENT MINISTRIES: Strategies for reaching & leading today's youth



### YOUTH MINISTRY WEB EXTRAS

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#### ■ Youth surveys

#### ■ Youth Workers Over 30: Effective or Obsolete?

DANETTE MATTY

A spectrum of 30- and 40-something youth ministers describe the joys and challenges of continuing in a field often relegated to "junior staff" status.

#### ■ Beyond Preaching:

#### The Necessity Of Mentoring Staff

DAVID RALEY

The greatest need of youth pastors is for their senior pastor to speak into their lives. They need an older peer to mentor them in ministry.

### 6 shorts

### 111 ej online

Abstracts from Web-exclusive ministry articles.

## EDITORIALS

### 1 Ministry Matters

GARY R. ALLEN

### 144 In Closing

TOM GREENE

## COLUMNS

### 112 MINISTRY AND MEDICAL ETHICS Gene Testing: Helpful Knowledge or Harmful Information?

CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL

### 116 DISCIPLESHIP DYNAMICS Called Alongside: The Paraclete's Roles in Discipleship

DEBORAH M. GILL

### 120 HISTORY IS HIS STORY J.C. Ryle: A 19th Century Evangelical

WILLIAM P. FARLEY

### 124 REACHING SECULAR UNIVERSITIES Seekers and Skeptics at Your Door

RUSTY WRIGHT

### 128 THE GREATEST CHALLENGES OF PASTORAL CARE Pastoral Issues Surrounding Suicide

RICHARD D. DOBBINS

### 132 FAMILY LIFE Battle Plan

JUDI BRADDY

### 136 FINANCIAL CONCEPTS When Money Woes Get You Down

KREGG R. HOOD

## DEPARTMENTS

- 135 Marketplace
- 138 Book Reviews
- 140 News and Resources
- 142 With Christ
- 143 Advertising Index

Next time in **enrichment**

## MINISTRY ROADMAP Navigating the journey of your call

Just as a roadmap helps us know where we are and how to get where we are going, a ministry roadmap helps us identify where we are in our present ministry, assess where we began, and describes the path we want to take to attain our ministry goals.

In the winter 2007 and spring 2007 issues, we describe the six ministry phases to provide reference points for navigating the journey of your call.

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## BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS DEVELOPING YOUNG LEADERS



Recently, three conversations changed my perspective on what it will take to develop leaders for the future church.

**1. The Airport:** My conversation with an Army officer who was lamenting over how difficult it had become to recruit soldiers felt that something more than international events was to blame — a lack of willingness on the part of young people to live lives of sacrifice.

**2. The Airplane:** Sitting beside the president of a nursing school who worried young people have so much competition for their talents that convincing them to serve the public in a highly stressful profession, like nursing, was becoming a tough sell, unless they were reached very young. When I asked how young, she replied, “the fifth grade.”

**3. The Church:** In a Texas church, a technical producer told me he brings young people into his team at age 12. They have both the time and the schooling that older people lack.

My conclusion from these conversations was that the church must develop ways to identify and cultivate leaders much younger than the current norm. Waiting for a call to ministry at youth camp may be too late in today’s context. While no one can control the call of God, pastors can help young people open their hearts to considering it. Our own example is the key.

**My major recommendation:** Never do anything alone — take a young person with you.

Be a leader worth following.

**EARL CREPS**, doctor of ministry director, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

## MINISTRY LIFE

### IT CANNOT BE THIS EASY

*Parents’ spiritual growth may be the catalyst to your youth group’s spiritual growth.*

A survey of 10,000 teenagers, assessed these students’ current commitment to Christ on a continuum from “fringe” to “I’d die for Him.” The more committed students were asked to list the primary reasons they had grown deep in the Lord. The four reasons that emerged as the crucial elements to teenagers’ spiritual growth seem so obvious as to be hidden from many youth ministers.

#### Parents

About one in five Christian students said their parents are the No. 1 catalyst to their spiritual growth. Another fifth of the students said their parents’ influence is No. 2 or 3.

#### Youth pastor or adult leader

One in six students said a leader was the top influence in their lives.

#### A tragedy, crisis, or great struggle

One in seven students said their greatest struggle in life led them to their greatest spiritual growth.

#### Friends

Nearly one in eight said their friends were the greatest help in their growing more committed to Christ.

Lurking right in front of youth ministers are the resources that need empowerment. The primary insight: Invest in parents’ spiritual growth: it may be the catalyst to your youth group’s spiritual growth.

**BYRON D. KLAUS**, D.Min., president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

#### ENDNOTE:

See <http://www.youthworkers.net/parents>

See <http://www.youthministry.com>



## FIELD TRIP

### POSTMODERN STUDENT PRAYER INTERVENTION



“Teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). Those four words constitute one of the disciples’ best-ever requests of Jesus. His response — a clear example and simple instructions — combined with a powerful and consistent witness introduced His followers to the power of prayer. How can we do the same for young believers today?

Chuck Haavik, Chi Alpha minister at the University of Minnesota at Duluth, asked the same question. He wanted to find a way to bring postmodern believers into a positive experience with prayer. He says, “The very characteristics that make many postmoderns leery of prayer packaged as religious duty (for example, the demand for authenticity, low regard for authority and tradition) also make them perfect candidates for a life of prayer based on desire for God.” Many college students, like most believers, understand the importance of prayer and desire to pray, but do not know how. Assuming they will learn on

## U ASKED!

"I WISH MY YOUTH PASTOR KNEW..."



"I wish my youth pastor knew how sensitive I really am, and how I really desire to break out of my shyness."  
—Lindsay, age 18, Arkansas

"I wish my youth pastor knew that I have a lot of great ideas and influences that could help us win more souls to the kingdom of God because the world today is totally different than 20 years ago, and I believe that there are changes in the cultural life of young people today."  
—Christabel, Florida



"I wish my youth pastor knew that I wanted to start a youth worship band."  
—Ricky, age 17, Ohio

"I wish my youth pastor knew what I am struggling with in my home and with my family."  
—Alexandra, age 18, New York

"I wish my youth pastor knew that I love God with all my heart and soul and might and that I thirst for certain changes among our youth activities that would help us seek Him more in unity and harmony."  
—Heydi, age 18, New York

"I wish my youth pastor knew about what I have been going through with my friends in the youth group. One of my friends is falling away from God and is starting to use drugs and alcohol."  
—Amanda, age 15

"I wish my youth pastor knew that I never read my Bible until now. I also wish my youth pastor knew that I never used to come to church because I always made excuses. But now I stopped doing that, and I am fully aware that if I turn around now then I know where I am going to end up."  
—Talifiaai, age 16, Hawaii

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their own or by fervent exhortation only sets them up for failure.

Haavik chose to unite Pentecostal theology and tradition with the best of the contemplative prayer tradition. He created a "retreat in daily life" approach called the Journey of Prayer. During the 12-day experience, both individual and corporate prayer and instruction times were scheduled. The methodology emphasized silence, the examen of consciousness, journaling, intercession, and gifts of the Spirit. A scriptural environment anchored the journey with accounts from the Gospels and Upper Room passages.

The successful intervention brought about many significant changes in the participants' prayer lives, including increased regularity of daily prayer, more time spent listening for God's voice, using Scripture in prayer, focus during prayer, understanding of the Holy Spirit, and general satisfaction with prayer and its effectiveness. Qualitative results were equally impressive, testifying to deeper relationships with the Lord, hunger for prayer, and growing faith. For more information on the Journey of Prayer, contact Chuck Haavik at [shaavik@viafamily.com](mailto:shaavik@viafamily.com).

**LORI O'DEA**, teaching and small groups pastor, The Oaks Fellowship, Red Oaks, Texas

## LEADERLIFE

SLASHING THROUGH RED TAPE — HOW TO MAKE MEETINGS MORE PRODUCTIVE



Leadership is a life of meetings. The books and Web sites devoted to the topic often portray the bold individual slashing through red tape and projecting vision at 50,000 lumens.

Most days are not like that. Usually you are sitting around a table with 4 to 8 other tired people trying to figure out how to solve a problem. Here are a few thoughts (some serious, some not) on how to make meetings more productive:

1. Have a metameeting to discuss how good your meetings are. We let meetings happen as if they are easy and inevitably successful. They are not. If they were inherently productive, why do most people go to them so reluctantly?

2. Buy Patrick Lencioni's book, *Death by Meeting*. One of my teammates trained our team in this system and greatly improved our ability to make sure the right things were getting done right.

3. Set time limits for everything and talk about the important things first. Do little things by e-mail before the meeting, big stuff right at the top, medium stuff (like minutes) at the end, and set a drop-dead time at which the meeting ends.

4. Let meeting leadership flow to the best person. I do not lead our team meetings because one of my teammates (maybe all of them) is better at it than I am. So, having someone else run the meeting keeps us on track. On specific issues, leadership can float to whoever is best suited. Just because you are the nominal boss does not mean you have the skills to optimize meetings, or the best ideas.

**EARL CREPS**, doctor of ministry director, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary



# CURRENT TRENDS



## NEW POLL SHOWS THAT AMERICAN TEENS HAVE AN INCREASINGLY STRONG ETHICAL COMPASS — BUT MANY LACK THE COURAGE OF THEIR CONVICTIONS

*Potential to cave under pressure suggests continued education and support are needed.*

An encouraging shift in teens' attitudes on ethics has emerged in a new poll released by JA Worldwide (Junior Achievement) and Deloitte & Touche USA LLP (Deloitte). As an indication that teenagers may be fine-tuning their ability to make ethical decisions, the number of teens who say they

would act unethically to get ahead if there was no chance of getting caught has dropped to 22 percent, down from 33 percent in 2003.

However, while exhibiting a strong sense of ethical principles, many teens don't have the courage of their convictions when faced with pressure from above. More than 40 percent of teens admitted they might act unethically if instructed by their boss, and more than a third of teens would likely lie to their boss to cover up a mistake they made at work.

"We believe it is incumbent upon organizations to create a culture that values personal integrity and expects ethical behavior," said James H. Quigley, CEO of Deloitte & Touche USA LLP. "When students tell us they can be swayed under pressure, it's a call for help. Supporting education and dialogue about ethical decision making is an important way we can encourage kids who may have difficulty making the right choice, and it's a long-term investment in fostering a high standard of integrity in the marketplace."

In other findings, the poll shows that the positive relationship between business ethics and professional success continues to resonate with teens. The percentage of teens who believe "people who practice good business ethics are more successful in business than those who don't" has jumped to 69 percent this year, up from 56 percent in 2003. The number of teens who think "you have to bend the rules to succeed" has also declined.

"These poll results indicate that teens are aware of the importance of good ethics. They know the 'right answer' when faced with an ethical dilemma, but need support and ethics education to follow through on that knowledge," said David S. Chernow, president and chief executive officer of JA Worldwide.

Junior Achievement's "Excellence through Ethics" is a Deloitte-sponsored business ethics curriculum, the third edition of which has just been released. The goals of the curriculum include bringing the issue of business ethics to the forefront of students' minds, providing students the tools and training they need to become ethical business leaders, and having a positive impact on the business leaders of tomorrow and on society. It is used in all JA programs for grades 4–12 in the United States. For more information about "Excellence through Ethics," visit <http://www.ja.org/ethics>.

**SOURCE:** [http://www.ja.org/about/about\\_newsitem.asp?StoryID=293](http://www.ja.org/about/about_newsitem.asp?StoryID=293)

## NEW POLL SHOWS 10 PERCENT OF TEENS USE CREDIT CARDS

*15.7 percent of teens who own credit cards make only the minimum payment due.*

It would take a teen making minimum payments more than 9 years and almost \$2,000 in interest fees to pay off a \$1,000 balance on a credit card with an 18 percent annual interest rate. And, as teens get older, they tend to own credit and debit cards in increasing numbers, according to the 2006 Interprise™ Poll on Teens and Personal Finance conducted by JA Worldwide (Junior Achievement) and The Allstate Foundation. Consistent with the results of last year's findings, more than 10 percent (10.3 percent) of respondents indicated that they own credit cards. As teens grow older, incidence of credit card ownership consistently climbs; among teens ages 13–14, only 5 percent reported owning credit cards. Yet at age 17, the percentage of ownership climbs to 9.8 percent and then doubles again to 19.6 percent for teens 18 or older, and alarmingly, 15.7 percent of teens who own credit cards make only the minimum payment.

**SOURCE:** [http://www.ja.org/about/about\\_newsitem.asp?StoryID=325](http://www.ja.org/about/about_newsitem.asp?StoryID=325)





# EMERGING REALITIES

## SEX EDUCATION IN AMERICA



The debate over whether to have sex education in American schools is over. A new poll by NPR, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government finds that only 7 percent of Americans say sex education should not be taught in schools. Moreover, in most places there is even little debate about what kind of sex education should be taught, although there are still pockets of controversy. Parents are generally content with whatever sex education is offered by their children's school. Few public school principals report being contacted by elected officials, religious leaders, or other people in their communities about sex education.

When it comes to the general approach to teaching sex and sexuality in the schools, Americans divide almost evenly. Respondents were asked to choose which of two statements was closer to their belief: (1) "When it comes to sex, teenagers need to have limits set; they must be told what is acceptable and what is not." Or (2) "ultimately teenagers need to make their own decisions,

so their education needs to be more in the form of providing information and guidance." Forty-seven percent selected the first statement; 51 percent selected the second. Conservatives were much more likely to choose the first statement over the second (64 percent to 32 percent), as were Evangelical or born-again Christians (61 percent to 35 percent). Liberals and moderates were more likely to choose the second statement over the first (61 percent to 37 percent for liberals and 56 percent to 42 percent for moderates).

Evangelical or born-again Christians also have different views on many questions about sex education. Twelve percent of them say sex education should not be taught in schools — a small number, but three times the percentage found among non-Evangelicals (4 percent). Moreover, more than twice as many Evangelicals as non-Evangelicals (49 percent to 21 percent) believe the government should fund abstinence-only programs instead of using the money for more comprehensive sex education. And on what should be taught in sex-education classes, Evangelicals are much more likely than non-Evangelicals to think certain topics are inappropriate. (See Table.) ▼

**THE HENRY J. KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION** is a nonprofit, private operating foundation focusing on the major health care issues facing the nation. The Foundation is an independent voice and source of facts and analysis for policymakers, the media, the health-care community, and the general public.

| TOPIC<br>(percentage saying it should not be taught at all)                                                         | EVANGELICALS | NON-EVANGELICALS |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| That teens can obtain birth control pills from family planning clinics and doctors without permission from a parent | 42           | 20               |
| Oral sex                                                                                                            | 41           | 20               |
| Homosexuality and sexual orientation                                                                                | 37           | 18               |
| Masturbation                                                                                                        | 27           | 13               |
| How to put on a condom                                                                                              | 26           | 9                |
| How to use and where to get contraceptives                                                                          | 21           | 7                |

Don't know/refused responses are not shown.



## THE HIM BEHIND THE HYMN A SAFE PLACE TO HIDE

When the story of Corrie ten Boom was dramatized in a major motion picture, a young British-born hymnist was commissioned to write a song. The assignment was to capture in both lyrics and melody the spirit of the screenplay that championed God's faithfulness in the life of a Dutch Christian who lost most of her family in the holocaust.

Bryan Jeffery Leech responded to the challenge by writing, "In a time of trouble, in a time forlorn, there is a hiding place where hope is born."

Much to his surprise, the song was not included in the movie as promised. Leech was profoundly disappointed. What he had spent countless hours creating was left on the cutting room floor. He reflected that this season of his life was deeply troubling for him personally. He felt forlorn, and he ached for a hiding place where his hope could be born anew. The lyrics he wrote for others became words that expressed the desires of his own heart.

Although largely unknown by the average churchgoer, Bryan Jeffery Leech is one of the most prolific hymnists of this generation, having written scores of hymn texts and melodies. Apart from "The Hiding Place," he is also well-known in evangelical circles for his hymns: "We Are God's People" and "Kind and Merciful God."

Sadly, the disappointment associated with the exclusion of

his song from the film is not the only time Leech longed for a hiding place where his hurting heart could be comforted. His parents divorced when he was a child. Their separation caused him great distress. When Bryan was a teenager, his father promised to provide for his education at Cambridge University in England. For this obviously gifted student this news was cause for inexpressible joy. But, alas, his father failed to come through.

Throughout his adult life, Leech documents a series of blows and setbacks that have bruised his spirit. No wonder many of his hymns provide a means of expression for those needing a safe place to hide from misfortune. But no one hymn says it quite like "The Hiding Place."

"In a time of trouble, in a time forlorn,  
There is a hiding place where hope is born.  
In a time of danger, when our faith is proved  
There is a hiding place where we are loved.

"There is a hiding place, a strong protective space,  
Where God provides the grace to persevere;  
For nothing can remove us from the Father's love,  
Tho' all may change, yet nothing changes here.

"In a time of sorrow, in a time of grief,  
There is a hiding place to give relief.  
In a time of weakness, in a time of fear,  
There is a hiding place where God is near."

**GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS**, Mercer Island, Washington

## FAITH AND FAMILY HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR FISHBOWL FAMILIES

The families of virtually all Pentecostal pastors feel as though they exist in a fishbowl, a recent survey by Ellison Research indicates.

The study found that 97 percent of Pentecostal preachers agreed that "there is extra pressure being married to a minister." Of the seven denominational categories surveyed, this ties Southern Baptists with the highest percentage holding such a belief. The average for all faith groups is 94 percent.

In addition, a whopping 99 percent of Pentecostal clergy sense "there is extra pressure being the child of a minister." Presbyterians had the next highest rate, at 96 percent, while the average among all groups is 91 percent.

Pentecostals also had the highest ratio, 93 percent, agreeing with the statement that "churchgoers often expect pastors' families to be 'better than' other people's families. Southern Baptists had a close second with 92 percent agreement, 88 percent being the average.

Six out of 10 Pentecostal ministers are concerned that their role as pastor leaves them insufficient time for their

family. While that figure is the same for Protestant clergy in general, Southern Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians all had higher rates for that question.

Eighty-two percent of Pentecostal pastors say they have a healthy relationship with their spouse, just 1 percent lower than the denominational average. Pentecostals had the highest healthy relationship with their children, 88 percent, compared to an overall rating of 86 percent.

The study determined that 88 percent of evangelical ministers are in their first marriage and 92 percent have children. Fourteen percent of ministers are themselves the child of a minister.

**JOHN W. KENNEDY**, *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*



## WHAT IN THE WORLD

### SUNDAYS AT ST. ARBUCKS

Mercer Island, Washington, boasts only 22,000 people. It is roughly the same size and shape as Manhattan Island, New York. Because it is just a bridge away from downtown Seattle, it has more to offer than most sparsely populated islands in Puget Sound. For example, since Starbucks Coffee Company is headquartered in the Emerald City, six Starbucks stores are on Mercer Island. Two are directly across the street from each other.

But Starbucks is not just a watering hole for people intent on having their daily dose of caffeine. In this small community, the various vendors of venti lattes are extensions of the 12 churches on the island. At any hour of any day Christians gather in the coffee shops with the green and white logos for committee meetings, prayer, Bible studies, and one-on-one discipleship. On Sundays, church members stop at the Bucks on the way home to sip the drip of the day and debrief the sermon. It is such a common occurrence on Mercer Island that one pastor has started to refer to Starbucks as St. Arbucks.



When pressed to explain what he meant, Pastor Reg said, "For one thing, the kind of community one usually sees at the local Starbucks is the very thing you

hope to see in your church. People are cared for and called by name. There is a sense of belonging. But then again, I think it is tremendous that churches are seeing the local coffee conveyor as an extension of the church building. What we do as Christians does not need to be done within the walls of the church. It can be done among those we are trying to reach."

**GREG ASIMAKOUPoulos**, Mercer Island, Washington

## UTH TRAX

### WILDLY POPULAR SOCIAL NETWORK SITES ATTRACT TEENS

*Facebook. Myspace. Xanga. Tagworld.* Do these words mean anything to you?

They do to teens.

The world is getting smaller as people (mostly teens and college students) connect in these popular social network sites.

What are they? They are communities where one can post basic personal information, create a unique identity, and share his or her thoughts, like an online diary. Sites can be personalized with one's favorite music, books, movies, and quotes, as well as creative skins. These communities are like a giant spider web. Teens interact and link to each other as they add friends, leave comments, and subscribe to or post member blogs or bulletins.

These sites can be powerful ministry tools. I have a *Xanga* and am linked to many of the youth in my church. I also have a *Myspace* and can post bulletins or messages of encouragement. Through these sites, I am invited into a teen's daily world.

Many teens have discovered that these communities are a way to share their faith. Tim Sweetman (<http://www.agen-timonline.com/>) is a 15-year old who receives thousands of hits from readers around the world. He is on a mission to revive teens to regenerate their culture with a biblical worldview.



But there is a darker side. Since the Internet has been a presence in a teen's life from birth, they often fail to realize the danger of sharing information on the World Wide Web. One young girl recently expressed her hurt over a boyfriend's rejection on her *Xanga*.

She posted her phone number, saying, "Call me, I'm lonely." This information was intended for friends, but any person (or predator) could find it by googling the words "*Xanga*" and "I'm lonely." Her site lists her city, state, and name, as well as photos of her and her friends.

These sites are also addictive. One recent study showed that 60 percent of members log in daily. Most students I talked to said that they checked for comments several times a day. The words they used to describe their activity were: *Addictive*.

*Hooked. Junkies.*

Are these communities a good thing? According to teens, yes. Are there negative aspects that both teens and adults must be aware of? Absolutely. But one thing is clear. These wildly popular networks are not going away any time soon. Perhaps now is a good time to discover where your teens are spending their time.

- <http://www.xanga.com>
- <http://www.myspace.com>
- <http://www.tagworld.com>
- <http://www.blogspot.com>
- <http://www.facebook.com> (must be a high school student or college student and link through edu sites)

**T. SUZANNE ELLER**, Muskogee, Oklahoma



# PROFILES

## NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH: A HIGH-TECH TABERNACLE IN A WIRED WORLD

Mark and Laura Batterson have a dream: to plant and pastor a church for life. Their passion for deep-rooted ministry was established early.

"Laura's dad, Bob Schmidgall, was a huge influence on me," Mark says. "He planted and pastored Calvary Church in Naperville, Illinois, for 30 years. I saw in him that if you invest yourself in one place and pour your life into it, you can have some serious impact."

But National Community Church, taking shape in the heart of Washington, D.C., falls well outside the paradigm for permanence most people envision. No imposing sanctuary. No education wing. No sprawling acres of blacktop parking space — at least none owned by the church.

NCC's primary home is Union Station, a retail and transportation hub that draws 25 million visitors a year.

"It's the most visited destination in Washington," Mark says.

Another portion of the NCC family gathers at Ballston Common Mall in nearby Arlington, Virginia.

Both sites are rented movie theaters. A third site, Ebenezers, a 6,500-square-foot coffeehouse, was extensively restored before opening last year. Just a block from Union Station and opposite the largest office building in Washington, the shop is a thriving hub of caffeine-laced evangelism throughout the week.

About 1,000 people make their church home at one of NCC's campuses. Thanks to NCC's online presence ([www.theaterchurch.com](http://www.theaterchurch.com)) — with links to Batterson's Podcast sermons, E-votion blog and video Podcasts and Webcasts — thousands more around the world connect with the church at some level.

"Three core convictions drive how we do church," Mark says, "First, the church ought to be the most creative place on the planet. Second, the greatest message deserves the greatest marketing. Third, the church belongs in the middle of the marketplace."

If the church were a corporation, Batterson believes NCC would function as the research and development department.

"We feel called to experiment with new ways of doing church," he says, "of reaching emerging generations, of creatively communicating a timeless message."

When the Battersons came to Washington in 1994, their plans were far more traditional.

"I went into church planting with the mindset that you meet in rented facilities until you can buy or build a building," Mark says.

In 1996, NCC involved a core group of 19 people and met in a local public school.

"When the school closed because of fire code violations, God opened an amazing door of opportunity in the movie theaters at Union Station," Mark says. "I realized there is no way we could buy or build a Union Station. Doing church in the middle of the marketplace became part of our spiritual DNA."

Average attendance grew from 35 in 1996 to 150 in 1999. That number swelled to 250 by 2001, 700 by 2003, and 800 last year. E-mails, sermon series, movie trailers, postcards, brochures, and other promotional tools drive the growth. With more than \$200,000 given to missions last year, this is growth with a heart for outreach.

And attendance at NCC goes far beyond the weekend gatherings. The church operates 61 small groups, with something offered every day of the week.

"Small groups is how we do discipleship at NCC," Mark says.

For relationships to grow within the politically charged Beltway, politics have to be left at the door. Many NCC

members work in congressional offices for both parties.

"We have tried from day one to remain apolitical," Mark says. "Most of our congregation lives, eats, and breathes politics Monday through Friday. We want to focus on building people up spiritually and helping them in their walk with Christ and letting that inform their politics whichever side of the aisle they're on."

Long-range plans envision a network of NCC gathering points at theaters across D.C. It is a unique dream aimed at meeting the region's unique needs. An annual conference ([www.buzzconference.com](http://www.buzzconference.com)) will offer like-minded pastors encouragement and insight for multiplying their ministries.

"In the Old Testament, you had the temple and the tabernacle," Mark says. "The tabernacle was the first mobile church. It could go where the people needed to go. We kind of view ourselves as a tabernacle church. Temples and tabernacles are both great. We're called to be a tabernacle."

**SCOTT HARRUP**, associate editor, *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*







## Ask the Superintendent — **Impacting This Generation for Christ**

**G**eneral Superintendent Thomas E. Trask is optimistic about the future of Assemblies of God youth ministries. His optimism is buoyed by a sense of limitless opportunity the church has to connect and communicate the message of hope to this generation of young people. During his recent visit with *Enrichment* journal, he discussed a number of important issues surrounding student ministries. His insightful and practical remarks will be fodder for both senior and youth pastors as they labor together to impact this generation for Christ.

**THE CHURCH TODAY IS LOSING MANY YOUNG PEOPLE. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE YOUTH IN OUR CHURCHES?**

**TRASK:** Youth bring the church a spirit of adventure, excitement, and faith. A special simplicity is found in the hearts of youth.

Our young people are not only the church of tomorrow, they are also a vital part of the church of today. Scripture says, “Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream

**If a church only has young people,  
IT WILL BLOW UP.**

**If a church has only old people,  
IT WILL DRY UP.**

**But if a church has both young and old people,  
IT WILL GROW UP.**

dreams” (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). God did not arrange it that way by accident. If a church only has young people, it will blow up. If a church only has old people, it will dry up. But if a church has both young and old people, it will grow up. The church needs both.

**HOW CAN SENIOR PASTORS BETTER SUPPORT THEIR YOUTH PASTORS?**

**TRASK:** A senior pastor is pastor over the entire church. The church may have a youth pastor who ministers to the youth, but the senior pastor is still responsible for the church’s youth ministry.

To stand with the youth pastor and support him, the senior pastor needs to know what is happening in the youth ministry. The senior pastor should



give the youth pastor opportunity to promote youth ministry to the body of Christ.

One thing was reconfirmed at General Council in Denver, Colorado, when the youth were brought into the closing services — the appreciation adults have for young people. It also gave the Fellowship opportunity to see what God is doing in today's youth.

A youth pastor may make mistakes because he is learning, but even senior pastors make mistakes. In spite of the mistakes the youth pastor may make, the senior pastor needs to stand with him, support him, let him know the role God has given him is vital to the church, and that he and his ministry are appreciated. This encouragement will help the youth pastor understand that he is making a significant contribution to the church.

#### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR THE YOUTH PASTOR TO UNDERSTAND THE SENIOR PASTOR'S VISION?

**TRASK:** The overall vision for a church must come through the senior pastor's leadership. It is important that the youth pastor understand the senior pastor's vision and align his vision for youth ministry with the senior pastor's overall vision. Otherwise, the church could go in many different directions. Staff and ministries must be synchronized like gears. When gears are synchronized, they do not grind. In synchronization, the overall vision of the church can be reached because the church operates in harmony.

#### THE AVERAGE TERM OF A YOUTH PASTOR IS 9 TO 12 MONTHS. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO INCREASE YOUTH PASTORS' TENURES?

**TRASK:** First, youth ministry must not be viewed as a stepping-stone to another ministry position. In many cases, however, a youth pastor will eventually become a senior pastor or an associate or senior associate pastor.

Second, a youth pastor must know he has been called to youth ministry. If a youth pastor views his ministry as a call to minister to youth and to serve the church, he will put his efforts and energies into fulfilling the call.

Third, a youth pastor cannot fulfill his call in 9 months, any more than a senior pastor can accomplish his call in 9 months. For a youth ministry to bear fruit, it needs time to grow. Many youth pastors never see the fruit of their ministry because they do not stay long enough.

#### MENTORING YOUNG LEADERS WHOM GOD HAS CALLED INTO MINISTRY IS IMPORTANT. DESCRIBE WHAT PROVISIONS ARE AVAILABLE TO SENIOR PASTORS TO FACILITATE MENTORING.

**TRASK:** Mentoring is valuable. The General Council in Washington, D.C., enacted legislation to facilitate mentoring in our Fellowship. When a senior pastor recognizes God has called someone in his congregation to full-time ministry, he can provide that person with credentials recognized by his church. Once the person is credentialed, the senior pastor is responsible to mentor and nurture him in the ministry.

Providing credentials elevates the person's call in the minds of the people. People realize that the newly credentialed person is not merely fulfilling a responsibility because he has a call to ministry, but his ministry has been recognized by the senior pastor. This facilitates mentoring and helps young leaders grow and develop their ministry.

#### EXPLAIN THE BENEFITS OF NETWORKING AND PROVIDING INTERACTION BETWEEN YOUTH FROM OTHER CHURCHES — URBAN, SUBURBAN, AND RURAL?

**TRASK:** Networking between church ministries and young people is important. Local churches — urban, suburban, and rural — can cooperate to do many things, such as outreach ministries. Assemblies of God churches can even partner with evangelical churches and youth groups of other denominations. Many activities can be done successfully when churches partner.

### Youth ministry must not be viewed as a **STEPPING-STONE** to another ministry position.

#### WHAT CULTURAL SHIFTS AFFECT YOUTH TODAY?

**TRASK:** Culture is always changing. What was "in" in my day is not "in" today. J.B. Phillips, in his *New Testament in Modern English*, translates Romans 12:2 this way: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold but let God remold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves toward the goal of true maturity."<sup>1</sup> The challenge is to not to copy the culture in which we live. The church should



be originators, not imitators. If youth pastors are not careful, they can let the culture of the world enter the church through the youth. This would negatively impact the church. Pastors must guard against this danger.

### MANY OF TODAY'S YOUTH KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT, BUT THEY HAVE DIFFICULTY DOING WHAT IS RIGHT. THEY OFTEN MAKE CHOICES BASED ON WHAT IS CONVENIENT. HOW CAN YOUTH PASTORS HELP THEM IN DECISION MAKING?

**TRASK:** Learning how to make God-honoring decisions needs to begin at home. But what young people are taught at home needs to be reaffirmed by the church and pastoral leadership.

Today's youth need to know that it might not be popular to take a stand, but it is still the right thing to do. They need to know God will help and strengthen them.

Christians cannot live with one foot in the world and one foot in the church. Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Matthew 6:24). Scripture also says: "Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord" (2 Corinthians 6:17). That is not always popular.

When I attended school, it was not popular to be Pentecostal or a Christian. Pentecostal Christians were a small minority then. However, in many circles today, it is much easier for a young person to be a Christian because there are more Christians and their influence has impacted the culture. That is healthy.

My grandson is a Spirit-filled Christian and is new in the school system. He noticed students who were wearing a band around their wrist. He asked his dad what the wristbands stood for. His dad said the students had committed themselves to purity. That makes a statement. When others see a commitment to Christ, it strengthens their commitments.

### DESCRIBE THE VALUE OF CORPORATE WORSHIP WHERE YOUTH AND ADULTS PARTICIPATE TOGETHER.

**TRASK:** Several valuable things take place when youth and adults worship together. First, adults learn about what youth face today. Young people face temptations that today's adults did not face when they were teenagers. There were no drugs or pornography when I was in school. During times of corporate worship the adults are given opportunity to say, "We will pray for you. We stand with you. We support you. We love you."

Second, corporate worship creates bonds between adults

and youth. These friendships can have lasting value.

Third, youth develop an appreciation for adults — those who have already borne the heat of the day. It is proper to honor those who have gone before us. There is value in giving "everyone what you owe him: If you owe ... respect, then respect; if honor, then honor" (Romans 13:7). There is beauty in seeing young people honor and respect adults. This pleases the Lord, and is the first commandment with a promise (Ephesians 6:2).

### HOW CAN WE CLOSE THE REAL OR PERCEIVED GAPS BETWEEN GENERATIONS?

**TRASK:** The gaps between generations can be closed when people show tolerance in love. Christians do not need to be rigid, but flexible. I heard an elderly saint in one church say, "I do not necessarily like some of this new music, but it is ministering to the young people. And it is better for them to enjoy music in the church than to go out into the world to enjoy it." That sentiment shows maturity. It was not a matter of what she liked; it was a matter of what was ministering to the young people. When the church shows this kind of maturity, young people will stay in church. If adults become critical, the young people will leave. The church must turn them toward Jesus.

### ANY CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON STUDENT MINISTRIES?

**TRASK:** I am encouraged at the level of commitment from the youth in the Assemblies of God today. The commitment of young people in our churches is as great as any time in the history of our Fellowship. They have a passion for Jesus, for their friends, and for the lost. They have boldness. They

## The church needs to hand the BATON TO THESE YOUNG PEOPLE. Let them run.

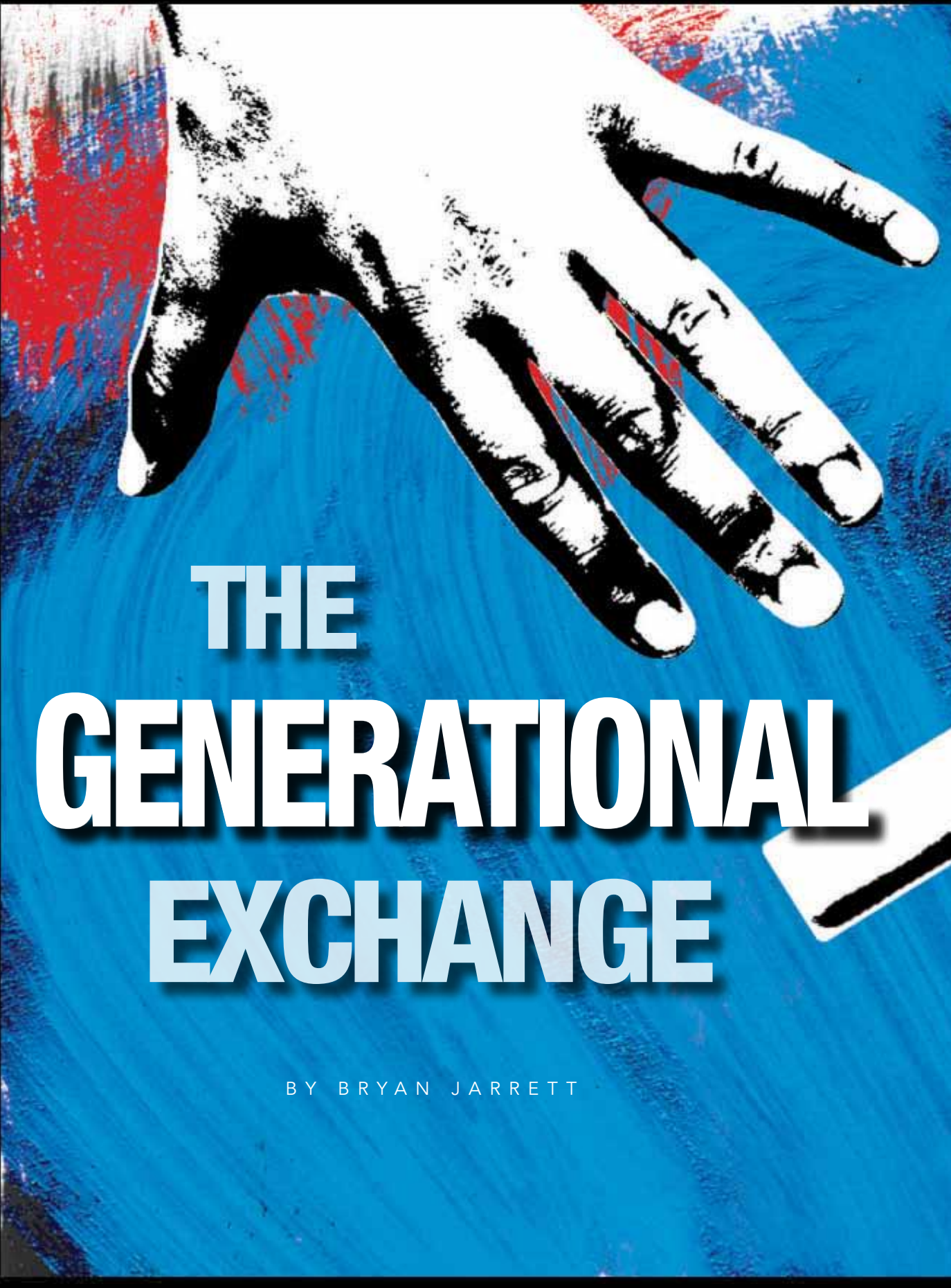
gather at flagpoles across the nation and pray unashamedly. These young people carry their Bibles to school.

If the Lord tarries, the church of tomorrow will be in good hands. Our Fellowship has young men and women who have passed through young adulthood and have become great pastors, associate pastors, missionaries, and evangelists. The church needs to hand the baton to these young people. Let them run. Do not hold them back. Let them run, because they will run the race well. ■

#### ENDNOTE:

1. Scripture quotations marked "Phillips" are taken from *The New Testament in Modern English*, copyright © 1958, 1959, 1960 J.B. Phillips and 1947, 1952, 1955, 1957 The Macmillan Company, New York. Used by permission. All rights reserved.





# THE GENERATIONAL EXCHANGE

BY BRYAN JARRETT



*The following is an abridgment of a message that was delivered during the Friday evening combined adult and youth rally at the 51st General Council of the Assemblies of God in Denver, Colorado, August 5, 2005. The full online audio and video streaming of this message can be played at: [www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org](http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org), then click on current issue.*

I am a product of AG youth ministry. During my adolescence my mom, a single parent, attended a small Pentecostal church that offered no youth or children's ministry. Intuitively sensing rebellion in my preteen years, she started looking for a Spirit-filled church that had a viable youth ministry. This led her to an Assemblies of God church in a small farm town in eastern Arkansas.

This church's youth ministry introduced me to Assemblies of God youth camps where my passion was ignited for God. There I met a girl who has been my bride for more than 12 years and is the mother of our three children. My family has crisscrossed this nation pouring our lives back into the churches and camps that so powerfully impacted us.

In this church's youth ministry I heard about Central Bible College. There my wife and I were given the foundations for Pentecostal ministry and developed countless lasting relationships.

Today I serve this Fellowship as a local pastor, continually drawing from the foundation given to me by AG youth ministry. I owe a debt to this Fellowship and its youth ministry.

My assignment tonight is difficult: Build a bridge between the generations. My message, however, is simple.

On the other hand is the younger generation. They are as passionate as the pioneers of this Pentecostal church and have an amazing potential to expand the Kingdom in this world. But they have become weary with church as usual, with legalistic expectations, and with conditional blessings.

The younger generation needs the church to provide a consistent example in an ever-changing world. At the same time, they need the church to stop forcing cultural and geographical man-made convictions onto their faith and calling it gospel. In

**ANY RELUCTANCE TO TAKE THE BATON IS USUALLY DUE TO THE  
CONDITIONS WE HAVE ATTACHED TO IT.  
THE YOUNGER GENERATION IS RELUCTANT TO TAKE THE MAN-MADE  
BAGGAGE ASSOCIATED WITH IT.**

Two unique Scripture passages speak to us. The first is Genesis 27:32–34: “Isaac his father said to him, ‘Who are you?’ And he said, ‘I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.’ Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, ‘Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate of all of it before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed.’ When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, ‘Bless me, even me also, O my father.’”<sup>1</sup>

The second passage is 2 Timothy 1:13,14: “Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.”

The first passage records a terrible tragedy; the second is a timeless challenge.

Before I speak of terrible tragedies and timeless challenges, let me address the titanic distrust that exists among the generations.

## **TITANIC DISTRUST**

On one hand is the older generation. Many of them have given their lives as missionaries, pastors, and hardworking laypeople to guard and further the full-gospel message. They have poured out their sweat and tears and spilled their blood to build this church. They do not want to die having kept their faith to themselves.

The older generation is looking for someone in whom they can deposit their faith, or as Paul put it, they are looking for someone in whom they can deposit the trust of the full gospel (1 Timothy 1:11; 1 Timothy 6:20). However, they are reluctant to make that deposit for fear that their faith, their church, and the trust will be diluted, altered, or even forsaken.

my lifetime, I have noticed that the church now readily accepts many things it once called sinful. Our students are confused.

Young people are not reluctant to take the faith, to guard the biblical trust, or to carry the Pentecostal message. In fact, some of them are waiting with their hands outstretched to receive the baton. Many would have already taken the baton if given opportunity.

Any reluctance to take the baton is usually due to the conditions we have attached to it. The younger generation is reluctant to take the man-made baggage associated with it. They are reluctant when forced to do it the way it has always been done. They are not afraid of the message. They are afraid of the baggage we have attached to it.

One generation is reluctant to give and the other is reluctant to receive. This titanic distrust between the generations has placed the future of this Pentecostal church in a vulnerable state. We may have some of the most talented young people in America, some of the greatest churches and preachers in the world, and the greatest missionary enterprise known to man; but if we do not properly exchange the baton between generations, the Assemblies of God could end as fast as it started.

Ironically, I understand the reluctance of both generations. Because of family issues, my mom and I lived in my grandparents' home during the greater part of my early teen years. The father figure and greatest male influence in my life has been my 83-year-old grandfather. He was a bivocational Pentecostal pastor of a small rural church.

He was and still is as rough as sandpaper and as tough as steel. He preached on one of three subjects every Sunday: heaven, hell, or the Holy Ghost. He preached holiness so strongly and heaven so hard to reach that the only way to get through the narrow gate was to turn sideways and suck in.

I love my grandfather. I love his generation. I love their





loyalty, dedication, discipline, steadfastness, conviction, spirit, fire, and their commitment to the full-gospel message. I am indebted to them and owe them much.

On the other hand, I was born into a different generation, and my generation is struggling with reaching our world without compromising the standards of our forefathers. We are struggling to find the balance between cultural relevance and ancient truth. We have a biblical mandate to reach our world, but realize the methods of our forefathers are no longer working. We are looking for ways to reach our friends and grow our churches while maintaining the integrity of the faith that has been handed down to us.

For this reason, students, I ask you to move from this titanic distrust and rise to the timeless challenge given to Timothy.

## A TIMELESS CHALLENGE

Students, you are a Timothy. Paul's challenge to Timothy was to "retain the standard" and "guard the good deposit."

The younger generation needs to understand that Assemblies of God churches and functions, such as youth ministries in particular, only exist because someone went before them. Today's young people can stand tall only because they are standing on someone else's shoulders.

Nearly 90 years ago, my great-grandmother attended a brush arbor revival on the banks of an eastern Arkansas river. There she heard the Pentecostal message for the first time. She witnessed the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear, the lost saved, and believers baptized in the Holy Spirit. She and others were ridiculed, had things thrown at them, and

eventually were kicked out of their churches because of their new Pentecostal experience.

She deposited her faith in her son, who deposited his faith in his daughter, who deposited her faith in me. There is too much at stake for us to fail to guard the trust. Do not take for granted the faith that has been deposited in you. We must guard the trust.

I love the younger generation, and I am for them. But if the older generation seems somewhat reluctant to give them their blessing, it may be because they have reason to be.

**MY GENERATION IS STRUGGLING WITH REACHING  
OUR WORLD WITHOUT COMPROMISING  
THE STANDARDS OF OUR FOREFATHERS.**

Most of the younger generation do not make decisions based on conviction, but on convenience. They have made "me" as the center of their universe, and when things — relationships, ministry, and even the church — cease to benefit "me," they walk out on them.

In a recent article, Jay Mooney, our national youth director, quotes the Southern Baptist Convention's Council on the Family, which states that the loss rate of evangelical students within 1 year of high school graduation is now as high as 88 percent. This means nearly 9 out of 10 young adults are not in church only 1 year after high school graduation. Instead of guarding the trust, many of the younger generation are trading the trust or walking away from the trust.

Books have been written on the biblical illiteracy of the American culture, especially the youth culture. Some say the young generation is the most biblically illiterate generation

in American history. No one denies their passion, and few people would question their spiritual hunger, but many people question their substance.

Our elders do not think young people can give an answer for the faith they have. They can tell how it feels, but can they explain where it is found? The younger generation is a “feeling” generation. They want a God they can feel.

The church has attempted to create an environment that will keep the younger generation coming back to church, and

of God. There is nothing more exciting to talk about than the truths of the Word of God.

## A TERRIBLE TRAGEDY

Adults, hear the cry of Esau in Genesis 27:34: “Bless me, even me also, O my father!”

Do you hear his heartache? Do you hear his desire? He was crying for a blessing he had once taken for granted. He was crying for a blessing that rightly belonged to him. The

# THE CHURCH HAS ATTEMPTED TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT WILL KEEP THE YOUNGER GENERATION COMING BACK TO CHURCH, AND IN THE PROCESS HAS MADE DOCTRINE A DIRTY WORD.

in the process has made *doctrine* a dirty word. The church has created the misconception in its youth that doctrine is boring at best and divisive at worst.

A few decades ago doctrine was the main subject of church sermons and songs. There was so much emphasis on doctrine that application and practicality were neglected. Instead of finding balance, we have swung the pendulum so far to the practical side that the younger generation knows little about doctrine.

But Jesus is doctrine. He is the Alpha, Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Bread of Life, the Bright and Morning Star, the Counselor, the Chief Cornerstone, the Door, the Deliverer, Elect, Emmanuel, Everlasting Father, the Hope of Glory, I Am, I Was, I Will Be, the Light of the World, Master, Messiah, Mighty God, Prophet, Propitiation, Rabbi, Rock, Rose of Sharon, Root of Jesse, the Way, Wonderful, the Word

of God. There is nothing more exciting to talk about than the truths of the Word of God.

According to Josh McDowell, more of the children and teens from the younger generation live without their fathers than any previous generation in American history. Many whose father is physically in the home do not have his interactive presence in their lives.

McDowell’s research also reveals that the younger generation will be the first generation in American history to have little chance of exceeding their parents’ standard of living.

The younger generation knows what the stats say about them. They know they have been called the *ugly duckling generation*. They know there is not much going for them, according to the numbers.

From talking to young people, I know they wonder if the church is for them. We have told them throughout their lives what they have done wrong. Most of these kids can tell you everything the church is against, but can name few things the church is for. They need to know that the church is for them, and regardless of what the numbers say, believes in them.

People might ask, “But Pastor, how could we give them our blessing? How can we pass them the baton? How can we give them the trust, if what you said earlier is true?”

The older generation needs to know that there is no Mayflower full of old-timers who are going to land on Plymouth Rock before the next General Council and save this Movement. The younger generation is all you have. Take a risk. Bless them. The older generation can withhold their blessing and watch this Fellowship die with them, or they can take a risk and deposit the trust in a generation that many people have written off.

The younger generation knows they are the underdog but remember, “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise” (1 Corinthians 1:27). God has a history of using what has been voted the least likely to succeed, and He





will use this generation to usher in another great awakening in the Assemblies of God in America.

The Millennials represent the largest generation since the Baby Boomers, totaling 71 million. Of this group, 33 million are currently teenagers. In whatever direction the Millennials choose to go, the future of our society and the future of the

ALL WE NEED TO BE IS WHAT  
GOD CALLED US TO BE  
92 YEARS AGO — A CHURCH OF THE SPIRIT.

Assemblies of God will go. Such a critical moment in history requires action from both the young and the old. Church, this is our wakeup call.

Some say the youth are rebellious; I say they are revolutionaries. There is a reformatory anointing on this generation. They are the reformation generation. They do not want to be

normal. They want to be abnormal. They do not want to be natural; they want to be supernatural.

Nearly 90 years ago, my great-grandmother left her mainstream church to be a part of something distinctive, something different. This Fellowship was planting churches across America — in barns, tents, and storefronts. They believed they were a continuation of the New Testament church. They believed through the power of the Spirit that they were to be a naturally supernatural church. My great-grandmother left what was normal for what was different.

Over the years, the Assemblies of God has moved from barns, tents, and storefronts to better facilities, more educated pastors, and more respectable budgets. Thank God for His blessing. But God forbid that, as we become more accepted in church culture, we make less room for the demonstration of the Spirit's power. God forbid we lose our distinctives. God forbid we become mainstream — normal.

## HELPING STUDENTS RECEIVE THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

There is no specific formula to guarantee that a student will be baptized in the Holy Spirit, but there is some helpful counsel you can give your students as they seek the Baptism.

**Relax.** Receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit isn't always an instantaneous experience. Even in the Book of Acts, the believers in the Upper Room waited 10 days. So, don't get discouraged.

**Encourage students to worship God.** The Baptism is a means of glorifying God. It's not about what they get; it's about what He gives. Create an atmosphere of worship and thanksgiving that helps students express love and appreciation for God out loud, not just in their minds.

**Help students seek the Giver, not just the gift.** Their focus should not be on tongues or a spiritual experience; it should be on getting more of Jesus. The Holy Spirit wants to draw attention to Christ (John 16:13,14).

**Tell students they will need to leave their native language so they can speak a new language.** As they worship and wait, they may sense strange, unknown words or syllables coming to their minds. Help them understand that since they can't speak two languages at once, at some point they must stop speaking their own language and start praising in the spiritual language.

**He will give the words, but they must do the speaking.** (If their lips and tongue start stammering or trembling, assure them that the Holy Spirit is trying to get them to speak. They may not hear the words in their minds, but as

they surrender to the Spirit and step out in faith, He will honor their faith and help them speak.)

**Remind students that they can trust that they are getting what they asked for (Luke 11:9-13).** Often, when people begin to sense the Spirit prompting them to speak, they are afraid it might just be their own words or simple gibberish. But if their focus is truly on Christ, and they are willing to take a bold step and use the gift, they can be confident they are getting what He promised.

**Don't let students get discouraged if they don't immediately receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.** Make sure they keep expecting and stay open. Tell them they should express their hunger for more of God during their personal prayer time. They may want to enlist a Spirit-filled friend, parent, or youth leader to agree with them in prayer.

Receiving this gift does not need to take a long time, and often it does not. At other times, people may have difficulty accepting all God has to offer. It doesn't necessarily mean that they are any more or less spiritual. The most important thing is to continue worshiping and depending on Jesus, the Baptizer.

God loves your students and wants to fill them with His Holy Spirit more than they can possibly desire. He wants to satisfy their spiritual hunger, and He wants to empower them to fulfill the purposes for which He has created them.

Adapted from *Hungry? A Study in the Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. ©2006 Gospel Publishing House. Used with permission.



Former General Superintendent Thomas F. Zimmerman said, “Though we have grown in number, it would be foolish for us to assume that ‘having begun in the spirit’ we could ever substitute mass strength for the power and presence of God in our lives. Our strength is not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”

I love my evangelical brothers. I read their books, attend their conferences, and learn from their models. I am in debt to them for their contribution to the kingdom of God, but we do not need to lose our Pentecostal identity while learning from them. I am evangelical, but I am not just evangelical; I am Pentecostal. We are “people of the Spirit.”

The irony of this is that the evangelical community is attempting to make their services more experiential. To stop young people from leaving their churches, leaders have been told to make their worship more passionate and provide room in their service for people to experience God because this is an experiential generation.

The DNA of this youth culture matches the DNA of this Fellowship. All we need to be is what God called us to be 92 years ago — a church of the Spirit.

The youth in this generation do not want normal. They want what is supernatural. This generation has railroad spikes through their tongues and piercings over the rest of their bodies. Someone speaking in tongues will not scare them away. They will probably say, “Cool. Finally, this is not a normal church.” They want someone who will lead them into an experience with the God of the Book of Acts.

**IF THE YOUNGER GENERATION WILL BLOW ON ONE SIDE  
AND THE OLDER GENERATION WILL  
BLOW FROM THE OTHER SIDE, THE EMBERS OF  
PAST REVIVALS WILL GLOW HOT AGAIN.**

Churches need to maintain excellence: the yard needs to be manicured; the orchestra needs to be in tune; our sermon needs to be well prepared; and the service needs to be well organized. But if God does not show up and breathe on us, all we have done is put on a nice show.

Like Esau, the younger generation longs for the blessing they have once taken for granted. Many young people in the Assemblies of God are starting to realize that they are part of something much bigger than themselves. They want to look up from the battlefields of their school campuses and home environments and know someone in the “great cloud of witnesses” is blessing them and believing in them.

The church is good at giving blessings with addendums. “I will bless you *if*. ...” Take away the *if*. Take away the

conditions. Just bless them and release them.

I am not suggesting we remove accountability structures. I am not suggesting we allow the younger generation to live and minister outside the perimeters of biblical revelation. But, if it is not sin, and it is within the framework of Scripture, the older generation needs to encourage the younger generation to go and build this church and expand God’s kingdom. Encourage them to use the creative ideas and unique gifts God has given them to do what has never been done and to try what no one else has ever tried.

The older generation must give the younger generation a blessing that says: “Go. If you fail, at least you got out of the boat. You have one life, one chance; do not live the status quo. Attempt something great for God.”

If the younger generation is reaching people in their unique culture, let them dress like the natives of their culture as long as it is modest. If they want to take an acoustic guitar and plant a church in a downtown coffee shop, let them. Do not withdraw financial and moral support when they do not have service on Sunday night. Stop the conditional blessings.

Adults are reluctant to give their blessing, and youth are reluctant to take their blessing. So, do we just sit in this arena and stare at each other while the pulse of our Movement gets weaker and weaker? Someone needs to make the first move, and I believe that responsibility falls on the shoulders of the older generation.

Part of the tragedy is that the older generation is looking for the God of their past and are reminiscing about the good

old days, while the younger generation is looking for the God of their future. Both will miss Him because He is not only the *I Was* for the older generation or the *I Will*

*Be* for the younger generation; He is the *I Am* for everyone. He is here. He wants these generations to come together and call on the *I Am* to fill this church now.

We need a Book of Acts experience, but we need to realize that the God of right now may blow into a coffeehouse this time, not a brush arbor. He may not show up at the altars of our well-organized churches. He may come into a Saturday night service, while 15 20-year-olds sing praises to Jesus accompanied by acoustic guitar in the back of a Barnes and Noble. Understand me, I do not care where He comes. I do not care if He comes on Thursday night or Sunday night. It does not matter if He comes to Starbucks or First Assembly; I just want Him to touch my generation.

If the blessing is withheld, the blessing will die with the

older generation in the next 20 or 30 years, and the Assemblies of God will never be what it was before. The younger generation will reform our Movement, or they will leave it and start another one like our forefathers did four generations ago.

While still an evangelist, I preached a revival in a little town on the Arkansas-Missouri line. In my message that night I challenged the people to seek God for another great awakening in America. After the altar service an older man in his late 80s or early 90s walked briskly up to me. It was obvious he was weeping.

He passionately grabbed me by the lapel of my jacket and said, "Son, listen to this old man. I am a retired Methodist pastor. I came into the Methodist church when it was a revival movement. We were called the shouting Methodists. Over time, the Assemblies of God came along, stole the fire out of our stove, and left us with a cold, black stove. What happened to my church is happening to yours. If revival does not come to your church, when you are an old man, you will grab some young man by the collar just like this and weep the same bitter tears this old man weeps tonight."

I have learned much over the years from cold, black stoves. My grandfather, whom I mentioned earlier, holds the philosophy, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." So, we ate food prepared on a wood-burning cookstove until I was 16 years old. Every night in the wintertime my grandfather would clean out the ashes and start a fire before he went to bed. My grandmother would get up early in the morning and make breakfast on that stove.

My bedroom joined the area next to the stove. One morning my grandmother got up and opened the stove door startling me awake. I went to the door and looked at her. I remember

seeing her like it was yesterday. She was kneeling down in her nightgown, and I watched her blowing into the stove. I thought my grandmother had lost her mind because in my young mind, I thought, *You blow out candles, and you blow out a match*. I knew she was trying to start a fire, but now she had lost it. She was blowing the fire out.

She saw me in the doorway and invited me over to stand beside her. I said, "Grandma, don't you know you're going to blow your fire out?"

She chuckled and sat me on her knee and said, "Watch this, Bryan."

She then blew into the stove, and as she did the coals left from the previous night's fire started turning red. The stove had looked dry, empty, and cold, but when she blew into it, the ashes turned bright red.

She said, "You do it."

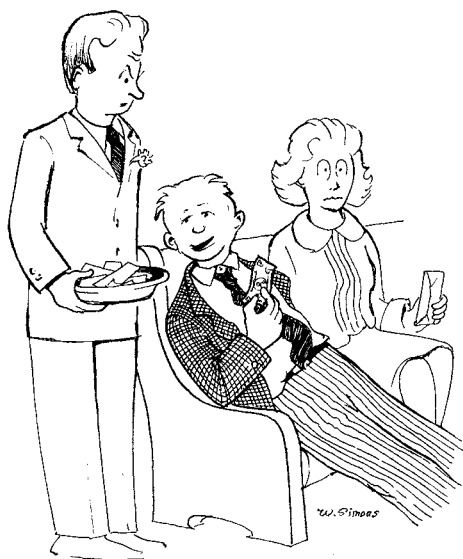
When I blew on the ashes, they turned red, but when I quit, they stopped glowing. So, she blew, and then I blew. She blew, and then I blew. Then she grabbed a piece of kindling that I had carried in the night before, and she laid it on the glowing ashes. Then she blew, and I blew, and she said, "See, Son, you would have thought that we would need to start over, but there's still enough left in the stove from yesterday's fire. All we need to do is breathe on the ashes, and we can start right here."

The same simple message my grandmother shared with me that winter morning applies to the church. A member of the older generation blew on the ashes of yesterday's fire joined by a young person who did not understand all the facts, but blew on the ashes of yesterday's fire anyway.

This Movement does not need to start over either. There is enough fire left in the embers of yesterday's revival. If the younger generation will blow on one side and the older generation will blow from the other side, the embers of past revivals will glow hot again. Then if young people will lay their lives as logs on the fire of yesterday's revival, God can do again what He did in the past. The God of the brush arbor and the camp meeting is still the God of the carpeted cathedrals. He can do it again. Join the cry of Habakkuk, "O Lord, revive Thy Work in the midst of the years" (Habakkuk 3:2).

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. ■

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"Hey, Buddy, you got change for a dollar?"



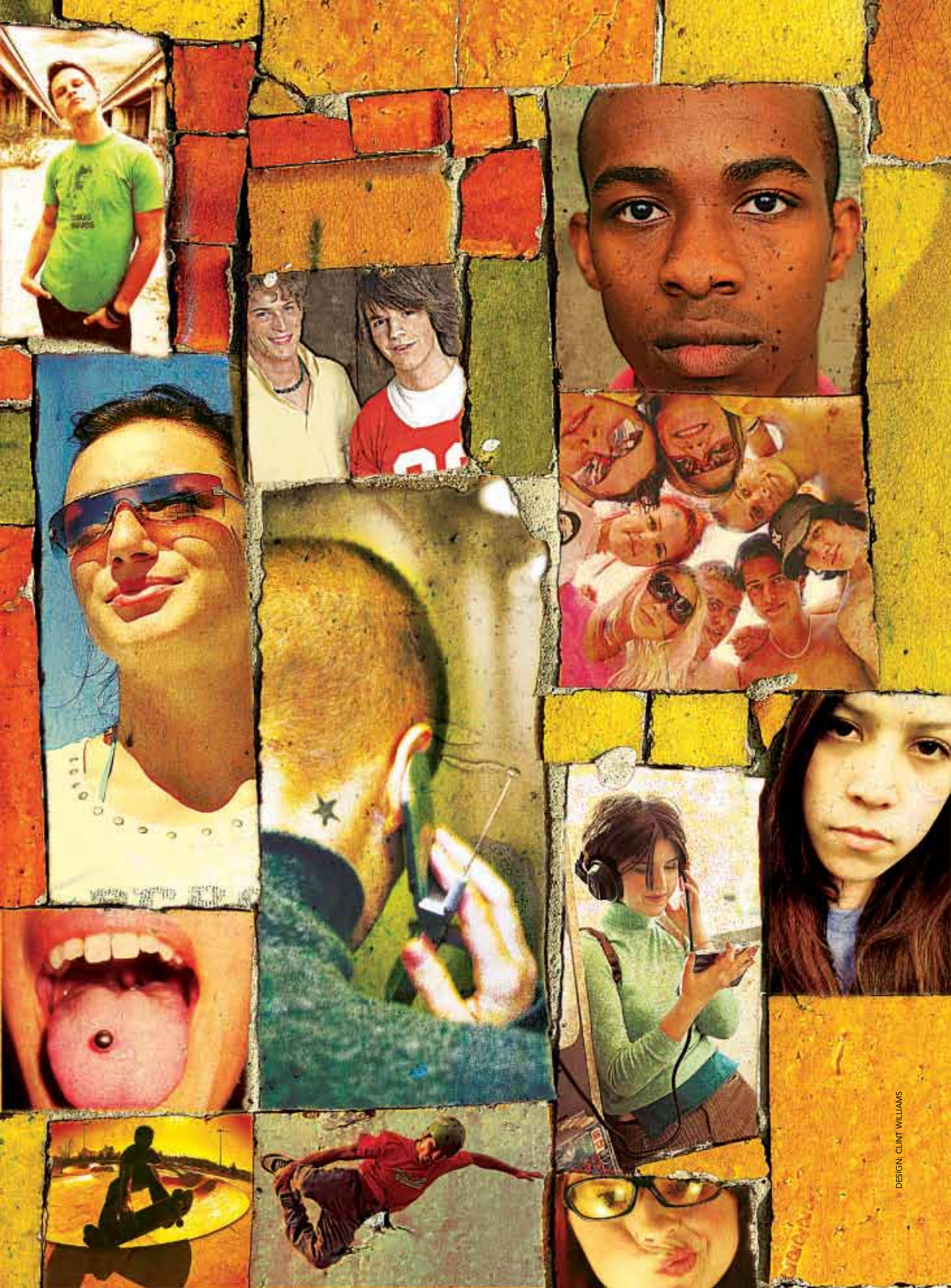
**BRYAN JARRETT**, senior pastor, Sachse Assembly of God, Sachse, Texas.

#### ENDNOTE

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# THE MOSAIC GENERATION:

## THE MYSTIFYING NEW WORLD OF YOUTH CULTURE

When you think about today's youth culture, what thoughts or images come to mind? *Energetic? Optimistic? Dripping with media? Change-oriented? Technology-driven? Confusing?*

Ministry to teenagers has never been easy. But it has rarely, if ever, been as challenging as it is today. The teen world has traditionally perplexed adults. But Mosaics — the generation that includes today's teenagers — represent an increasingly tough-to-influence and confusing audience. With Mosaics, what you see is rarely what you get. Mosaics take the perspectives of previous generations and then blend in their own unique experiences and ideas about life. Because of this — and other things, such as the pace of technology change and the entertainment culture — Mosaics are hard to pin down.

Still, with Mosaics expected to be the largest generation in America's history — even surpassing Boomers in size — and with many Mosaics now in their formative years, the spiritual destiny of this group is up for grabs. Their lifestyles and values are being established. Their faith commitments and spiritual habits are being formed. Their leadership opportunities and tendencies are emerging. The stakes are incredibly high, and spiritual leaders need to act now. To help pastors get their bearings, let me give a bird's-eye view of this generation — with some of its many complexities — so pastors can make the most of their opportunities with the teenagers God has placed in their lives.

BY DAVID KINNAMAN



Leaders have a responsibility to understand Mosaics not only because they represent future church leaders, but also for self-assessment. Let us examine one of the most uncomfortable realities of youth ministry. In the typical church, 3 out of every 5 teens will be unchurched in the next 10 to 12 years. At your next youth meeting look around. Chances are most of those teenagers will disengage from church attendance by age 30. In fact, participation in church steadily declines following high school graduation, bottoming out during a person's late 20s. Sadly, many of these people will describe their teenage involvement in church as a "Jesus phase."

Keep in mind three things:

- The problem of church post-teen dropouts has never been more dramatic than it is today.
- Fewer people are returning to church than before and these few who do return do so at older ages.
- People are left to fend for themselves spiritually during one of the most important periods of their lives.

Mosaics' religious activity can be misleading (there is a gap between what is visible and what is really happening). They are religiously active because they love new experiences and thrive on relationships — two natural by-products of church efforts. Consequently, many leaders misinterpret well-attended youth events as synonymous with life-changing youth ministry.

However, the goal of ministry to Mosaics — as with any generation — should be transformed lives through the intentional development of a strong, enduring, and growing faith. But whether pastors want to admit it or not, teen discipleship is not working well in most churches, despite the many teens who participate.

How can youth workers and pastors retool their discipleship efforts with teenagers — especially in a dynamic, hard-to-pin-down generation? Here are insights into some aspects of this complex new world of youth culture.

## MOSAIC LIFESTYLES

One way to understand the lives of Mosaics is to compare them with their predecessors — Busters (those currently ages 22–40). Mosaics are often characterized as a confident, optimistic, and upbeat generation, especially when compared to the disillusioned, cynical perspectives of Busters. Mosaics are also more interested in developing a meaningful career and getting a solid education. Consequently, they are more willing to take the necessary steps to achieve those goals. Also, compared to

Busters, today's teenagers are more likely to consider religion and spirituality to be a positive dimension of life, although Mosaics do not necessarily perceive faith to be indispensable.

There are other differences as well. One of the non-negotiables of Mosaic lifestyles is their desire for fresh and stimulating experiences, well beyond the appetites of Busters. The Mosaic drive for experiential living is fueled by their yearning to be vitally connected to others and to their culture — and to get as much enjoyment out of their lives as possible. One of the implications for ministry is to teach via experiences, rather than by lecture whenever possible.

More so than Busters, Mosaics are in constant search for relevant and fresh means of self-expression. Teens express their perceived uniqueness in many ways from clothing to lifestyles (Skaters, Goths, Gays, and Jesus Freaks), and from creating their own music to getting "body art" (tattoos and piercings). Many teens share their creative efforts with others as a means of self-expression. For instance, 25 percent of teens say they have put stories, videos, artwork,

**The goal of ministry to Mosaics — as with any generation — should be transformed lives through the intentional development of a strong, enduring, and growing faith.**

or photos online. Mosaics also expect customized outlets to express themselves — from having their own Web site, blog, or online identity to having their own personalized media profiles (customized music playlists, ring tones, or movie preferences).

Despite Mosaics' optimism and can-do attitude, there are many contradictions about their lives. They believe they are likely to succeed in life, but they admit feeling unprepared for the future. They feel confident and self-assured, but they are facing more life stress and being pressured to mature faster than previous generations. They are driven to succeed, but they are not sure why or how to define what success means. Most believe they are popular with their peers, but a majority embraces the label "looking for a few good friends." Most consider themselves deeply spiritual, but few are pursuing depth beyond attending church. Seventy-five percent say they are searching for life purpose, but half believe the main purpose of life is enjoyment. With Mosaics, what you see is not always what you get.

## MOSAICS AND MEDIA

Another aspect of teen culture is the prodigious influence of and access to media. No generation has had more entertainment



choices — and none has spent more time taking full advantage of these media options. A recent study by the Kaiser Family Foundation shows that the typical Mosaic spends 8 1/2 hours *each day* using various media, including television, radio, music, print resources, computers, the Internet, and video games. That time is compressed into about 6 1/2 hours since they often use more than one media at once (for example, listening to music and spending time online). Still, teens today are spending more than an hour more every day consuming media than teenagers did just 5 years ago.

The Internet takes up much of that additional time. According to research by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, more than 21 million teenagers use the Internet, and half go online every day. Mosaics fit comfortably online; it is a dynamic, adaptable environment where they feel they can be themselves, where they can have some degree of control, and where they can interact with friends. Other technologies — such as cell phones, online social networks (for example, <http://www.MySpace.com>), other mobile devices, instant messaging, and text messaging — facilitate a whole new degree and method of teen communication.

Pastors cannot underestimate how deeply these technologies are shaping teen culture. The impact includes providing teens with a grid to identify like-minded friends, giving them cultural heroes and role models, generating language and stories to help them understand their lives, and facilitating opportunities for shared experiences with their peers.

Maybe most important, the mass media are Mosaics' primary teachers. Media and technology shape their life philosophy and values. This happens not only through the relentless messages imbedded in the music, movies, television, and online content they consume, but also in the fundamental way it shapes how they process input. Partly because of their exposure to media and technology, Mosaics value control, multisensory experiences, nonlinear input, and dynamic relationships — all in a personalized, when-you-want-it package. In other words, technology and media energize their eclectic lifestyles and their nonlinear thinking styles.

One clear implication for youth ministry is to supplement the education of the mass media, especially by giving Mosaics tools and techniques to evaluate and assess that input. When pastors can teach using media — the language, stories, and format Mosaics are most comfortable with — they should do so, though never at the expense of biblical principles.

## MOSAIC RELATIONSHIPS

Friendships have always been important to teenagers. But pastors may not realize the new shape of Mosaics' peer relationships — *relational tribes*. These tribes are typically

groups of three to six peers (though a tribe can be much larger) who function as the nerve center for a teenager's life. The tribe dictates much of teens' discretionary time (what they talk about and how they spend their time). On a personal level, teens derive from their tribe such things as their identities, heroes, sense of right and wrong, and way of viewing and interacting with the world. For Mosaics, ideas have little personal relevance until they have had a chance to bounce those concepts around their tribe a few times.

How do teen tribes differ from teen relationships of the past? For one thing, the environment has changed. Along with experiencing more life stress, many families of teenagers are in disarray. There are intense pressures on Mosaics to perform, to balance deftly a wide range of activities and priorities, and to make sense of the deluge of information, media, and opportunities available to them. So, the tribe creates a miniature ecosystem that brings order, stability, and sensibility to an otherwise chaotic world.

The structure of tribes is also different from the structure of previous generations. Along with exhibiting greater diversity of gender, lifestyles, and ethnicity, the typical tribe also undergoes frequent changes in its core relationships. Mosaics add and subtract peers from their tribe with regularity. This leads to an important insight about teen culture: "Teen power brokers" — the popular teenagers who traditionally wield robust influence over their peers — are less prominent. Mosaics are less concerned with what popular people are doing because they insulate themselves from peer expectations by maintaining equal footing in their tribe. Peer pressure

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"I realize we all have to do our part in these youth fellowship parties, but there's something humiliating about being in charge of bringing the toothpicks."





still affects teenage relationships — they want to fit in with their tribe — and some teens naturally gravitate to leadership positions. But the tribal culture of Mosaics softens the power of the traditional brokers, like “jocks,” “brains,” and “babes.”

Although parents still influence teens a great deal, tribes increasingly function as the first place Mosaics turn for advice or assistance in tough times. As such, tribes have great spiritual potential — both to help and to harm. For example, most Mosaics are comfortable discussing faith matters with their peers, but they are just as likely to dispense spiritually damaging advice. One of the ministry implications is to provide opportunities for teens to learn as a tribe and to discover how to give out edifying guidance to their peers when possible.

## MOSAIC MORALITY

While Boomers defied conventional morality to place their stamp on the world, Busters determined their moral views out of their angst and disengagement. For their part, Mosaics are widely embracing *moral pragmatism* — the “whatever works” method grounded in postmodern philosophy. Pastors probably have heard this “whatever works” approach expressed like this:

- “What is right for you may not be right for me.”
- “I do what I think is best, not what anyone else thinks is best.”
- “You are the only one who can determine what is right and what is wrong.”
- “There is no absolute truth.”

When teens face moral or ethical decisions, most decide what to do based on what feels right or comfortable in the situation; what will produce the most positive outcome for them, personally; what will make the most people happy or create the least conflict; what they think their friends or family expect; or what they believe most other people would do. In all, 76 percent of teenagers say this is the primary way they make such decisions, which makes it far more common than among Busters

(50 percent) or Boomers (39 percent). The generational slide toward relativistic morality — where each individual feels he can decide what is right and what is wrong — has reached Niagara Falls proportions. (*See graphic.*)

The moral dilemma is hitting Christian teens equally hard. Sixty-six percent of born-again teens say they make decisions based on the “whatever works” approach. Moreover, only 2 percent of teenagers — about 6 percent of born-again teens — have a biblical worldview (defined as those who believe there is absolute truth, the Bible defines such truths, and who maintain a handful of orthodox beliefs — for example, Satan is real, and Jesus never sinned).

Moral attitudes have a direct connection to actions. Most teens — Christian and otherwise — believe music piracy (unauthorized music downloading or copying of CDs other than for personal use) is not a moral issue. That translates into widespread music piracy among both Christian teens (76 percent) and non-Christian teenagers (85 percent).

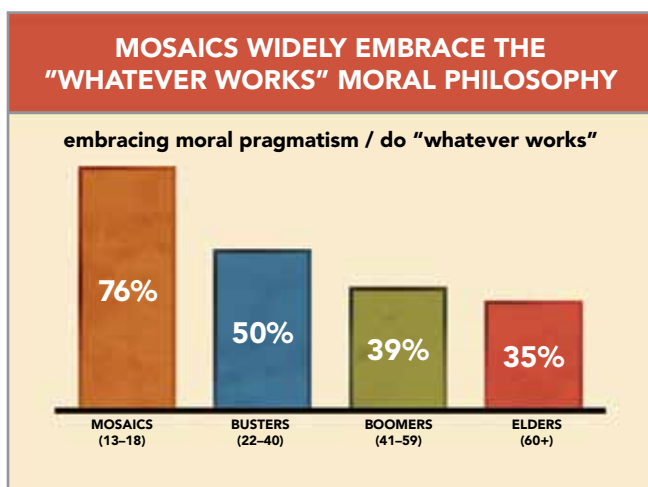
The “whatever works” philosophy infiltrates every dimension of moral decision making — whether or not to cheat, to view online porn, to experiment with drugs and alcohol, or to have sex. In all, 53 percent of born-again teenagers admit to at least one of those four at-risk behaviors *in the last 3 months*, compared to 59 percent of unbelievers. Sadly, teens’ allegiance to Christ makes little difference in their behaviors. However, those teens with a biblical worldview were significantly less likely to have engaged in any of the four at-risk activities (41 percent), which implies helping teens develop a biblical worldview is one of the best ways to influence them morally.<sup>1</sup>

## MORALITY CHART

The currents of postmodernism run swiftly through the morality of Mosaics. One of these postmodern influences is teenagers are comfortable with contradictions, which directly influence their moral decision-making. Mosaics are not logic based. They experience no dilemma embracing two conflicting concepts at the same time. While they may appear to give the right answer, they may also believe things completely at odds with that perspective.

Another tenet of postmodern thought is relationships count; institutions do not. This means Mosaics’ primary compass for making moral decisions is allegiance to their friends (their tribe). The music industry has felt the deep reverberations of this peer allegiance.

Finally, postmodernism also advocates the process over the product. This means Mosaics are more concerned with







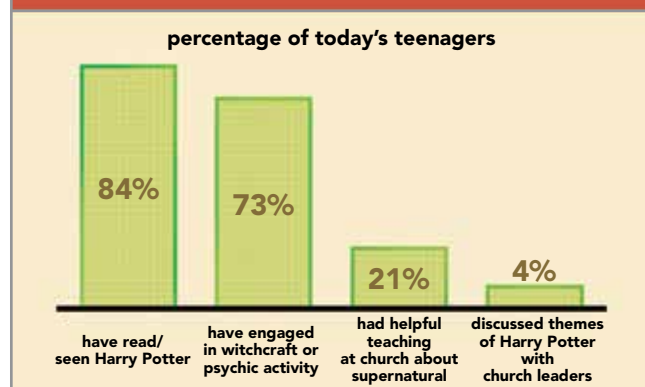
how they arrive at a moral choice than in what they ultimately decide. To influence their perspectives, pastors cannot argue Mosaics — believers or unbelievers — into an absolutist position; that comes from trust, modeling, and long-term exploration. Pastors need to help them arrive at the decision themselves, rather than telling them what to think. One implication is to ask questions, rather than give facts, whenever possible.

## MOSAICS AND SPIRITUALITY

Teens are, in many ways, extraordinarily open to matters of faith. Mosaics exhibit high levels of religious engagement. Most consider spirituality to be a significant dimension of personal maturity. And the vast majority — 86 percent — identify themselves as Christian. However, serious, committed believers are hard to find among teen ranks. Only 33 percent of teens are born again — and only half of those say they are absolutely committed to the Christian faith. Only 4 percent of teens are evangelical, meaning they have made a profession of faith in Christ, a confession of personal sins, and have embraced core orthodox beliefs.

One spiritual reality sweeping the Mosaic generation is exposure to and experimentation with witchcraft and psychic

### MOSAICS EXPOSURE TO SUPERNATURAL THEMES AND EXPERIENCES



activities. Seventy-three percent of teenagers have engaged in at least one such activity, including most born-again teenagers (69 percent). In all, half have explored witchcraft, including reading a book on the subject, playing a game with witchcraft elements, using a Ouija board, participating in a séance, or casting a spell or mixing a magical potion. And nearly half have engaged in at least one kind of psychic activity, such as having their fortune told, having their palm read, seeing a psychic, visiting a spiritual medium, or being present when someone else was using their psychic powers.

Why do teenagers get involved? Many get involved out of their thirst for new experiences and a desire to find meaning

## WHAT'S IN A NAME? MEET THE MOSAICS, THE EMERGING GENERATION

Almost everyone knows about the Boomers, and most have probably heard of the Busters (or Gen X). Now meet the newest generation of Americans: the Mosaics. These individuals came on the scene between 1984 and 2002 (currently ages 3–21), making today's teenagers a significant chunk of this age cohort.

Other cultural analysts have suggested names like Generation Y and Millennials for this new generation, but these labels seem one dimensional. Generation Y was suggested because this generation follows Generation X. Millennials earmarks the age segment based on the calendar.

At Barna, we believe the term *Mosaics* better describes this emerging generation. Here is why:

- **Eclectic lifestyles:** Teens experiment with many activities, making their lifestyles more multifaceted and stressful than ever.
- **Nonlinear thinking styles:** Rather than using logic and rationality, teens embrace contradictions and process information in a flexible, adaptable manner.
- **Fluid relationships:** Teen friendships are in a constant state of flux; their heroes and role models change regularly; their network of peers is extraordinarily diverse ethnically; and many experience an up-and-down family life.
- **Cut-and-paste values and personalized spirituality:** Most teens embrace moral pragmatism (that is, “whatever works”) and customized spirituality, drawing on many sources to decide ethical dilemmas and to determine spiritual meaning.
- **Open-minded attitudes:** Teens are not particularly dogmatic about their views and they give others space to chart their own paths — the same space they want for themselves.
- **Technology-fueled expectations:** The Internet and mobile devices like cell phones drive teenagers’ information use and much of their connectivity. The Internet in particular represents an ever-changing and broad-ranging collage of input that fuels much of the nonlinear expectations of teens.

Whether or not you like the name Mosaics, their lifestyles and perspectives are changing the way people live, work, and worship.



DAVID KINNAMAN, Ventura, California



## Since each teen is different, leaders use a spiritual development and assessment process that helps each teen grow in the way that fits him best.

outside of themselves. Others do because they feel powerless, and the supernatural world helps them gain some measure of control — real or imagined — over their circumstances.

Pastors need to understand several things about teens and the supernatural. First, teen exposure to the supernatural world via media is nearly ubiquitous — 82 percent of teens said they have seen spiritual or supernatural themes addressed in movies, television, books, or music, as recently as the last few months. The Harry Potter series has been read or watched by more than 4 out every 5 teens (and it is just as widely read by born-again Christian teens).

Second, teens have little proactive feedback from parents or church leaders about how they are to understand the supernatural world. Despite Mosaics' widespread participation in churches, only 1 out of every 5 teenagers recall any church teaching in the last year that helped to shape their views about the supernatural. Most teens reading or watching Harry Potter have had *no conversations* with their parents or pastors about the spiritual themes in the book. For Mosaics, Potter represents one of the most important modern-day legends, but biblical input from adult believers is missing in action.

### SHAPING THE FUTURE

What can youth pastors do? There is no magic solution or formula for effective ministry to teenagers. The most important thing is to have a clear vision for ministry. Pastors may need to evaluate how God uniquely called and gifted them to influence teenagers. Beyond that, here are five additional things The Barna Group learned from the most effective youth ministries — that is, those that create the most enduring faith in teenagers.

First, effective youth ministries personalize their ministry to each individual teenager. Their focus is on the quality of their ministry, not the quantity of those who attend. Since each teen is different, leaders use a spiritual development and assessment process that helps each teen grow in the way that fits him best. This often includes pairing teens up with a mentor who helps to identify and develop their gifts, confidence, and leadership abilities.

Second, effective youth ministries emphasize career discipleship. Many teens drop out of church because faith does not seem to address key issues they face as a scholar or as a professional. So, effective youth ministries try to rectify this by

helping each teenager integrate his faith with what he loves to do — whether it is music, writing, leading, or studying the Bible. Additionally, they try to give teens ongoing access to resources — especially to mentoring relationships beyond high school — that address their areas of professional interest.

Third, effective youth ministries focus on helping teenagers develop a biblical worldview. Teenagers with a biblical worldview are the most likely to display the transforming power of faith — they are less likely to engage in at-risk behaviors, they are significantly less likely to experiment with witchcraft and psychic activities, and they are much more likely to stay connected to their faith beyond high school.

Fourth, these youth ministries pray daily for each teenager and model a lifestyle of devotion to Christ and Scripture. These leaders are careful not to stretch themselves too thin. They realize even the most devoted youth pastor cannot personally mentor more than a handful of young leaders, so they recruit other adults and parents who assist not only as chaperones, but also as true mentors.

Fifth, the most effective youth ministries readily embrace the challenges and opportunities of postmodern lifestyles. They carefully limit the amount of talking head presentations they do, and de-emphasize facts and logical arguments (except when personalizing ministry to “brainy” teenagers who respond well to these efforts). Instead, they rely on lifestyle modeling, shared experiences, strategic use of media and technology, intimate and authentic relationships, peer-based leadership, and question-and-answer discussions.

Make no mistake; one must work hard to stay current with the confusing and ever-changing world of Mosaics. If you are effective today, praise God. But soon enough — unless you consistently allow the Holy Spirit to renew your efforts — you will be irrelevant, quickly passed by a generation that does not stay in one place long. After all, Mosaics hate to be pinned down. Would you expect anything less from America's most mystifying generation? ■



**DAVID KINNAMAN** is vice president and strategic leader of The Barna Group, Ltd. He is the author of *Ministry to Mosaics*, a new series of downloadable reports available at the firm's Web site (<http://www.barna.org>). The first report explores *Teens and the Supernatural*.

#### ENDNOTE

1. A worldview is the way any human being assesses, interprets, and interacts with the world to form his values, morals, and beliefs. A biblical worldview, then, is a means of experiencing, interpreting, and responding to reality in light of biblical perspective.



# Today's Youth Need Our Help... To Go Beyond Belief

**SCHOOL SHOOTINGS. TERRORIST  
ATTACKS. DANGEROUS "DESIGNER"  
DRUGS. TEEN SUICIDE PACTS.**

It seems there is no end to the reasons to fear for our children's safety and well-being.

But there are other fears, daily worries, and more imminent reasons for most parents to be frightened. What strikes fear into many parents' hearts is the daily possibility their children will fall prey to the wrong crowd, succumb to cultural pressures, and make wrong choices that will bring pain and suffering to their lives. That fear is real. And it never goes away.

In today's world, teens are likely to encounter more ethical and moral temptations, greater spiritual battles, and more emotional and relational struggles than any other generation in history. Young people's exposure to sexual temptations, school violence, alcohol, illegal drugs, and many other dangerous influences threatens to undo what parents may try to teach them. Yet, while parents need to fear what their children could be tempted to do, they need to be more concerned with what their children are led to believe.

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BY JOSH MCDOWELL (WITH BOB HOSTETLER)

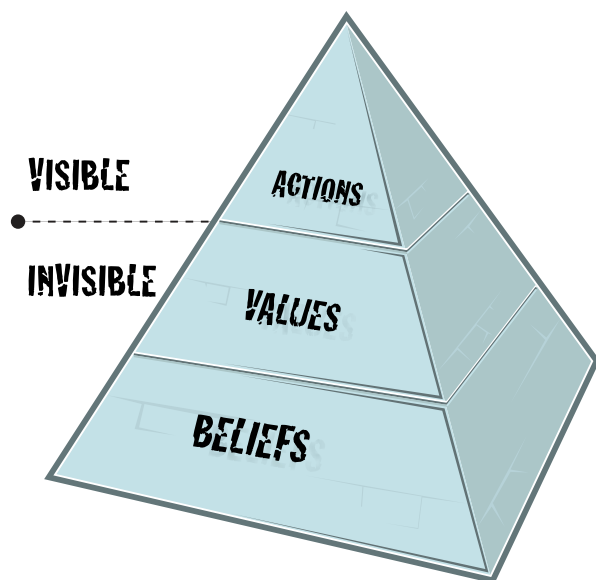




The way teens behave comes *from* something. Their attitudes and actions spring from their value system, and their value system is based on what they believe. Glen Schultz puts it this way: “At the foundation of a person’s life, we find his beliefs. These beliefs shape his values, and his values drive his actions.”<sup>1</sup>

In his book, *Kingdom Education*, Schultz uses the diagram below to illustrate this:

## THE MAKING OF AN INDIVIDUAL<sup>2</sup>



The illustration shows a young person’s actions are just the tip of the iceberg. If parents are concerned their young people might make wrong choices that will bring them pain, it is shortsighted to merely try to mold or control what they do. It is better to instill right values in them, values based on solid biblical beliefs. Unless their actions are built on a solid foundation of biblical beliefs, parents can expect their children’s lives to reflect the pain and consequences of wrong choices.

## WHAT DO THEY BELIEVE?

Today’s church youth say religious beliefs are important to them, and the Bible is accurate. Eighty percent<sup>3</sup> of children involved in evangelical churches agree religious beliefs are important to them, and 61 percent<sup>4</sup> say the Bible is accurate. That is the good news. After all, this generation, more than past generations, seems far more open and vocal about their faith — even to the point of wearing their Christian witness on T-shirts and worshiping with passion. Research conducted by The Barna Group indicates, among Christian teens in evangelical churches, 80 percent believe God created the universe and God is personally involved in people’s lives (84 percent).

That is as far as most people see. Most parents, pastors,

youth leaders, and Christian educators recognize a fervor and faith in teenagers that largely encourages them. Sure, teens have their problems, but they are okay. They believe in God. They are following Jesus Christ. They hold the same beliefs their parents cherish. Right?

Not so fast. Dig a little deeper. Their views about God probably do not differ much from those reported by Rob Rienow, a youth minister at Wheaton Bible Church: “Their answers were as individual as the children themselves. One thought God was like his grandfather: ‘He’s there, but I never see Him.’ Another took a harder view, describing ‘an evil being who wants to punish me all the time.’ Two more opinions followed. Finally, the last teen weighed in: ‘I think you’re all right, because that’s what you really believe.’ In other words, as Rienow relates it, God is whatever works for you. On this, all of the youth agreed.”<sup>5</sup>

“As individual as the teens themselves.” That is the general storyline. Though most teens in evangelical churches today say they believe in the God of the Bible, 63 percent also believe Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and all other people pray to the same god, even though they use different names for their god.<sup>6</sup>

Do all religions pray to the same god? An alarming 63 percent<sup>7</sup> of teens think so, and 70 percent<sup>8</sup> say there is no absolute moral truth. How do they determine what is right or wrong? Seventy-two percent<sup>9</sup> say they can tell when something is right by whether or not it works in their lives.

Do teens believe Jesus rose from the grave? Do they think the devil and the Holy Spirit are real? Fifty-one percent do not believe in the resurrection of Christ, 65 percent do not think the devil is real, and 68 percent do not believe the Holy Spirit is a living entity.<sup>10</sup>

Though 87 percent of teens believe Jesus was a real person who came to earth, and 78 percent believe He was born to a virgin, nearly half (46 percent) believe He committed sins and more than half (51 percent) say He died, but did not rise from the dead.<sup>11</sup>

## WHY BELIEFS MATTER

Does it really make a difference what teens believe? We may prefer for them to have biblical beliefs, but what harm will come if they do not? Will it really change the way they think and act in the real world? Yes, and to an astounding degree.

Research consistently shows what a person believes translates into behavior. A major survey of more than 3,700 teens involved in evangelical churches reveals that, compared to teens who possess a solid, biblical belief system, young people who lack such basic biblical beliefs are:

- 225 percent more likely to be angry with life;
- 216 percent more likely to be resentful;
- 210 percent more likely to lack purpose in life; and

- 200 percent more likely to be disappointed in life.<sup>12</sup>

These findings confirm that beliefs create values, and those values result in certain attitudes. But as the pyramid illustration showed, beliefs shape values, and values drive actions. In other words, the things teens believe will result in specific behaviors.

This is why research has shown teens — otherwise good teenagers from good families — who do not possess a biblical belief system are:

- 36 percent more likely to lie to a friend;
- 48 percent more likely to cheat on an exam;
- 200 percent more likely to steal;
- 200 percent more likely to physically hurt someone;
- 300 percent more likely to use illegal drugs; and
- 600 percent more likely to attempt suicide.<sup>13</sup>

While this may be disturbing, it should not be a surprise. Beliefs matter because they form the values that determine people's actions. What may be surprising is the best way to correct the distorted beliefs teens have about God and the truth of His Word.

## BELIEVING IS NOT ENOUGH

Now, you may be among the few parents who could say, "But, Josh, I am teaching my children right. We have family

devotions. I take them to a solid church, and I even send them to a great Christian school. My children believe the right things. They will be able to stand strong against temptation and evil influences — right?"

My answer may sound like I am contradicting myself, but teaching teens to believe in the right things will not be enough to enable them to stand strong and make right choices in today's culture.

This sounds contradictory. Beliefs do matter. If teens do not have solid biblical beliefs, they are 200 to 600 percent more likely to exhibit dangerous or destructive behaviors. So why isn't the solution simply teaching our kids the right things to believe? How can believing the right things not be enough to hold teens steady when life's trials and tests come their way?

The older generation's concept of what it means to believe in something is probably different — radically different — from that of your teens. Influenced by postmodernism, many teens today find the inerrancy of the Bible hard to swallow. (See sidebar *Culture Without Convictions*.) They are not convinced Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life for "all the children of the world." Forty-eight percent believe it does not matter what religious faith one associates with because all teach the same principles and truth. Fifty-eight percent believe all religious faiths teach equally valid truth.<sup>14</sup> The vast

## CULTURE WITHOUT CONVICTIONS

Recent decades have witnessed the development of a postmodern culture that largely considers *conviction* to be a dirty word. To understand our society's loss of convictions, we must understand postmodernism.

Understanding postmodernism, however, can be much like standing in an appliance store trying to watch three or four television shows at once. Postmodernism defies easy definition because it is extremely complex, often contradictory, and constantly changing. It is fitting that the term *postmodernism* describes this school of thought by what it is not.

Postmodernism is the philosophy that succeeded and, to some degree, supplanted modernism — a way of thinking that has challenged the Christian worldview for centuries. Whereas modernism rejected religion and superstition in favor of science and reason, postmodernism repudiates any appeal to reality or truth ... and, thus, frowns on those who believe anything with conviction.

So, while postmodernism is difficult to define, it is possible to summarize its most common beliefs:

- Truth does not exist in any objective sense.
- Instead of *discovering* truth in a metanarrative — a story (such as the Bible) or ideology (such as Marxism) that presents a unified way of looking at philosophy, religion, art, and science — postmodernism rejects any

overarching explanation of what constitutes truth and reality.

- Truth — whether in science, education, or religion — is created by a specific culture or community and is true only in and for that culture.
- A person is the product of his culture. That is, people are not unique individuals created in the image of God; one's identity is defined by his culture (African-American, European, Eastern, Western, urban, rural).
- All thinking is a *social construct*. In other words, truths are arbitrary "beliefs we have been conditioned to accept by our society, just as others have been conditioned to accept a completely different set of beliefs."<sup>1</sup>
- Any system or statement that claims to be objectively true or unfavorably judges the values, beliefs, lifestyle, and truth claims of another culture is, in effect, a power play by one culture to dominate other cultures.



**JOSH MCDOWELL**, Dallas, Texas

### ENDNOTE:

1. Jim Leffel, "Our New Challenge: Postmodernism," in *The Death of Truth*, ed. Dennis McCallum (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996), 35.



majority (65 percent) either believe or suspect there is “no way to tell which religion is true.”<sup>15</sup>

Christian teens are not rejecting Christianity as they know it; they have been influenced to redefine it according to their cultural setting. Teens are forming their own religious canon in a smorgasbord style. They have been led to believe it is better to construct a tailor-made faith that is right for them by choosing from various concepts of God and religion. They are being encouraged to piece their faith together themselves; that way it will be right for them personally, and will offend no one.

*Newsweek* reporter John Leland discovered, “Even more than their baby-boomer parents, teenagers often pick and choose what works for them. ... As they sample from various faiths, students have become more accepting of each other’s beliefs, even when those beliefs are stringent. Clayton, a high-school junior, says he is known among his classmates as ‘the religious guy,’ but this does not make him the odd man out. Clayton, 17, an evangelical Christian, is one of a growing minority of teenagers who are vowing to defer sex until marriage. ‘There really is an atmosphere of whatever you think is okay,’ he says. ‘Just don’t tell me what to think. I’ll figure it out myself.’”<sup>16</sup>

Clayton’s stand for abstinence is encouraging. But his comments are less than reassuring because they reflect the culture’s encouragement to teens to figure it out themselves. What most are figuring out is a little truth here and a little error there until they end up with erroneous beliefs.

Thus, an entire generation of young people today believe truth is not true for them until they choose to believe it. They believe the act of believing makes things true. Once they believe, those things will be true for them only until they choose to believe something else. As soon as something more appealing comes along, they are likely to begin believing that — whether it is biblical or not.

## Christian teens are not rejecting Christianity as they know it; they have been influenced to redefine it according to their cultural setting.

Some time ago I was speaking at a denominational youth conference. The denomination had assembled their top young people at this conference. They were the cream of the crop — solid Christian teens. Because I was planning to speak the next day about the truth of the Bible, I went from one young person to another in the course of my address and asked, “Why do you believe the Bible to be true?” The teens did not have an answer.

The next day before the morning session a young man came running up to me and shouted, “I know the answer.”

He caught me off-guard. I was not sure what he was referring to, so I asked, “The answer to what?”

“To your question about why I believe the Bible is true.”

“Okay,” I said, “let’s hear it.”

“Because I believe,” he answered with assurance. “Because I have faith.”

“You’re saying it’s true because you believe it?” I asked.

“Yes.” He could not have sounded more convinced.

I looked around at the teens that had gathered to listen. Many of them were smiling and nodding their heads in agreement, as though this young man had solved a great riddle, and what was once so puzzling now seemed obvious.

I asked him, “Does this mean the Bible would also be true for your neighbor or the kid down the street?”

“It would be if he believed it,” the boy responded.

I gazed at him for a few seconds. His answers saddened me deeply, but I knew he was typical of today’s teens. Finally, I said, “You know the basic difference between you and me?”

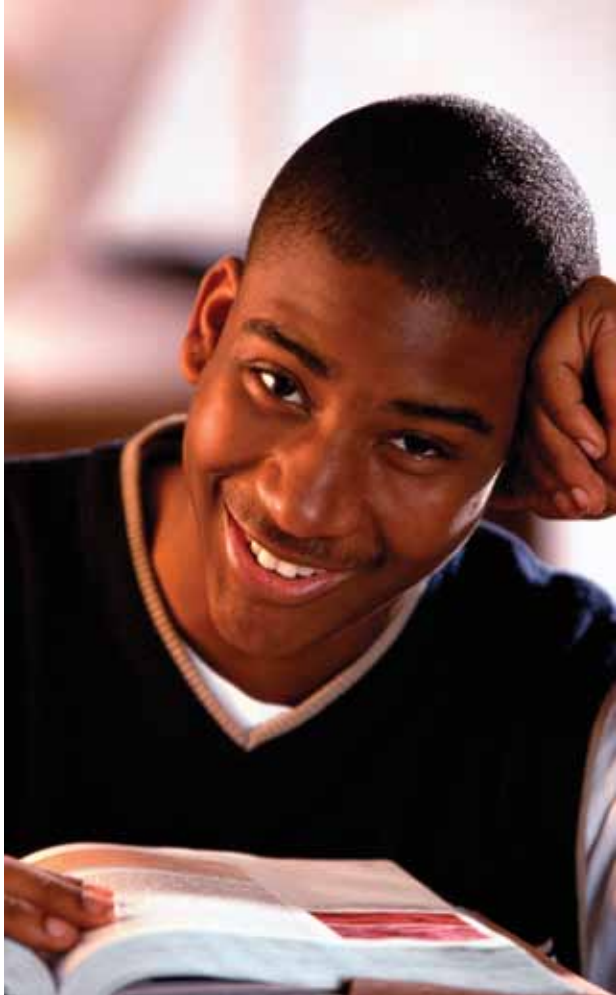
“What?” he asked, still smiling.

“To you,” I said, “the Bible is true because you believe it. I believe it because it is true.”

## THE NEED FOR CONVICTIONS

Alarming as it may be, most young people today — even the brightest and best of them — agree with that young man. They believe the act of believing makes things true. They have





PHOTOS: PHOTODISC

accepted what I call “subjective believism,” a philosophical way of thinking that is reflected in the statement, “if you believe something is true for you, then believing makes it so.” Getting our children to believe the right things is not enough because believing is a thoroughly subjective exercise to them.

An entire generation of young people are being conditioned to believe truth is not true for them until they choose to believe it. And then, once they believe, the things they believe will be true for them only until they choose to believe something else. As soon as something more appealing to them comes along, they are likely to begin believing that whether it is biblically correct or not.

To believe in something is to “accept it as true, genuine, or real.”<sup>17</sup> But as we have pointed out, teens are conditioned by today’s culture to believe nothing is objectively true, universally genuine, or real in an absolute sense. They think something is true, genuine, or real only when they accept it, subjectively, for themselves.

If teens are to stand strong in today’s culture, we must help them develop correct beliefs so deeply rooted no tempest can shake them, no storm can uproot them. They need more than personal opinions or lightly held suspicions. If teens are to withstand the pressures and temptations in today’s dangerous

## If teens are to withstand the pressures and temptations in today’s dangerous world, we must help them move beyond subjective believism ... to firm convictions.

world, we must help them move beyond subjective believism ... to firm convictions. They need to be so thoroughly convinced of what they believe they will take a stand for it regardless of the consequences.

### THE FACTS OF THE MATTER

It is not enough to have convictions. The actions of terrorists and suicide bombers demonstrate it is possible to have deep, abiding convictions and still be tragically wrong.

That is why evidence is crucial to Christian convictions. Christianity is a verifiable faith based on clearly recognizable and accessible historical facts. To move teens beyond belief to conviction we must guide them through an examination of the evidences for what they believe. Only then will they be equipped with the conviction that Christianity is objectively true. But even that is not enough.

Deep convictions are built not only on what the mind believes, but also around what the heart has experienced. Christian faith is intended to be a personal experience; it

should have a profound and relational meaning for each of our lives.

Most young people, however, do not understand how their faith can be meaningful in their everyday lives. They may have been told faith in Christ results in eternal life and involves a call to right living. But most teens see little correlation between what they believe (about God, truth, or the Bible) and their relationships with friends and family, or their future in life. But that presents a golden opportunity. We can demonstrate to teenagers not only what is objectively true about the Christian faith, but also how it can be relationally meaningful to their lives.

Therefore, our task is to present the Christian faith to young people in ways that demonstrate believing is an intelligent exercise of knowing what is objectively true and experiencing it relationally. When we do that, teens will begin to develop deep convictions that will make them strong, even in the face of today's challenges.

## THE ROAD TO CONVICTION

Helping teens develop deep convictions is so important — and so challenging — it has become the impetus behind a broad, new Beyond Belief Campaign. This campaign provides a fresh framework and innovative means of introducing and teaching Christianity to teens in a way that combines truth and relationship. We recommend reading the book *Beyond Belief to Convictions* as a crucial starting point. To begin the task of leading young people beyond belief to convictions:

- Examine your own faith. Reading *Beyond Belief to Convictions* may cause you to realize you have not come to fully understand why you believe what you believe. If so, you are not alone; many Christian adults have not examined the facts and their meaning to the point of being able to explain their faith to others. But if adults are going to guide teens into deeper convictions, we must have deep convictions ourselves.
- Encourage honest, open discussions with teens about the things they believe (be prepared for surprises); try to draw them out and get them talking. One must understand what teens believe before he can address it. Criticizing or correcting too soon will probably discourage openness.
- Emphasize the personal nature of truth. Moral and spiritual truth is not merely abstract or philosophical; it is innately concrete because truth is a person. Truth is best understood as a “who,” not as a “what.” Try to relate discussions of right and wrong, true and false, to the loving person of Jesus Christ.
- As much as possible, avoid teaching truth without application. Everything Scripture teaches teens to believe, to be, and to do contains one common thread: an intimate, real relationship with the one true God of

the universe. When teaching a Bible story, for example, explore what the passage reveals about God's loving desire for a relationship with His creation.

- Explore with teens how their faith in God answers the fundamental questions of life: Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?

*Beyond Belief* explores these topics at greater length, but reading one book cannot provide every possible way to meet the challenges ahead. That is why I am working with various denominations, parents, pastors, youth workers, and Christian school educators to launch an international campaign. In recent years we have been incrementally releasing a family of resources to equip parents and youth pastors in their efforts to lead youth into deeper convictions. For more information, visit <http://www.beyondbelief.com>.

Together, we can ground the next generation in deep, solid, biblical convictions that will enable them to live as “children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which [they] shine like stars in the universe” (Philippians 2:15). ■



**JOSH MCDOWELL** is an internationally known speaker, author, and traveling representative of Campus Crusade for Christ. He has authored or coauthored more than 60 books, including *More Than a Carpenter* and *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. Josh and his wife Dottie have four children.

To view Josh's Youth at Risk PowerPoint® presentation, go to: [www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org](http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org) and click on current issue.



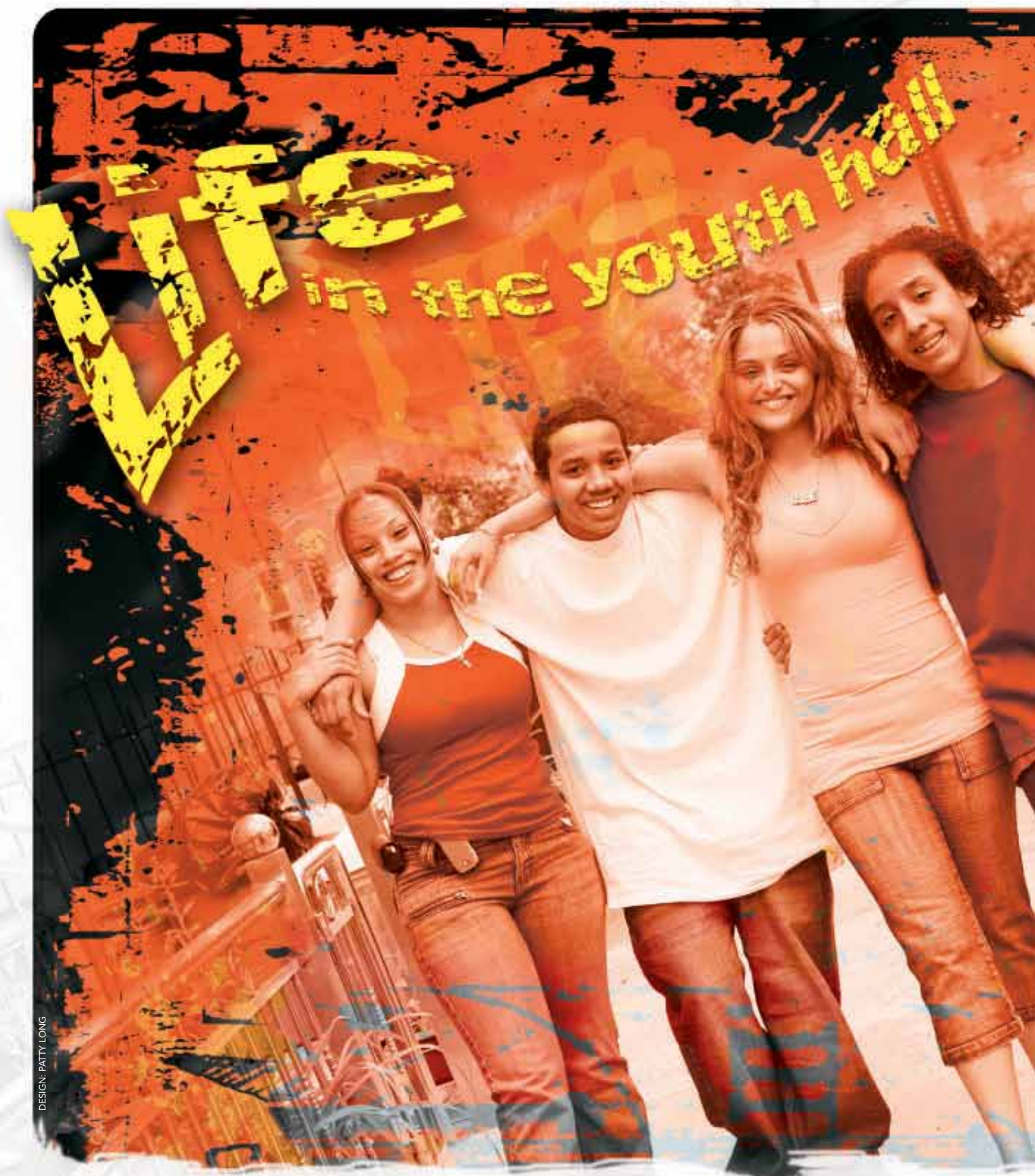
**BOB HOSTETLER** is a writer and pastor from southwestern Ohio. His books include *The New Tolerance* (coauthored with Josh McDowell) and the new release, *American Idols: The Worship of the American Dream*. He and his wife Robin have two grown children.

### ENDNOTES

1. Glen Schultz, *Kingdom Education: God's Plan for Educating Future Generations* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1998), 39.
2. Ibid., 40.
3. George Barna, *Third Millennium Teens: Research on the Minds, Hearts and Souls of America's Teenagers* (Ventura, Calif.: Barna Research Group, Ltd., 1999), 47.
4. Ibid., 52.
5. John Leland, “Searching for a Holy Spirit,” *Newsweek*, 8 May 2000, 61.
6. Barna, 48.
7. Ibid., 48.
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10. Ibid., 51.
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14. Ibid., 51.
15. Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, *Right From Wrong* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1994), 263.
16. Leland, 62.
17. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed., s.v. “believe.”







DESIGN: PATTY LONG

Perspectives in Youth Ministry • Perspectives in Youth Ministry





# Teenagers.

The thought of spending **24/7** connected to a bunch of energetic, acne-riddled adolescents who are trying to find themselves may be enough to strike fear into the most confident pastor. That is why it takes **someone special** to fulfill the calling of youth leader.

BY AMBER WEIGAND-BUCKLEY

A senior pastor might see a student as dramatic, strong-willed, and risk-taking, but the youth leader sees the same student as passionate, purpose-driven, and adventure-some. Whether a youth leader is single, married with children, or a grandparent, leading handfuls or hundreds of students is serious business. The icebreaker games, foosball tournaments, and all-nighters culminate into one eternally rewarding purpose — to show students the love of Jesus and help them become disciples and leaders of the church.

Youth leaders Sammy Baez, Jim and Linda Keers, Jeanne Mayo, Bruce Riddle, Elizabeth Covington-Taylor, and Betty Zaldivar agreed to talk to *Enrichment* journal about what life is like behind the youth hall doors and what it takes to stick it out for the long haul — it is not all fun and games.

• Perspectives in Youth Ministry •



## TAKING THE LEAD

Mayo was the only woman in her Bible college class to speak in chapel her senior year because of requests from students. “When I started 35 years ago women did not do this. [At



Jeanne Mayo

and I just talked a lot with other youth pastors to get ideas.”

Baez had plans that did not include students or ministry; he wanted to be an actor. However, he faced a life-changing decision when a crisis hit the church he grew up in — the senior pastor unexpectedly died of a heart murmur. “Our interim pastor approached me about volunteering to take over the

**“It is not your humor, your charisma, or your talent that produces eternal results. The greatest champions in youth ministry are the ones that stick it out for the long haul and develop a youth ministry culture where people [that are placed in leadership] can stick it out individually with the kids.”—Mayo**

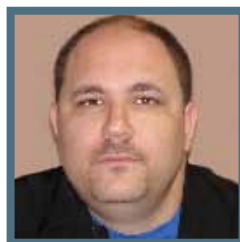
that time] women in the nonspeaking Assemblies of God culture could be a missionary, sing, play an instrument, or teach children.” After growing mega-sized youth groups, authoring books, and mentoring leaders, she is one of the most well-known faces in youth ministry. At age 54, she is starting over by pouring into the lives of 56 students at The Tabernacle, an Atlanta-based church originally planted by her father-in-law.

Riddle started over at age 32 when he left an 11-year career with the railroad to pursue full-time youth ministry. “All I knew was that I needed to respond to the call and, at that point, it did not matter how old I was. Now I look back and ask, *What were my twenties really about — was that all about God?* All I know is we responded [to the call] at the time when we sensed we needed to, and so it really was not in my mind that I was too old.”

While responding to God’s call, Covington-Taylor thought she was preparing for an overseas missions appointment when a college internship working with high school students in a church in Pennsylvania temporarily redirected her ministry to a youth group in Idaho. “During the internship I found I really liked the kids and they really liked me. I was surprised at how well it went so I started considering it.” Covington-Taylor did not initially foresee youth ministry as a part of her career when she was in college, but she used that to her advantage. “I did not have a lot of preconceived ideas of how I had to be so that made it kind of fun. I could be a little more creative,



Bruce Riddle



Samuel Baez

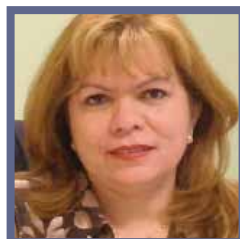
youth while they were looking for somebody.”

Because Baez was fighting the call to ministry to pursue acting, God gave him a dream one night that changed his direction. Baez remembers, “God told me, ‘The teenagers are hurting.’ So I told my wife I felt God calling us back there to help them out. We went to visit one Sunday, even though we had been gone a month or two. When one girl saw us coming to the church, she started crying and hugged my wife and me, as if we had never left. To me it was a confirmation.”



John & Linda Keers

When husband-wife missionary team Jim and Linda Keers left their ministry working with cannibals in the Indonesian jungles, they had no idea God had been preparing them to operate the Eagle’s Nest, an outreach to Native American students on Red Lake Reservation, in Red Lake, Minnesota. “[The reservation] is under a different spiritual covering than the United States,” says Linda. “It has always been native land. And, you know, the warfare is intense. But working with kids, it is wonderful. What you see is what you get.”



Betty Zaldivar

Although they refer to themselves as grandparents in youth ministry, the Keerses know God has given them opportunity to invest in the lives of students who will affect change on the reservation. Jim agrees, “We had

not worked with youth before. But we found the kids were the ones who were open to the gospel and really listening.”

It was a grandmother-type who affected change in the life of a 19-year-old new convert. An elderly missionary took Zaldivar under her wing and helped Zaldivar realize her ability to reach students for Christ. “She really opened her arms to me. She believed in me. That built my dream that God could use me.” From that time Zaldivar has dedicated more than 21 years to serving youth and youth leaders in the South-eastern Spanish District Youth Ministries, and in community outreach and counseling with boys and girls clubs and volunteering with the Guardian ad litem program. Because this missionary invested in her, Zaldivar’s primary focus is growing and mentoring youth leaders. “We have a volunteer internship program at the church. As the associate, I personally oversee the youth pastor/intern. We are planning to make him official next spring. My role is to stand behind him and let him guide the youth group. He is doing an awesome job.”

## CONNECTING WITH THE PLUGGED-IN GENERATION ... STAYING CONNECTED WITH YOUTH CULTURE

With the Internet, cell phones, iPods, and cyber-linked gaming systems, catching the attention of this tech-savvy generation is more challenging for today’s youth leaders than ever before. Students may be making friends across the world through tech-based interaction, but they are suffering in ever-increasing numbers from broken lines of communication and broken relationships in their own homes.

Riddle sees the painful impact of this trend on his students in Lincoln, Nebraska, where 50 percent of his students are either from mixed, broken, or single-parent homes. “It is becoming not the exception, but the norm and so, obviously, the students react.”

Riddle notes that the patterns of acting out in response to painful life situations are much more violent and hurtful than in previous generations with an incredible rise in the number of students involved in cutting and destructive behaviors. “It is more prevalent, it is more out there for the culture to read about and observe.”

The Keerses observe the magnified effects of non-parenting on the reservation; students are starved for the interaction they receive at the Eagle’s Nest. Linda compares the kids with the latchkey generation. “They are throwaway kids because the parents do not give them keys. Sometimes when we take them home they will be locked out and need to find a different place to sleep that night.”

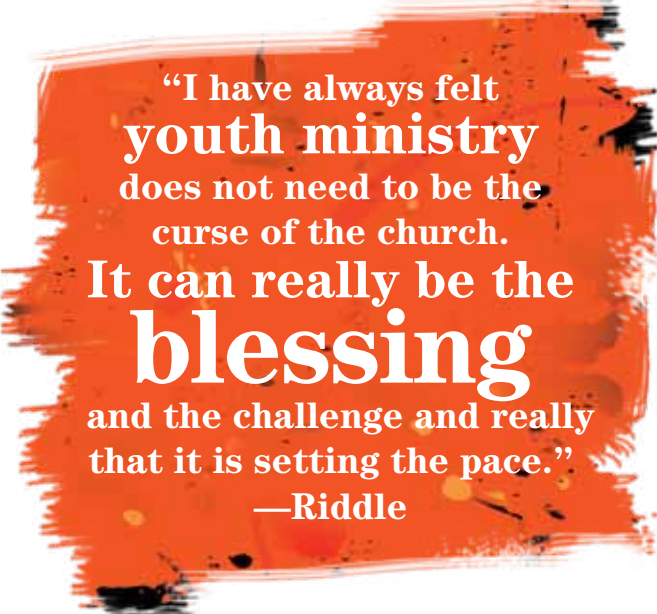
MTV reformats its programming every 3 years to appeal to generation-nexters. Having spent more than three decades in ministry to students, Mayo believes that, although the culture is constantly changing, the underlying aspects of youth ministry seldom change. While many exterior things change, the interior of teenagers stays much the same in youth culture.

Developing a sense of family, destiny, militancy, and childhood will help a youth leader stay in the game. “When you focus on that and do the obvious things, you have your kids help you look cool,” Mayo concludes.

Underneath the multiple piercings and tattoos, this generation has laudable resilience. Students endure incredible pain

— divorce, abuse, and a history of broken promises — and still maintain enough vulnerability to respond to someone who shows them genuine love and concern.

To make those genuine connections outside the youth group, every Friday Riddle can be found at one of the six public high schools in Lincoln having lunch with the students. “I encourage our kids to bring their friends. I get a chance to meet them and hear what is going on in their lives. Kids are



**“I have always felt  
youth ministry  
does not need to be the  
curse of the church.  
It can really be the  
blessing  
and the challenge and really  
that it is setting the pace.”  
—Riddle**

pretty open. They may not know you well, but you know it is an open generation to say what is going on. So I get an ear to the ground on that. I guess that is what has helped me to stay in touch.” Riddle believes interaction helps the message stay relevant and understandable.

Leaders need to take time to encourage and invest in their students. Mayo believes this generation of Christians will be the ones who tell the world about Christ. “If you get them into church and you love on them, they are passionate about their faith and about sharing it with others.”

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**“This generation of students has a willingness to be passionate about God and be involved in ministry. They are extremely under challenged.”—Covington-Taylor**

### **TOUGH TERRAIN: ADJUSTING YOUR MINISTRY TO REACH THE COMMUNITY GOD CALLS YOU TO**

Even though the message of Christ's love is universal, the demographics across America are diverse. This sometimes makes effective communication of the gospel difficult. When God called these leaders, they responded even though they had some intense learning to do along the way.

In Covington-Taylor's church community in Meridian, Idaho, Mormon seminaries adjoin every high school campus. Students are released an hour from school each day to study Mormonism.

Even though she lives in what most would consider a conservative town, she has worked with students who have come out of homosexual lifestyles. “This is the new thing on our side of the country,” she explains. “Kids are encouraged to experiment and find out what they are. Experimentation is not taboo. I have had guys and girls who have come out of that. They do not prepare you for that in Bible college.” To troubleshoot some of the issues, Covington-Taylor relies on

Internet sources and books for help, as well as input from other youth pastors.

For Baez and Zaldivar, reaching youth in the urban mission field where gangs and drugs have replaced the “Leave It to Beaver” family poses an even greater risk. Baez's Church of the Revelation is in the Bronx. This area is high gang territory, and the gangs establish a kind of family structure for teens. Baez adds, “Besides the gangs and drugs, we also have a high rate of girls that are either sexually molested or abused, but the number one thing is low self esteem.”

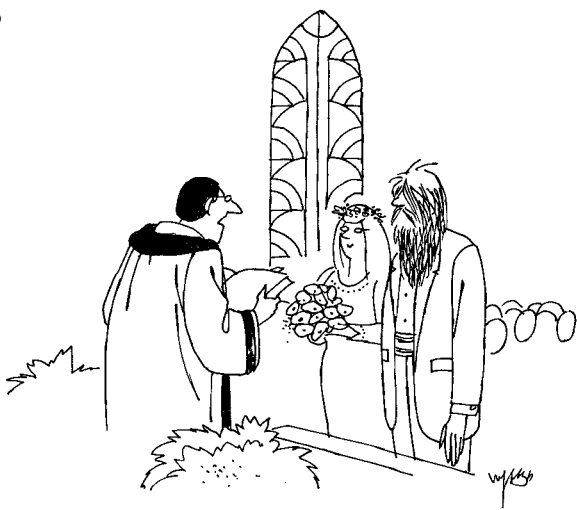
“One of the greatest needs in the Hispanic and inner-city communities is for churches to invest more into their youth and their youth leaders,” Zaldivar says. “A low percentage of youth leaders are full time — salaried. That is a big challenge when you must do both — work and attend to a youth group.”

Because of the wide range of inner-city challenges, including a tight or non-existent budget that is commonplace with youth ministry, Baez enlists the help of student leadership. A couple of years ago he began investing in a core group of students who had fire. Slowly the influence of these leaders spread and now the youth look out for each other. Baez says, “When students come in who are involved in drugs, we isolate them. My leaders know what is going on, and they look out for their own so the other kids will not be influenced.”

On the reservation at Red Lake, the community may be rural, but the daily problems the Keerses deal with resemble the issues in the Bronx. The clothes, music, and addictive behaviors tie into the gang lifestyle, which is glamorized. But this year, the Keerses faced their biggest challenge — to minister and restore healing to the native community after a school shooting that left the reservation angry at the white man's culture and religion.

Surprisingly, instead of buying into the sentiments of the older generation, the students fell back on the stability of the Eagle's Nest when the crisis came. “The students know that our doors are open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. They know what we do,” Linda explains. “If they cook meals for one another, they clean up. They know that in the [Eagle's Nest] theater they will get a survival lesson, learn memory verses, and pray — that is quiet time. So when people called

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**“Do you Gwendolyn, take Hairry, I mean Harry, to be your lawfully wedded husband?”**



us after the shooting and said, 'What are you going to do?' John told them, 'We are going to keep doing what we have been doing.' "

## KEEPING YOUR GUARD UP: BALANCE MINISTRY AND FAMILY

### The Balancing Act

Youth leaders work hard to invest in their students, and keeping family and personal time in balance can sometimes be challenging. As a newlywed, Baez struggled to keep his home time and ministry time separated. "There was one point my wife said, 'Look, there is no time being spent here,' " Baez admits. "We spoke to our senior pastor and he encouraged us." Baez resolved to schedule his time more wisely to guard his home time.

Linda credits her husband's initiative to keep their personal time guarded. "[John] always insisted every day that we had our time together. Even when our children were there, they were not the center of our lives. And I think that helped keep our family on the right course, just because our relationship was fresh."

As a single leader, Covington-Taylor had to work harder to guard her personal time because people took advantage of the fact she was single. "I was new, and I poured out so much that on my day off I was so tired I would not even want to get out of my pajamas and brush my teeth. Single people have more time to give. Part of the benefit of being single is having the energy to invest — but we still need personal time, and you need to guard it. No one else will guard that for you." She found setting boundaries and learning to say no was crucial to her keeping in the game for the long haul.

Early in Mayo's ministry people thought she was not wise to set boundaries that included passing up opportunities to speak at large youth conventions so she could attend her children's activities and games. "I would get my son's soccer schedules and refuse to miss a soccer game. I thought, *I have got one run at being a parent, and I am going to do this the best I can.*"

## Finding Support

Riddle believes the lack of mentoring relationships is one key reason youth leaders give up and move on. "They do not have anybody to tell them that feeling discouraged on a Thursday morning after youth service is normal."

As a youth pastor who did not have a mentor, Riddle felt his learning curve was more extensive. If someone would have shown him the ropes, he may have made fewer elementary-level mistakes. "I wish I could help young pastors today tighten that. It does not mean they are not going to have a learning curve, but it would help if they could learn at a quicker pace instead of my long route of 40 years in the desert trying to figure out where I was going."

As the first woman youth pastor in her district, Covington-Taylor found it even more difficult to develop a true mentoring relationship. She had people who spoke into her life, but connecting with someone who could relate with a single female youth pastor's struggles was next to impossible. To compensate, she intentionally plugged into resources and attended youth leader conferences. A few more female leaders are now in her district and finding ways to support them is important to Covington-Taylor. "Most of the women in our district who are doing these ministries now are married, so it is a little different. I am the only full-time one, but I have done my best to be a resource to them when we have coffee together."

Zaldivar agrees that mentoring moments can be as simple as sitting down for coffee. Her focus is mentoring teen girls. "I usually take a couple of girls with me, and they shadow me all day," she explains. I tell the girls, "I may be doing errands, laundry, dishes, and then I am going to have some prayer time if you do not mind just shadowing me."

With more than three decades in youth ministry, Mayo has taken shadowing to a whole new level. In addition to a Web site called "The Source" (<http://www.youthsource.com>), which is full of coaching/mentoring resources and forums, Mayo recently started "The Apprentice" mentoring program.



**I think God was preparing us for this time and place when we lived in the jungles of Indonesia. This [The Eagle's Nest ministry at Red Lake reservation] is the hardest ministry we have been involved in."**  
—John Keers

"It is just my way of getting up close to about 20 youth leaders or youth pastors," she says. Youth leaders across the nation can apply, and Mayo chooses 20 men and women to coach for a year. The interns come to Mayo's home twice a year to spend 2 1/2 days, do conference calls once a month on different topics, and send questions and correspondence with her via e-mail.

"We are great motivators in the kingdom of God, but we are not great equippers," Mayo says. "Even the people doing the equipping in youth ministry have not been in youth ministry in the trench for years, and though the principles stay the same, [mentoring] is the other huge part of my world."

## A SURVIVOR'S APPROACH TO YOUTH MINISTRY

Ironically, in an attention-deficit society where students are starved for meaningful, lasting, consistent, and stable relationships, the average stay at a church for a youth leader is 9 months.

The church Covington-Taylor came into was a product of excessive turnover, so the church requested a 3-year commitment. She agreed that a 3-year commitment was a wise request. "I got frustrated at the high turnover because I saw the effects on the kids. They were broken and distrusting. They had not had a stable spiritual influence. It took a year for me to gain one girl's trust before she would really talk to me."

Riddle, a veteran youth leader of 20-plus years, knows being effective in youth ministry involves long-term thinking and making leaving not an option. "Scripture says, 'Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up' " (Galatians 6:9). If youth pastors are not careful to see the things they want to see in 2 to 3 years, they believe it is easier to leave than to say 'Lord, I want to stay with this.' "

John Keers encourages young leaders to stick it out and follow their dreams no matter what. "God is not short on talent and ability. We seem to think that He needs us to operate, and we have got young pastors across the country who have vision that is so easily dampened by the traditional church. Stick to your guns, trust the Lord, and do not let

others despise you because of your inexperience and youth. God will subsidize that."

## TWENTY-EIGHT THINGS EVERY YOUTH PASTOR SHOULD KNOW TO STAY IN THE GAME

These veterans offer valuable advice to those in youth ministry:

**1. Do not be a lone ranger.** "You cannot try to do everything yourself or you will burn out quickly. Recruit a team to gather around you so you can share the vision and help it spread and grow," Riddle says.

**2. Put a system in place.** Mayo explains, "If you desire growth, you must have a small group format or something that retains those kids and builds friendship with the visitors so when they come in, they are engrafted. The surveys tell you that the No. 1 thing today's youth culture is looking for in a youth group, bar none, is a warm, inviting atmosphere."

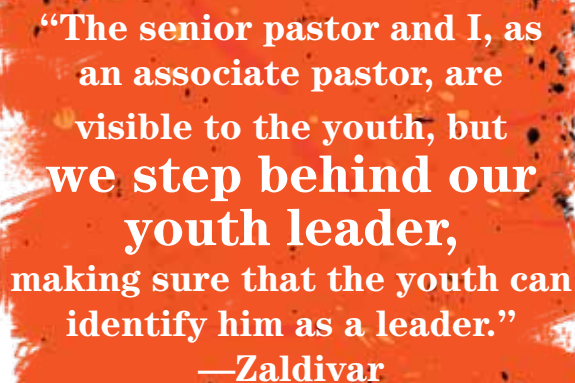
**3. Wait for the right leadership before starting new programs.** "I made the mistake of trying to implement a lot of new programs with the students before I had adequate leadership for them," Covington-Taylor admits. "I ended up getting ministries going when I had the energy and I was all excited, but then when I started getting tired and worn out, the ministries were still there."

**4. Get your students involved in outreach.** Mayo says, "Focus on strategic outreach about once every 6 to 8 weeks.

Start promoting probably 3 weeks out."

**5. Light a missions fire in your students.** "Take your youth group on a missions trip/at least once a year," Covington-Taylor advises. Get your students involved in Speed the Light (<http://www.stl.ag.org>), a ministry that helps purchase vehicles and equipment for missionaries. (To find out about trips available through Ambassadors in Mission, the AG short-term missions program for students, go to <http://www.aim.ag.org>.)

**6. Recognize your students' gifts and help them become leaders.** "I am having my first generation of 18- to 19-year-olds who want to be leaders. I am trying to train them and give them responsibilities," Baez states. In the beginning, he did not have any leaders. Now he has four students who have stepped up, and the younger



**"The senior pastor and I, as an associate pastor, are visible to the youth, but we step behind our youth leader, making sure that the youth can identify him as a leader."**  
—Zaldivar

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**“In the beginning, he did not have leaders.**

**Now he has four students who have stepped up, and the younger students see them as role models. Programs such as Bible Quiz or Fine Arts are available to help your students discover their ministry gifts and become great leaders.” — Baez**

students see them as role models. Programs such as Bible Quiz (<http://www.biblequiz.ag.org>) or Fine Arts (<http://www.faf.ag.org>) are available to help your students discover their ministry gifts and become great leaders.

**7. Look at your youth service through the eyes of a student.** “Many times we want teenagers to invite their friends to our youth group, but they are embarrassed of the youth service,” Mayo says. “We are singing songs about being washed in the blood of the Lamb — that is, blood from an animal. I am not trying to water down my charismatic message, but we need to look at the words we choose as we present it. Occasionally, I rewrite phrases in worship choruses.”

**8. Get to know the kids before you make any changes.** “For long-term success when you are coming into an established youth group, it is essential to get to know the kids first before you make a lot of changes and rules,” Baez reveals.

**9. Choose your battles.** “I am a person of conviction and principle. I do not sweat the ‘gray issues’ or the small stuff. I choose what I go to war over,” remarks Mayo.

**10. Work on building trust and relationships with your kids.** John Keers says, “A lot of people think that kids do not want adult involvement, but what I have learned more than anything is that they do. So ask, *How hard is it to sit around a campfire and cook hot dogs?* We cannot go in and present the gospel until they trust us. Why should they listen to us if we are not listening to them?”

**11. Determine when you need to be a coach and when you need to be a companion.** Mayo describes coaching as happening when a youth minister serves as cheerleader, spiritual director, and pastor. The companion is a friend or buddy. “It is important to understand that there are times when you need to decide what you need to be to your kids,” says Mayo.

**12. Do not be too idealistic.** “Having a youth group is not like having a Chia pet,” Riddle says. “You do not just add a little water, in a day or so it starts to grow, and everything is how you dreamed it would be. This is where young youth pastors get weary, disenchanted, and feel like they have tapped themselves out.”

**13. Keep your promises.** “I never talked about an event that I was not sure was really going to happen, just because the kids in my group had so many promises broken to them,” Covington-Taylor says.

**14. Love the kids more than you love yourself.** Linda Keers believes “It is easier to build up young boys and girls, than to repair men and women. You have this time to invest in their lives. We need to take it seriously.”

**15. Show your family they are a priority.** “My kids knew that Jesus was first priority for me and Sam, and that Sam and I were each other’s second priority. [Our sons] came third, but they knew they were way above the ministry ... [my sons] always won,” Mayo says.

**16. Do not ignore the command to have a Sabbath day off.** Covington-Taylor says, “If you are a single person, people will take advantage of the fact you do not have family commitments. You need to learn to say no and have boundaries.”

**17. Pray your guts out.** “Get a team to support your kids in intercession,” John Keers advises. “Find all those sweet little ladies in the church who just pour their hearts out to God, get close to them, and hook up with them because prayer support is all about warfare and that is the strategy.”

**18. Seek out mentoring opportunities.** “If you see a student that has potential as a leader, talk to and encourage him. Just listen to him, hear what is in his heart, empower and be an advocate for him,” Zaldivar says.

**19. If you do not have a mentoring relationship, read a lot.** “Because I was the first single female youth pastor in my district, I did not have a true mentor relationship with someone who knew exactly what I was going through,” Covington-Taylor explains. “It was up to me to really push to achieve spiritual growth.”

**20. Make friends with your district youth director.** Covington-Taylor agrees that her relationship with her DYD helped her adjust as the first woman youth pastor in her district. “I think our DYD set such an incredible tone that the youth pastors were really great to me. When we started planning camps, he asked me to speak in one of the morning chapels because he wanted the girls at camp to see a woman in youth ministry. Having that support made the difference.”

**21. Plug into resources like Momentum** (<http://www.momentum.ag.org>) and Youth Source (<http://www.youthsource.com>). “Youth Source is a network of a thousand plus youth pastors who receive the CDs and the newsletters encouraging them in their personal lives and their youth



ministry life," Mayo says. Momentum is a leadership ministry that provides training, materials, and a monthly e-letter specifically geared for AG youth pastors.

**22. Plan to regularly attend youth workers conferences.** "You will get lots of new ideas and come back refreshed," Covington-Taylor says. For information on the national Youth Ministries 2006 Youth Workers Conference go to <http://youth.ag.org/nywc/>.

**23. Respect your pastor.** "When our new pastor came in, he inherited us," Baez says. "It was up to us to lift him up, respect his views, and work with him. Any problems that come up always stay between him and me."

**24. Be teachable and humble.** Covington-Taylor reminds youth pastors, "If you are going to have a good relationship with your senior pastor, having a teachable, humble spirit is essential."

**25. Communicate with your senior pastor and associates.** "I know seniors and associates are extremely busy, but communicating vision, ministry goals, struggles, and simply spending time with each other is important," Zaldivar says.

**26. Think long-term.** Riddle says, "Over the years there is enough lack of continuity in students' lives, that, if at all possible, in God's will, they will end with the same youth pastor they started with. They need something consistent, someone they can count on to be there for those incredibly formative years."

**27. Leaving? Set a time and honor the commitment.** Covington-Taylor reflects, "I know for me it was 3 years. When the end of that time was approaching, I started praying. I told the pastor when I interviewed that I had a call to missions." When she felt God was releasing her to go, Covington-Taylor started talking about her missions call with her students. "I did not talk about it before that time because I did not want them to feel like I was here and already talking about leaving them."

**28. Learn to grow leaders so the ministry will stay in tact, even if you move on.** "When I left Rockford I had a group of 1,000 kids in that 13 years. But I had told them I had been preparing for my exit the day I entered," Mayo admits. "Because of that, you are going to be great. And they were." Mayo attributes the smooth transition to having the small-group leaders, who were the real youth pastors, in place for the kids. ■



**AMBER WEIGAND-BUCKLEY** is managing editor of *On Course* magazine. *On Course* is the official magazine of Assemblies of God national youth ministries.

## WHEN IN TRANSITION:

### "FROM INTERVIEWEE TO INTERVIEWER"

#### QUALITIES TO LOOK FOR IN A SENIOR PASTOR

1. What is his/her vision for the community and for young people?
2. Are his values clearly known?
3. Does his character resonate integrity?
  - Call the respective district.
  - What is his reputation with former youth pastors and associates?
4. Is he approachable and secure in his leadership?
  - Is he teachable and open to opposing views?
5. Does he have a good pastoring record?
6. Is he interested in your future and further development?
7. Is he committed to staff and relationship building?
8. Does he have a passion for Jesus?
9. Does he release people into ministry?

#### QUESTIONS FOR YOUTH PASTORS TO ASK SENIOR PASTORS

1. What is your vision for the community?
2. Based on your perception, what are the values of this church? What is the church known for in the community? What are this church's strengths and weaknesses?
3. What is your vision for the youth ministry? What is the greatest need of the church's youth?
4. What are your key expectations for the youth pastor?
  - What size is the youth group?
  - What office hours are expected? If nights are used for ministry, what kind of flexibility will the youth pastor have?
  - What is office attire during the week?
  - How important are outreaches; is this a priority in the church?
  - What kind of discipleship strategy are you looking for?
  - Which student group do you want the youth pastor to focus on (churched or unchurched)?
5. Is a written job description available?
6. What is my spouse's expected role?
7. What is the single most important thing a youth pastor can do?

# Finding the Right Pastor Under Which To Serve

8. How much is designated for the youth budget and where does the money come from?
9. Will the church send me to seminars or conferences for continuing ministry growth? Who will pay the expenses? Is my spouse included?
10. From your perspective what can or should the youth pastor expect from your leadership?
11. How often will you meet with your youth pastor and in what capacity? How do you build staff relationships?
  - Mentoring?
  - Relationship building?
  - Business meeting?
12. Is the youth pastor directly responsible to the senior pastor?
13. Who fires the youth pastor? The senior pastor or the church board?
14. What are your thoughts (attitude) regarding district involvement?
15. How protective will you be of your staff? If a parent thinks I am over emphasizing spiritual growth, how will you respond?
16. If the youth pastor disappoints you, whom do you talk to?
17. Explain the salary package? How often does the church give job evaluations and raises? Is medical insurance, housing allowance, included?
18. What is the vacation arrangement?
19. Will secretarial help be available?

## WARNING FLAGS AND SIGNS TO CONSIDER

Beware of:

1. Promises. For example, "We'll start you as a part-time youth pastor and then in 6 months we will bring you on full time."
2. A lack of attentiveness and commitment to the youth pastor position; an unwillingness to invest in you. "If you can get down here, we will interview you."
3. A "do the job mentality." "If you do not hear from me, you're doing a great job." In other words, "I'm hiring you to do a job ... do it. Don't plan on being mentored."
4. Fear of change. "Bless God, we've been doing it this way for 20 years."
5. Little to no district/organizational involvement.
6. A bad record with associates.
7. History concerns including lack of longevity.
8. Reactive expectations based on the last youth

pastor. (Listen to comments about the former youth pastor.)

9. Negative impressions. For example, listen to spousal intuitional alarms.
10. Cultural issues that make you uncomfortable.
11. Relational walls among the staff.
12. Little to no church vision.
13. Church vision, but no plan.

## QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED BY THE SENIOR PASTOR

1. What is your philosophy of ministry?
2. What is your spiritual history?
3. Describe or explain your call.
4. How are your personal finances (plans, debt, and discipline)?
5. Describe your ministry experience.
6. Who are your references?
7. What are your strengths?
8. What are your weaknesses?
9. Are you open to discipline?
10. Describe conflict resolution scenarios.
11. What are your hobbies?
12. What do you consider priorities?
13. Describe your marital strengths and weaknesses.
14. Describe your goals and ambitions.

## SUGGESTIONS WHEN BEGINNING THE SEARCH FOR A NEW POSITION

1. Take the high road when departing a church.
2. Pray for geographical direction for new ministry.
3. Map out specific areas for further prayer.
4. Contact districts for information on openings.
5. Check with colleges for open church positions.
6. Contact churches for job requirements and description.
7. Request a conversation with the senior pastor.
8. Request the privilege of sending the senior pastor your resume.
9. Do not become preoccupied with finances in your search.
10. Stay positive about previous church positions.



**RICK LORIMER**, Student Outreach director, National Youth Alive of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri









# ARE YOU RELEVANT

BY BRET ALLEN

**Relevance** is the cry of the day. Youth pastors are frantic in their attempts to capture this elusive beast. In an effort to remain relevant, many youth ministries faithfully follow the fads and trends of society. The problem is that fads and trends come and go.



# OR JUST Recent?

**Youth culture is liquid. Change is constant and nothing seems to be sacred. What is hot today may be viewed with indifference tomorrow. The latest and greatest will soon be a distant memory. Loyalty is granted on a single fact — selfishness. This generation filters everything through “How does that benefit me?”**



Hairstyles, language, trends, heroes, and music must undergo a complete transformation every 4 to 6 months for modern teens is to hold them with value. The situation becomes more complex and difficult when one considers that teen culture validates everything based on personal experience. Truth has been replaced by personal taste and absolutes have given way to situational ethics. Teens routinely consider themselves the center of truth and revelation.

In this storm of change without absolutes, youth ministers are trying to bring a life-changing message. The last thing today's youth culture needs is youth programs that follow trends set by MTV, Paris, Hollywood, and Wall Street. Adherence to such trends will ensure that one's program is recent, but never relevant.

## RELEVANCE HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH TRENDS AND FADS

To be relevant, youth ministries must provide more than a reflection of fads and trends. Youth pastors are obligated to provide relevant youth ministries that remain consistent in changing times. We must be relevant while remaining aware of trends, and relevant while promoting a 2,000-year-old truth.

Relevance is demanded because the world continues to look for spiritual answers everywhere except the church. Relevance does not denote compromise or a need to determine which direction the wind of popularity is blowing. The sad fact is today's ministries are being dictated to by the world rather than impacting the world they are called to reach. For the church to be relevant, it must not succumb to a reactionary position of acceptance while following after the latest trend. If pastors follow the crowd, they will never lead it.



What is the answer to this dilemma? New programs? Better dramas? More lights, lasers, and videos? No. The solution to being relevant lies in the church's ability to shift from a paradigm of reaction to one of impact and leadership. Failure to make this shift will have devastating effects on the church.

## MAKING THE SHIFT

My family and I have a tradition of attending the National Hot Rod Association top fuel drag races. It is an exciting 3-day event for the adrenaline junkie. Cartoonish looking vehicles with oversized engines speed down the racetrack at over 300 miles per hour. The thunder from the engines causes one's internal organs to vibrate. The engines are finely tuned. The track conditions are perfect. The sun is out. The grandstands are filled. While the conditions may be perfect, every year someone goes home a loser because he missed his shift. A failure to shift renders the engine ineffective and makes a mockery of the hundreds of hours of mechanical labor invested, the tens of thousands of dollars spent, and the driver's training and preparation.

The light tree goes from yellow to green, and the engine roars as the car accelerates from the starting line. But if the driver misses a shift, the result is a cloud of smoke and a burst of flames. Sounds of shock mixed with disappointment are emitted from the crowd as the dragster coasts to a stop short of the finish line.

It is time to shift. Youth pastors are not guilty of failing to prepare. Nor are they, for the most part, failing because they have invested insufficient time and resources. Failure, however, is becoming common in youth ministry because youth ministers are not making the shift from being as recent as possible to becoming as relevant as possible.

## RELEVANCE DEMANDS THAT PEOPLE BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN PROGRAMS

Many youth ministries have adopted an unhealthy philosophy concerning the purpose for youth and adult workers. Many believe workers exist to continue building the youth program. After all, the youth program is where youth pastors receive recognition and build their reputations.

Young people come to church week after week and watch as youth ministry is done at them. After many years, the sad and tragic results of this ministry style are now coming to light. According to the American Baptist Association, 86 percent of evangelical students who graduate high school walk away from church and never return. How tragic! If a student — after attending youth ministry services for 6 years throughout junior and senior high school — is still unable to stand strong in his faith, then youth pastors are doing something drastically wrong. The answer is not another program, more lights or video productions, or even more events and

# WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE RELEVANT?

**W**hat does an attitude of relevance look like? What are the characteristics of relevance? What traits must youth pastors possess if they are to direct society as opposed to merely tracking where it has already been? Relevance in action can be seen in Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well (John 4:1-42). Seven essential elements from this passage may help you develop the attitude necessary to become relevant in youth ministry.

## JESUS INITIATED THE CONTACT

"When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' " (John 4:7).

Jesus initiated every contact in this story. He did not wait for ministry opportunities to come to Him; He initiated ministry. Jesus was not at the synagogue or at the office. Jesus was with people.

## JESUS NOTICED HER NEED

"When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' " (John 4:7).

Immediately Jesus directed the conversation to what was relevant to the woman — her need for water. That was the reason she had come to the well in the middle of the day. Jesus did not talk to her about theology; He entered into a relevant conversation. Jesus spoke to her in her setting about her need.

## JESUS WAS WILLING TO VIOLATE THE NORM

"The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)" (John 4:9).

According to Albert Einstein, insanity is "continuing to do the same thing while hoping for different results." If youth pastors want fresh results, they must try new methods. Methods are not sacred, only our message is sacred.

## JESUS WAS KIND, NOT CONDEMNING

"He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back.'

" 'I have no husband,' she replied.

"Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you have no husband' " (John 4:16,17).

Jesus' kindness invited her honesty. In verse 16, Jesus told her to go and get her husband. She may have struggled with this request. Jesus was kind and He treated her with equality, but He was asking about that. Maybe she considered telling a lie or ducking the question. She may have been tempted to leave, but she did not. She stayed and answered the question with great honesty.

## JESUS OFFERED HER WATER — NOT A WATERED-DOWN MESSAGE

"The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.'

"He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back.'

" 'I have no husband,' she replied.

"Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true' " (John 4:15-18).

Jesus was willing to discuss her real issues. He felt comfortable speaking to her about her need for water and her failed marriages. His kindness gave her opportunity to be honest. With every step, Jesus was developing a better relationship with this Samaritan woman. Relationship and relevance go hand in hand. With relationships, people will listen. Without relationships, resistance is high and relevance becomes nearly impossible.

## JESUS REFUSED TO PLAY RELIGIOUS GAMES

" 'Sir,' the woman said, 'I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem' " (John 4:19,20).

These two verses are transitional in the story. The woman moved from honest communication with Jesus to playing religious games. This age-old ploy is common in the church today. But Jesus did not allow it to end the conversation. He had established the credibility needed to put an end to distractions in this conversation.

## FROM MISTRESS TO MISSIONARY

"Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?' Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I ever did' " (John 4:28,29,39).

Relevant ministry is measured in changed lives. Ministry is about people. It always has been and always will be. If one's ministry is about something other than people, then his focus is wrong. Ministry can only be considered effective when people's lives are being changed. Ministry is not measured by successful programs, but by changed lives. When ministry becomes anything less than this, it fails to be relevant.



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activities. The solution is to better train and equip teens.

Many teens have attended youth ministries, then served a 1- or 2-year youth ministry internship while in Bible college, and still have never had opportunity to lead in youth ministry. For years, the only way they have been asked to serve is by supporting ministries through their attendance. Students are doing what is asked of them, but when they graduate from Bible college they have no idea how to lead youth ministry. Pastors, then, accuse Bible colleges of not accomplishing their purposes.

Two years ago I was in a meeting where several influential ministers were discussing the shortage of quality ministers being produced by Bible colleges. The discussion seemed to focus on what the colleges were neglecting to accomplish. In the course of debate, they asked my opinion.

I responded, "The Bible calls for pastors to train and equip the saints. The responsibility of a Bible college is to teach theology. If pastors are unhappy with the training of ministerial candidates coming from our Bible colleges, perhaps they should examine their impact on the people they send to Bible colleges. It is impossible to make a silk purse from a sow's ear."

The ministry philosophy youth pastors embrace reveals the paradigm they are attached to. Their choice of ministry philosophy will do one of two things — elevate or deflate people. A youth pastor's ministry philosophy will affect the next generation.

Two paradigms are present in youth ministry — program-driven or student-led. A youth pastor's choice on this single issue is more important than any other single choice he will make because his choice will largely determine whether he will lead a healthy youth ministry or not.

Healthy youth ministries cannot be determined by size alone. Size is not the gauge of good health. Imagine a doctor telling his patient that he was healthy because he was big. Would a wise person agree with that assumption? No. Many things vital to one's well-being are not considered when one evaluates health by size alone. A person can be big, but flabby. What about blood pressure, cholesterol, genetic history, and the condition of vital organs? These must also be considered when determining health. A youth ministry may be big, but that does not mean it is healthy. Neither does a small youth ministry indicate an unhealthy ministry.

## WITHOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT RELEVANCE IS IMPOSSIBLE

Today's teens are hungry for reality and spirituality. They are not interested in religious ceremony or cheap answers to questions no one is asking. This generation usually scores high in national surveys on spiritual interests. They have not rejected God or the notion of spirituality, but they are in the process of rejecting the church, and Christianity as a whole.

As America moves from a post-Christian era to an

anti-Christian era, one thing is certain — this generation is increasingly fascinated with the supernatural. Television reflects what the culture is hungry for. Prime-time programs include *Charmed*, a provocative look into the occult and specifically Wicca. The host of *Crossing Over* communicates with the dead to answer questions asked by guests of his show. Month after month, more and more movies are released dealing with the occult, vampires, witchcraft, and even Satanism. Wicca is now reported to be the fastest-growing spiritual practice of teenage girls in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

Magazine covers also reflect the fascination young Americans have with spirituality. At the same time, teens are rejecting the church as an option for spiritual reality and power for their generation. How can youth ministries be struggling at a time when youth are eager to see the supernatural? Why have they rejected the church as a solution for meeting this need? Perhaps they have heard the talk, learned the rules, and familiarized themselves with the church, but have not seen God's power.

This is not a dark or hopeless picture. Revival will break forth when this generation sees God's power in operation. Programs, dramas, light shows, and activities will not fill this generation's hunger to see the supernatural power of God. This is not the time for youth pastors to avoid the supernatural and argue the philosophical aspects of doctrine. Well-rehearsed arguments will not touch this generation — only God's power will.

## SHIFTING IS TIME SENSITIVE

Relevance demands that youth pastors shift — not someday, but now. It matters when and how one makes the shift. If pastors wait too long, their efforts and forward motion will be stopped. There is also a time to shift. If it is done too early or too late, ministry can suffer damage or become stuck in one place.

Many Christian leaders fail to shift. Ineffective efforts are becoming commonplace as men and women whom God has called to lead become complacent — satisfied with the status quo — and succumb to the difficulty of making the necessary shifts.

It is time to shift. It is time to shift from fads and trends to relevant ministry. It is time for youth pastors to shift their energy from building programs to building people. It is time to shift to a relevant approach that embraces the power of God. A shift must take place or ground will be lost. Nothing in leadership will ever coast uphill. Anytime leadership takes a passive role, the result is negative. Pastor, it is time. Even as you read this, the opportunity to shift is passing. ■



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### ENDNOTE

1. <http://www.rickross.com/reference/wicca/wicca33.html>





# Healthy Youth Ministry: **BUILDING BLOCKS** To Long-term Success

Have you ever done something that you looked back on and thought, *What in the world was I thinking?* I have had my share of those moments. One in particular involved my daughter Sarah who, at that time, was about 9 years old. She had a loose tooth that was hanging on by a thread of skin. She would push it around with her tongue, make it stick out of her mouth, and have a blast creeping people out with it. Eventually it began to bother her and she asked me to pull it. I told her, “No problem. Dad will take care of it, and she would not feel a thing.”

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BY KEVIN BERRY

DESIGN: RANDY CLUTE



BUILDING BLOCK NUMBER FIVE:  
DEVELOP **STICK-TO-ITIVENESS**

BUILDING BLOCK NUMBER FOUR: BE IN A  
CONSTANT STATE OF **REPRODUCING LEADERS**

BUILDING BLOCK NUMBER THREE: HAVE A  
**LASER-BEAM FOCUS** ON YOUR VISION

BUILDING BLOCK NUMBER TWO:  
CONSISTENTLY **LOVE STUDENTS**

BUILDING BLOCK NUMBER ONE: BE IN A  
CONSTANT STATE OF **IMPROVEMENT**



I tied a piece of string around her dangling tooth and tied the other end around a door handle. Most everyone has seen this done, and I figured it had to work. After all, her tooth was holding on by only a tiny thread of skin. So I positioned Sarah just right, and reassured her again that she would not feel a thing because as soon as I slammed the door her tooth would pop out, and it would all be over. When I slammed the door shut, Sarah was jerked toward the door and screamed at the top of her lungs. The tooth did not come out. I felt awful. Now she was hurting worse.

After many tears, and many apologies from me, she let me try again. I dried off her tooth and gripped it firmly with my fingers. I pulled as hard and fast as I could. Her head jerked

## When youth pastors throw in the towel, they miss out on the excitement and adventure of long-term success in ministry.

down. Her shrieks and screams sounded like they were from another world. The tooth still would not come out. Believe it or not, she let me try again, and I still could not get her tooth out. Eventually we took her to the dentist, and he took care of it the right way. Fortunately for me, I have a loving and forgiving daughter.

There is a right way and a wrong way to pull a tooth. I was doing it the wrong way. I have also learned there is a right and wrong way to build a healthy youth ministry.

Jesus told about two men who each built a house. One built his house on a solid rock, the other on sand. One did it the right way and reaped the rewards. The other did it the wrong way, and his house collapsed.

Would you like to build a healthy youth ministry that will last? Would you like to reap the rewards that come from having long-term success in youth ministry?

Along the journey in youth ministry I have made my share of blunders. I have also learned some secrets to successful youth ministry, some building blocks that lead to a ministry filled with excitement, adventure, and continued growth. What follows in this article are a few powerful building blocks that can keep youth pastors in the race, and give them the ministry success their hearts long for.

### BUILDING BLOCK NUMBER ONE: BE IN A CONSTANT STATE OF IMPROVEMENT

The fact you are taking time to read this article means you probably understand the importance of continuous improvement and are heading toward success in your ministry.

Someone said that less than 10 percent of pastors in America pursue ongoing training. Some never experience long-term success because they stop developing the key areas of their life and ministry.

Imagine someone who continues to play golf even though he never gets any better. I took up bowhunting a few years ago, but I did not take time to practice and improve. The result: frustration. I shot at deer and missed time and time again. I finally could not handle the deer laughing at me anymore. I knew I was never going to take time to get better, so I sold the bow.

Lack of improvement is enough to make anyone feel like throwing in the towel. When youth pastors throw in the towel, they miss out on the excitement and adventure of long-term success in ministry.

Years ago *Newsweek* ran an article on the Olympics. This article said there was only one difference between the person who took the gold medal and those who took silver and

bronze — attitude. Attitude is what largely determines if a person will have long-term success. Attitude says, I must get better. I must make personal development a *top priority*.

What are you currently doing to improve your ministry? What books are you reading? With whom are you associating? Will they speak into your life and make you a better youth pastor?

Consider making your car a university. Youth pastors can receive helpful input from incredible leaders around the nation through their CD players. Empty heads cannot fill empty hearts.

Seth Godin in his book, *Purple Cow*, said, “You’re either remarkable or invisible. Make your choice.”<sup>1</sup> In today’s world, it is not enough to have a good youth ministry or to be a good youth pastor. Youth pastors must be remarkable. Youth ministries must be remarkable, breathtaking, and filled with excellence. Youth leaders and ministries that strive to become remarkable are constantly improving and attaining long-term success. Youth ministries that do not improve blend in and become invisible to the students in their communities.

### Action steps

- *Set aside time each week to prioritize your personal relationship with Jesus.* We reproduce what we are, not what we know. Most youth pastors know they need to spend time with God. Yet, R.A. Torrey said the average church leader spends only 4 minutes a day in prayer and devotion. What a scary thought, especially when one considers that real ministry is an overflow of one’s personal relationship with Jesus. How sad that some pastors stop improving

because they neglect their relationship with God. They risk being a professional in the ministry, yet a novice in knowing Jesus.

- *Learn from those who are successful.* Two things determine where a youth pastor is today and where he will be in the future: the people he associates with, and the books he reads. Two great audio resources I listen to every month that sharpen me as a youth pastor are “The Source” and “Up Close” by Jeanne Mayo. For more information on these resources check out <http://www.youthsource.com>.
- *Sharpen your leadership skills.* What are you doing to improve as a leader in your home and in the body of

influence their commitment to church. The largest influence was a warm, friendly atmosphere where they could be themselves. Last was a fast-paced, high-tech, entertaining ministry approach. This confirms what youth pastors already know: Teenagers want to be loved. When youth pastors love teens consistently, youth ministries will grow.

Students will attend your youth ministry if it has an atmosphere of love and grace. The first funeral I officiated was for a 15-year-old girl who had been shot execution style. The bullet hole was still visible on the side of her head as she lay in the casket. She had run away to Detroit to start a new life with her 29-year-old boyfriend. She became caught in the middle of a

## Two things determine where a youth pastor is today and where he will be in the future: the people he associates with, and the books he reads.

Christ? Evaluate your people skills and make improvements. Become a great listener, praise people for doing good, and practice affirmation.<sup>2</sup> Studies at the Dale Carnegie Institute of Technology reveal that 15 percent of a person's financial success is due to his skill or ability and 85 percent is due to his personality and ability to deal well with people.

### BUILDING BLOCK NUMBER TWO: CONSISTENTLY LOVE STUDENTS

It is easy to impress people from a distance, but youth pastors can only impact people who are close to them. The closer the relationship the greater potential for impact.

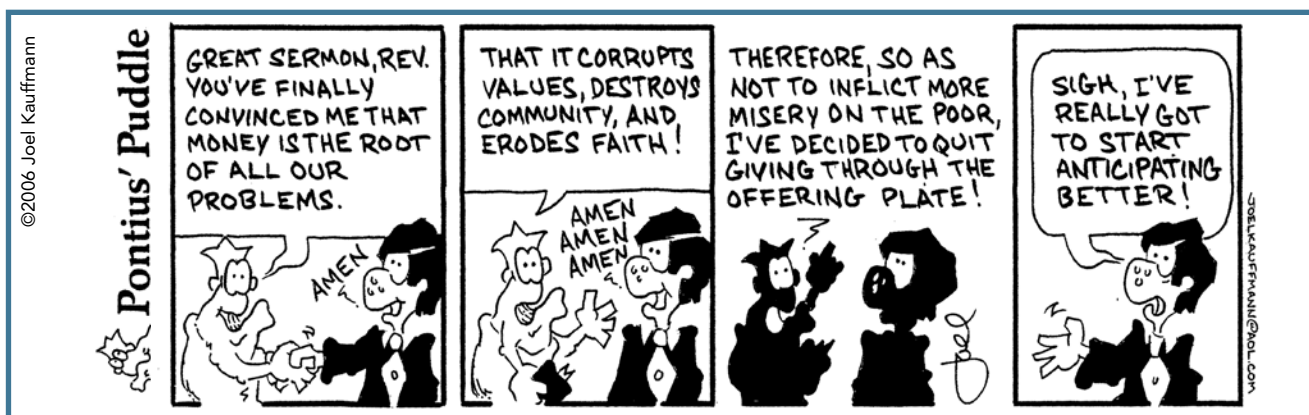
I love huge events where the church is filled with young people. A big event done right will attract students. However, consistent love will keep a student.<sup>3</sup> An article in *Group* magazine reveals the results of their “Cool Church” survey. Ten thousand students were asked to rate the factors that

drug deal gone bad. This young lady's life could have turned out differently if she had been exposed to a loving youth leader or student from our ministry.

One danger of being in ministry long-term is getting involved in other stuff — speaking engagements, big events, endless meetings, activities, e-mails, and planning for the future. These activities are good, and some are necessary, but none of them bring long-term success like hanging out with students and leaders, loving them, and strategically reproducing your life in them.

### Action steps

- *Plan to take a student out for a soda or cappuccino this week and talk about life.*
- *Determine to find the good in people.* Anyone can find the bad in others, but champions learn to find the good in people. Benjamin Franklin said, “Speak ill of no man, but speak the good you know of everybody.”



- *Send your leaders an e-mail or note expressing how much you love and appreciate them.*

## BUILDING BLOCK NUMBER THREE: HAVE A LASER-BEAM FOCUS ON YOUR VISION

Andy Stanley said, “Everybody ends up somewhere in life. A few end up somewhere on purpose. Those are the ones with vision.”<sup>4</sup> Have a dream that is bigger than you, one worth getting behind that breeds excitement in the church. No one likes to drive behind someone who does not have a clue where he is going. But people will line up behind a person who has a vision from the Lord.

Those who have a vision and learn to stay focused on it will have incredible success in ministry. They will see their dreams become reality.

Dave Williams, my pastor and mentor for more than 20 years, has blessed my life through his incredible example of vision. He has often said, “You can rise only to the level of your vision.” His relentless focus and determination to see his vision become reality has both challenged and inspired me over the years.

I do not know anyone who will do anything of significance for the Kingdom who does not have a vision bigger than himself. I remember a youth pastor who came to visit me. He wanted a tour of our facilities. While we were talking, he asked, “How many students do you have in attendance?” I told him, and he said he could never imagine having more than 30 students. I thought, *You will never need to worry about having more than 30 students because 30 is all you can see.* God has wired people to think in terms of pictures or vision. If a youth pastor can see the invisible, he can accomplish the impossible.

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**“Rev., we have a question regarding your attitude in pastor–church relations. In your resumé, why do you refer to your previous pastorates as, ‘I did my time at. ...’?”**

## Action steps

- *Take a dream weekend getaway.* Get away from the normal routine and take a Bible, pen, and maybe a good book with you. I recommend *Visioneering* by Andy Stanley for this getaway. Most important, bring your dream journal. Ask: *What do I want my life, family, finances, and ministry to look like in 10 to 15 years?* Do not worry about how to make the vision happen now. Write down where you want to go; the how will come later.
- *Make sure your ministry vision fits underneath your pastor’s ministry vision.* A local church can have only one vision and that vision is given to the pastor. If there are two different visions, the result will be division. Always promote the vision of the pastor — get behind it, and be excited about it. Whenever I fill in for Pastor Dave on Sunday, I try to promote his vision to the congregation.
- *Tell people the vision.* Start practicing your casting skills and cast your vision; leaders and students need to hear it often. Vision, not need, is attractive. A big vision communicated has the power to motivate, inspire, and rally people to see a God-given dream accomplished.

## BUILDING BLOCK NUMBER FOUR: BE IN A CONSTANT STATE OF REPRODUCING LEADERS

We are called not only to be productive for the Kingdom, but also reproductive.

Years ago, a youth pastor asked me, “What do I need to do to break the 200 barrier in our attendance?”

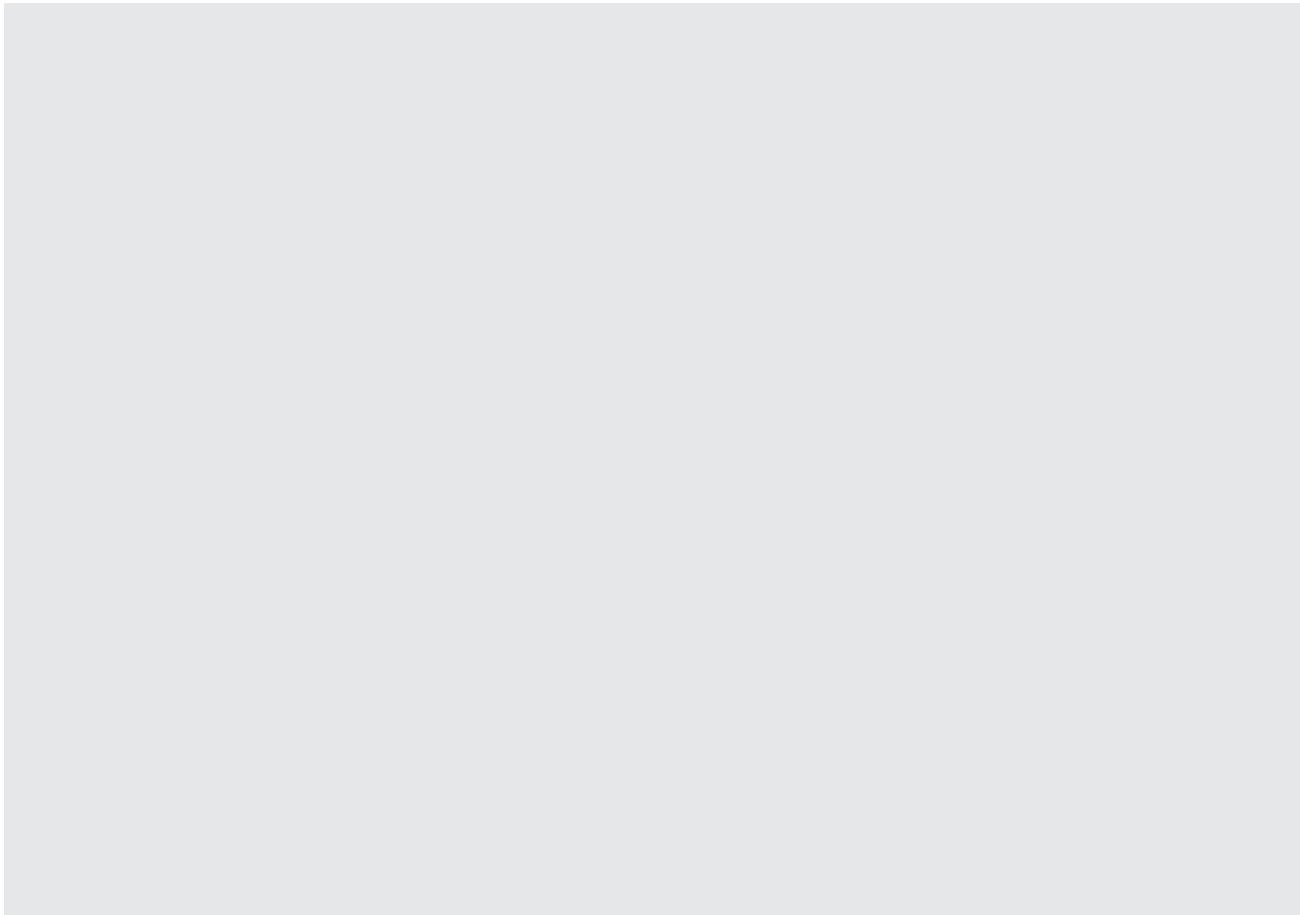
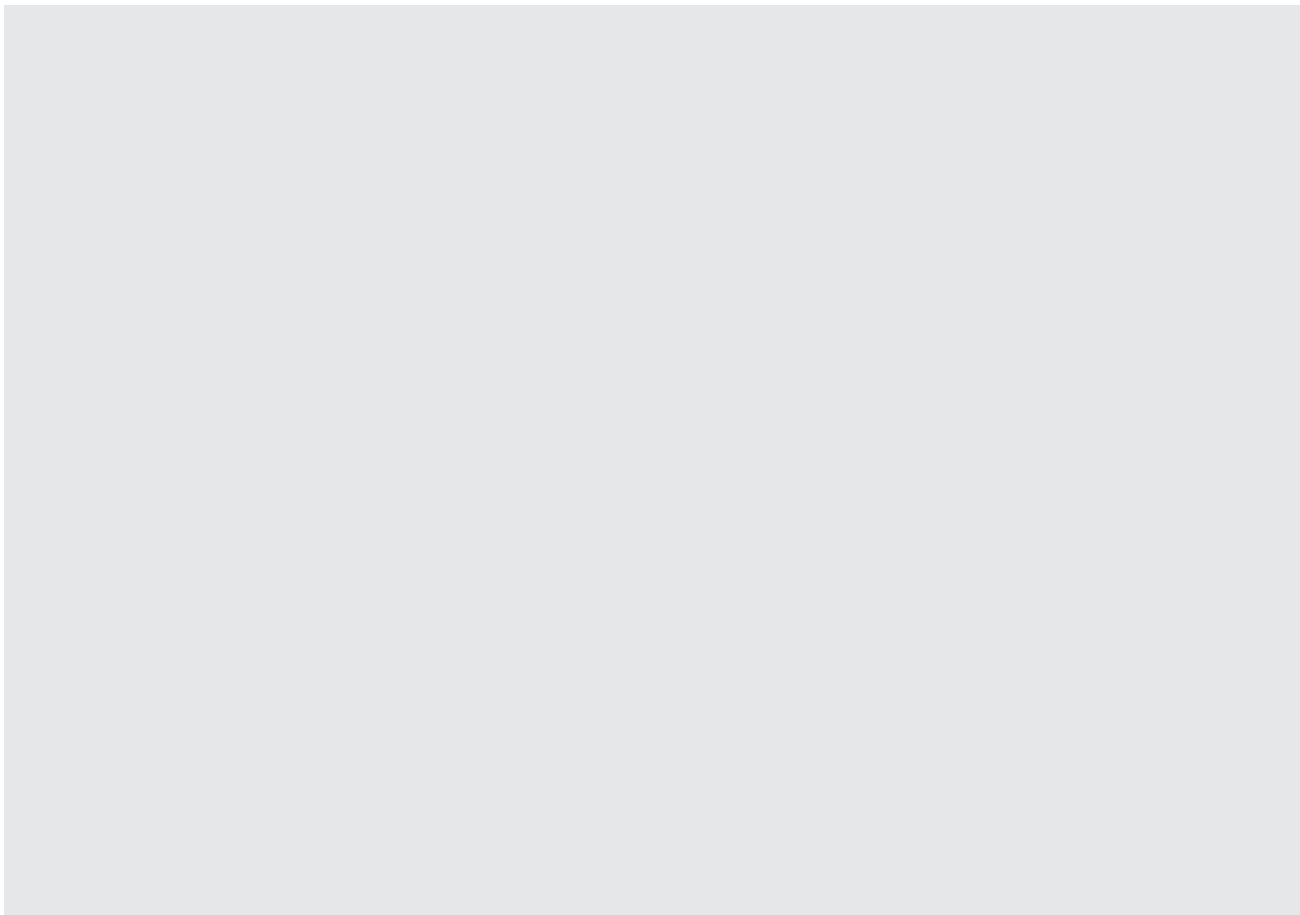
It was exciting for him to see his group grow to 100, 150, 175, but now it seemed stuck just under 200. I asked him to describe his leadership team. His response was, “What leadership team?”

I was amazed that his group had grown as much as it had without a leadership team. Youth pastors must constantly reproduce themselves in other leaders. This is an absolute adventure and a must if youth pastors desire long-term success.

Reproducing leaders and building a leadership team is not about getting volunteers to do crowd control, set up and tear down chairs, or be a chaperone for events. Youth pastors need to recruit, train, and release people to do the same youth ministry the youth leader does.

There is nothing motivating about doing crowd control, but investing one’s life in a teenager is extremely addicting. A youth pastor needs to be reproducing more youth pastors in his ministry. Youth leaders need to be reproducing more youth leaders, and disciplined students need to be reproducing more disciplined students. Everyone has a part to play in being reproductive.





## Action steps

- *List potential leaders for your ministry.* Look for leaders who students like to be around. Remember, people like people who like people. Keep your eyes open for people who are warm and fuzzy, not cold and prickly.
- *Spend time this week hanging out with potential future leaders.*
- *Write out a plan for recruiting, training, and releasing leaders.* A ready-made leader will not show up at your door and ask, “How may I serve you?” Your future leaders are right in front of you waiting to be recruited and molded into great leaders.

## BUILDING BLOCK NUMBER FIVE: DEVELOP STICK-TO-ITIVENESS

Call it what you want — tenacity, the heart of a finisher, endurance — it means the same thing. Stick-to-itiveness is the incredible ability to stay with your calling even through the most grueling times.

I was in St. Pete Beach, Florida, meeting with several pastors when a friend asked me if I wanted to go parasailing. It sounded fun, but I kept thinking about the many sharks in the ocean. I could hear the theme music to *Jaws* playing in my head. I envisioned myself soaring through the air behind the boat like a human fishing lure, occasionally dipping down, just barely touching the water to tease the sharks — like fly fishing, except in this case I would be the fly.

Then another friend sealed my decision forever. He related his sister's experience while parasailing. She was flying fine behind the boat (I am sure the sharks were following her every move.), and then, out of nowhere, the rope connecting her to the boat detached. She was now floating in the air, flying over the beach, over hotel buildings. It had to be the hand of the Lord that landed her, of all places, in a hotel swimming pool. When the rope detached, that poor girl only had one thing going for her — her ability to hold on and not let go.

It seems stick-to-itiveness is one of the greatest qualities found in successful youth pastors. In a world where the average youth pastor stays in a church for only 9 months to a year, many more need to hold on and not let go. In some cases, youth pastors never experience the thrills of longevity and the success that comes with it because they let go too soon. They leave the game before their time, or trade teams because the grass looks greener at another church. Instead of blooming where they are planted, they are constantly being uprooted, and that only causes a plant to wither and become fruitless. Galatians 6:9,10 says, “Let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest *if we do not give up*” (italics added). Bigger and brighter days are yet to come. The question is: Will youth pastors hang in there long enough to experience them?

When I am tempted to quit, I am reminded of marathon runner John Stevens of Tanzania. In 1968, during the Olympics in Mexico, he was running in last place. In fact, the winner from Ethiopia had crossed the finish line 1 hour before Stevens did. Stevens had fallen several times, was bruised and bloodied, and a medical team followed him in an ambulance. They tried to convince him to quit. After all, he could no longer win the race and needed medical help badly. He refused to quit and kept going. When he entered the stadium the crowd gave him a standing ovation larger than the one the gold medal winner had received. When a reporter asked him why he did not give up, he said, “My country did not send me to Mexico City to start a race. They sent me to finish the race.” Youth pastors are not called to be great starters, but great finishers.

## Action steps

- *List key verses.* Choose the verses that have most encouraged you to be a finisher. Commit a few of them to memory.
- *Refuse to dwell on quitting.* Your life will be pulled in the direction of your most dominant thought.
- *Take time to rest and be refreshed.* Imagine music without a rest in it. It would sound awful. So does a life with no rest in it. An article in *USA Today* states that vacationing is healthy. The vacation habits of 12,338 men were studied for 5 years. It was discovered that those who did not take vacations suffered the highest death rate and the highest incidence of heart disease over the next 9 years. By contrast, those who vacationed and took time to rest every year reduced their overall risk of death by 21 percent and their risk of death from heart disease by 32 percent.<sup>5</sup> Pastors will last longer and be much more productive if they take time to rest and be refreshed.

You have a call and a destiny. Jesus created and gifted you to be a pacesetter. He desires you to go the distance and experience the thrill of long-term success in youth ministry. ■



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For a personal audio/video message from Kevin on long-term success in youth ministry, visit [www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org](http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org) and click on current issue.

## ENDNOTES

1. Seth Godin, *Purple Cow: Transform Your Business By Being Remarkable* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2003).
2. Alan Loy McGinnis, *The Friendship Factor: How To Get Closer to the People You Care For* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1979).
3. Jeanne Mayo, *Thriving Youth Groups: Secrets for Growing Your Ministry* (Loveland, Colo.: Group Publishing, 2004).
4. Andy Stanley, *Visioneering: God's Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Personal Vision* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah, 2001).
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# The Power of **Team** Leadership

I still remember the service when I looked around a room packed with teenagers and thought, *If they wanted to, they could take over this place.* I was outnumbered. The group had been growing quickly, and I soon realized I could not handle it on my own anymore. I could not preach, receive the offering, lead worship, be an altar worker, encourage students, get permission slips to parents, plan an event, and. ... It was too much.

I was forced by my situation to discover team leadership. Now, years later, I can see how teams have revolutionized every aspect of our student ministry.

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BY SCOTTY GIBBONS



PHOTO: PHOTOS.COM



Team leadership is powerful, biblical, and effective. So why is it such a rare practice in student ministry? There may be several reasons.

1. Some youth pastors cannot admit their need for help.
2. Some are insecure and afraid of surrounding themselves with people who might be more talented than they are.
3. Some believe it is easier to do ministry than to put up with the frustrations and confrontations that come from delegation.
4. Others do not know how to do team ministry.

The only thing more exciting than doing student ministry is bringing a group of leaders with you on the journey. Embracing leadership as a team builder will lighten a youth pastor's load, increase his effectiveness, help him accomplish more exponentially, and have much more fun in the process.

Here are some practical thoughts to help youth pastors transition toward team leadership in student ministry.

## RECRUITING A LEADERSHIP TEAM

### Prayer

Before a youth pastor does anything else, he needs to spend time praying for his leadership team. (If he does not have a leadership team, he needs to pray that God will give him one.) A youth pastor may be tempted to view this step as the Sunday School starting point. But if youth pastors fail at this point, their entire effort is in vain.



## Perspective

Watch for potential leaders. There may be many potential leaders in the church, but a youth pastor needs to learn to recognize them. Potential leaders can come from many different age groups, and have different interests, giftings, and personalities. Potential leaders may be student leaders, senior citizens, or any age in between. Be careful not to discount Clark Kent when looking for Superman. Learn to see a diamond in the rough. Many of our most effective youth leaders did not necessarily come shooting out of the gate. But

## Team leadership is powerful, biblical, and effective. So why is it such a rare practice in student ministry?

they have been committed over the long haul and, as a result, have grown into their leadership role.

Early in my ministry I looked for talent. I have since realized that, while talent is desirable, it is not a priority. A youth pastor must learn to recognize potential and be willing to work to bring it out.

Parents can make excellent youth leaders. Before recruiting a parent, check with the student to make sure he is comfortable with the arrangement. Do not alienate a teenager to gain a worker. If the student is uncomfortable with the situation, see if the parent can be utilized in a behind-the-scenes capacity.

## Characteristics

When recruiting youth leaders it is important to know what to look for. Do not put someone on the team and entrust him with responsibility only because he is breathing. Remember, it is easier to hire than to fire. Look for these characteristics:

*Love for God.* Look for leaders who have a heart for God that is evident by their lifestyle. Understand that when a youth pastor brings someone on the team, he is endorsing that person as a model his students can follow.

*Servant's Heart.* A servant is willing to help where he is needed, even if it means staying after service to stack chairs. Be careful about recruiting someone who is eager to be in the limelight.

*Teachable Spirit.* Select individuals who will be committed to personal growth once they are part of the team. At some point a youth pastor may need to correct the leader or direct him to do something differently. When correction is given, how will he respond?

*Team Player.* Look for leaders who work well with others. If the team is made up of self-centered players, a youth pastor will not experience the power of team leadership.

Some youth pastors may be in a position where it seems no

one has these qualifications. In that situation, a decision must be made. Will he let someone lead the group in worship only because he can (even though his walk with Christ is questionable, and he is unwilling to serve)? A youth pastor needs to determine his convictions and set standards for involvement in leadership, and then stick to them. It is better to use a CD for worship than to give influence to a leader who will compromise the spiritual climate of the group. A youth pastor should not be afraid to set high standards for his leadership team.

### The pitch

*Opportunity.* Once a potential leader has been identified, the youth pastor needs to recruit him as a member of the team. Youth pastors will be more effective in recruiting leaders if their appeal is based on opportunity rather than need. Signing up to be a crewmember on a sinking ship is not appealing. When recruiting, appeal to the significant opportunity the potential leader has for impacting a student for eternity. Do not say to a potential leader, "I really need you to help me

with security. These kids are rowdy, and I cannot get them under control. It is so distracting when I am trying to preach. Would you be willing to help me?"

Instead, say: "I want to talk with you about an opportunity to make a significant impact in our Wednesday night services. We want to develop a security team to maintain order in the service so students can focus on the message without distraction. When students are not distracted during the altar call, they are significantly more likely to respond positively to the message. This directly results in changed lives. Would you pray about this opportunity?" Leaders (especially those selected for the team) will respond much more readily to opportunity than to crisis.

*Expectation.* When recruiting a leader, a youth pastor must provide the potential leader with clearly written general expectations up front (attendance at service, personal accountability, and length of commitment). He should also provide specific expectations regarding his role on the team (how to lead a small group or how to effectively greet a student).

## EMPOWERING AND EQUIPPING STUDENT LEADERS

**S**tudents can be effective (not to mention available) workers in youth ministry. How does a youth pastor mobilize students? Consider these thoughts:

### GIVE STUDENTS A COMPELLING CAUSE

1. Paint a picture. Help students see opportunities and the eternal significance of being involved. Help students understand that ministry is more important and rewarding than winning athletic trophies or music honors because ministry impacts where people spend eternity.
2. Explain how students can play a critical role when God uses them in ministry. God created each student for a divine purpose. Help students discover God's purpose for their lives and use their lives for His glory.

### GIVE STUDENTS CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

1. Discuss the cost. Do not avoid setting high standards and asking for heroic commitments. Students respond more quickly to commitments that require sacrifice.
2. Clarify the win. Help students understand how to define and recognize success. Is the goal large attendance, many salvations, or 20 first-time guests? Clarifying goals will not only help students evaluate their efforts, but it also motivates them to grow in ministry and become even more effective in the future.

### GIVE STUDENTS PERSONAL OWNERSHIP

1. Get buy-in. Facilitate opportunities for student leaders to weigh in on events. Youth pastors cannot expect students to be excited about bringing their friends to

activities the youth leader dreams up. Nothing can replace the excitement of an event students create and build from scratch.

2. Get feedback. Continually ask for and pay attention to input. Students will have fresh and honest (sometimes too honest) feedback. This information is priceless when a youth pastor wants to continually improve the church's youth program.

### GIVE STUDENTS EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

1. Be a mentor. Go on the journey with the students. Be close enough to model and monitor, yet provide space enough for them to learn for themselves.
2. Release students. Give students room to dream crazy dreams and exercise wild faith. While youth pastors want to do everything possible to set students up to win, it is equally important to give students room to fail. They are young and in most cases high on zeal and low on experience. Provide guidance, encouragement, accountability, and affirmation.

Running an effective student ministry is a thrilling experience. It will lighten the load the adult leaders carry, while engaging the interests of the students and developing their God-given talents and abilities.



SCOTTY GIBBONS, Ozark, Missouri



**Placement.** When placing someone in a specific ministry area, a youth pastor needs to consider how he can help that person fulfill God's plan for his life in that ministry context. People are more important than projects. To do this, a youth pastor needs to know the potential leader's life, dreams, interests, and gifts. If a potential leader tells the youth pastor that he feels called to build relationships with students, the youth pastor needs to provide him with an opportunity to fulfill his calling in the youth structure (maybe as a greeter, an altar worker, or small-group leader). Take the potential leader out for lunch or coffee and talk with him and hear his heart.

## DEVELOPING A LEADERSHIP TEAM

When a youth pastor recruits his team, he must have a plan to develop it. A good team needs a good coach who can train the team to win. Youth leaders are responsible for coaching their teams so they can win. This may mean taking extra time to encourage them, pushing them to do more than they think they can possibly do, and caring enough to confront them. As a youth pastor develops his team, he needs to keep these two principles in mind:

### Invest

A youth pastor needs to invest in his leaders. He needs to care more about them individually than about what they can do or

produce as a team. He can show them he cares by investing in their lives relationally and spiritually. He can teach them principles that will help them become more effective in life and ministry.

A youth pastor can be strategic and plan to make a significant investment in one of his youth leaders each week. One week he can take a leader to lunch. Another week he can invite a few leaders to attend a student's game. He might attend a leader's small group or ministry team and encourage them. He can write notes of encouragement.

Whatever else a youth pastor does, he needs to be intentional about investing in his leadership team. Small, but meaningful investments go a long way and pay great returns.

### Equip

A youth pastor needs to give team members the information and tools they need to win. He must communicate clearly and consistently with the team. Most of the challenges any team faces will be directly related to their communication (or lack of it). When assigning a responsibility to a leader, communicate what the goal looks like, and then give him what he needs to achieve it. A youth pastor can be creative in his approach to equipping leaders. He can experiment to find out what works best for him and his team.

At Realife, we meet with ministry team leaders (leaders of

## SMALL CHURCHES WITHOUT YOUTH LEADERS

Approximately 9,000 Assemblies of God churches do not have a paid part-time or full-time youth leader.<sup>1</sup> What should a minister do when he pastors a church not large enough to support a youth pastor, yet has a group of students needing spiritual care? This is a difficult situation for many pastors who are already stretched thin but want to make a difference.

Here are a few things pastors can do to ensure students get the love and discipleship they need.

### CAST THE VISION FOR STUDENT MINISTRY

Vision casting for student ministry starts when students and adults begin to hear how important the youth are to the senior pastor. A pastor can affirm the priority of student ministry in his messages by speaking directly to students. Publicly recognize the potential for this generation to do something great for God. As a pastor does this, the soon-to-be volunteers will catch his heart, and seeds will be planted for students' future involvement.

### TAP INTO DISTRICT RESOURCES

In many cases, the district youth director is the youth pastor for local churches that do not have a youth pastor. Senior pastors would do well to build relationships with DYDs and solicit their help in crafting effective youth programs.

Pastors need to promote and send their students to district events such as camps and youth conventions. These events provide opportunities for adult volunteers to serve for a few days without the risk of making a long-term commitment. These events, however, may become the connection point God uses to give adults a heart for student ministry.

### SHARE THE OPPORTUNITY

Pastors need to prayerfully approach the adult(s) they feel God is leading them to recruit. Ask them to prayerfully consider investing in the life of a teenager. Assure adults that they do not need to be experts on youth culture because the DYD and you, as the senior pastor, will support them and assist them in overwhelming situations. Then leave it to God to speak to their hearts.

Do not look for the next Josh McDowell, but for someone with a passionate love for God and a willingness to love those He loves.



**SCOTTY GIBBONS**, Ozark, Missouri

#### ENDNOTE:

1. Sherri L. Doty, statistician (This figure is based on 2004 Annual Church Ministries Reports.)



leaders) for weekly training sessions during Sunday School. In these meetings, upcoming youth events are discussed, leaders' responsibilities are assigned, questions are answered, training is provided, and leaders are given time to work on their responsibilities for the upcoming week. Leaders who miss a meeting can receive updates and audio recordings of the session on our leadership Web site.

## SUSTAINING A LEADERSHIP TEAM

As a youth pastor develops his team, he needs to structure it to win long-term. The longer his team stays together the greater his chances are of building an environment of trust with students and developing healthy chemistry on his leadership team. The mark of a great youth leader is building a ministry that can be sustained even in his absence. A youth pastor may not be in his current position forever. He must develop a solid ministry team so, when he leaves, a team is in place to sustain the ministry during the transition and beyond. The following principles will help youth pastors build teams that last.

### Personal longevity

Youth pastors must commit to long-term plans for youth ministry. They must not be quick to leave a ministry position, but stay where they are and be faithful. When a situation gets difficult (and some will), stay planted, and grow through it. Do not run. Youth pastors make a destructive mistake when they leave their position or responsibility prematurely. Does God call a leader to a position and then call him out of it 6 months later when the situation becomes difficult? Stick with it. A youth pastor will not reach his potential until he has been in a ministry position at least a few years. It is natural to have seasons that are more difficult than others. As a youth pastor sticks with it year after year, his influence will increase exponentially.

### Put the right people in the right places

If a youth pastor wants a potential leader to thrive long-term on his team, he must place him where he will fit best. A poor ministry fit minimizes a leader's effectiveness, frustrates him, and increases the likelihood he will burn out or give up. Obviously, every leader will occasionally need to do something he does not enjoy. When it comes to long-term responsibilities, place leaders in positions where they will thrive. Your leaders' passions may change occasionally. In those times be flexible and help them transition to another ministry area if necessary, or talk with them about the importance of perseverance.

### Build confidence

A youth pastor needs to give his team members easy tasks and early wins so their confidence will grow. As team

members show themselves faithful and competent, he can increase their responsibilities. Be careful about giving a leader too much too soon.

### Provide accountability

Team members need consistent accountability. After a youth pastor has given a leader a responsibility and explained his expectations, he needs to follow up with him. A lack of accountability weakens a youth pastor's influence and creates an inconsistent culture that is unproductive and ineffective. Following up with a leader to make sure he feels supported is different from micromanaging him. A leader needs to know the youth pastor is counting on him. He needs to know the youth pastor will follow up because he cares about him and the project. If a leader does not sense the project or goal is important to the youth pastor, it will not be important to him.

### Affirm continually

Give public appreciation to leaders and credit where credit is due. Write thank you notes often. Do not be generic and use clichés, but provide specific compliments and sincere encouragement. If a leader is going through a difficult time, the youth pastor needs to be there to offer support and prayer. Showing appreciation makes a statement to one's leaders and in turn impacts one's students.

## CONCLUSION

I have not figured it all out. But when I look around the room during a service, I am no longer frightened. I see something much different. I see a greeter showing a visitor around the facility. I see a small-group leader following up with a student who has not been around in awhile. I see the audio/visual team leader training students to mix sound. I see many teams impacting hundreds of students who in turn will impact thousands. I am glad I am not running this race alone.

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9–12).

That is the power of team leadership. ■



**SCOTTY GIBBONS** is Realife Student Ministries director, James River Assembly of God, Ozark, Missouri.

For a personal audio/video message from Scotty on The Power of Team Leadership, go to [www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org](http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org) and click on current issue.





# RURAL YOUTH MINISTRY: THE POWER OF NETWORKING

“I can see corn and cows,” my wife told her former colleague shortly after we moved from uptown Minneapolis to take a position in rural Michigan nearly 15 years ago. I left North Central Bible College (now North Central University) to serve in the north woods in a town of 300 people. Talk about culture shock.

I grew up in a small town. My father was a pastor and church planter, so our family was on the move. The communities we lived in were rural, but this was extreme, even for me.

BY TIMOTHY ELDRED





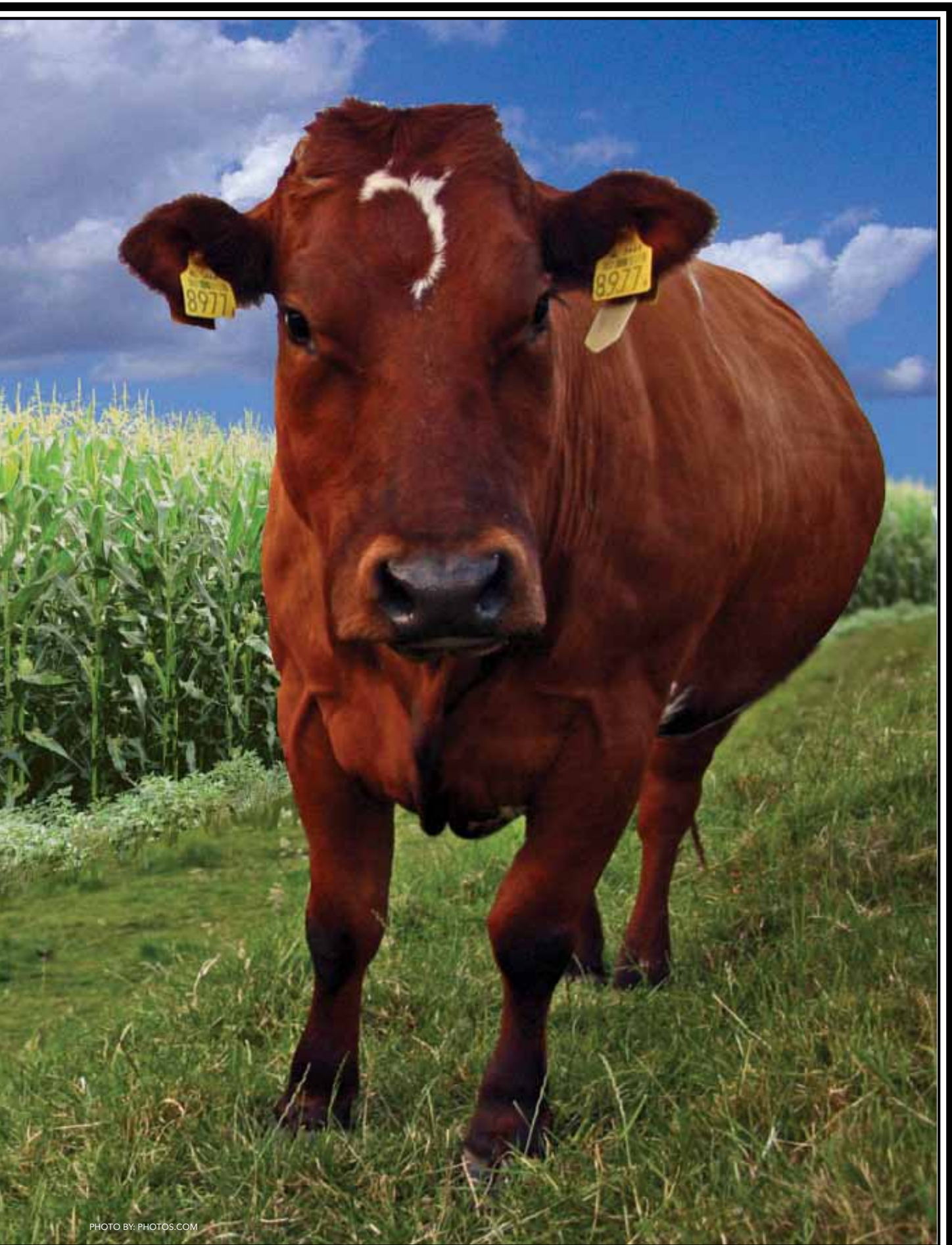


PHOTO BY: PHOTOS.COM

Cindy, on the other hand, spent her entire life in Milwaukee and Minneapolis. In spite of our differing perspectives on this new location, we both agreed on one important point: *It is all about relationships*. That phrase has not only become the basis for my ministry philosophy, but also the trademark of my Kingdom work.

Relationships are the foundation of life. From faith to family to our fellow man, everything hinges on relationships. It is where we learn, grow, and develop. It is how we discover truth. Josh McDowell says, "Truth is lived out in the context of relationships."

## NETWORKING IS NOT WORKING

This article will not tell pastors how to connect their church, adult sponsors, or student leaders to other congregations and their resources. Rather, I want to consider a different paradigm. My first goal is to challenge pastors' thinking by offering practical principles applicable to their congregations.

For most pastors, networking *is not working*. Many (maybe most) ministerial associations or youth ministry networks in small communities struggle to get together consistently. The time constraints and to-do lists pastors juggle while caring for the needs of their flock often trump the monthly meeting. On the uncommon occasions when everyone's schedule allows for attendance, shared vision for the combined faith community is better accomplished by sharing hearts and

hurts more than combining congregations for sing-a-longs and service projects. These meetings also provide personal support for the loneliness that can accompany leadership. Consider the following: More than 90 percent of congregations have less than 250 members. Of these churches, more than 80 percent have less than 100. According to the Mission America Coalition, the average Sunday morning attendance for churches in the United States is 127 people. Rural churches typically fit within those parameters, and congregations that size usually do not have the budget to employ vocational youth ministry staff.

Here is the leap pastors need to make: If a full-time senior pastor who is paid has not been empowered by networking, should he apply this practice to the volunteer youth ministry sponsor who has even greater time limits? Nevertheless, no church ministry is in greater need for networking today than youth ministry. Is there a way to combine the methods of networking with the mission of youth ministry? Can pastors take the principal need of connecting people and apply it practically? Pastors can with a little spin. Let us consider another possibility.

## NETWORKING IS LOOKING INSIDE

Networking is about engaging with others for mutual support. In the local church, networking requires recognizing gifts, talents, and abilities and employing them for the Kingdom's

# BEYOND VISION: THRIVING IN YOUTH MINISTRY

Wing it junky." Sounds good rolling off the tongue, doesn't it?

In many ways, this phrase has become the mantra of many youth leaders (vocational and volunteer). Youth leaders hear the phrase repeated often in youth ministry circles. It has even become a badge of honor for a select few. While youth ministry does require flexibility, flying by the seat of one's pants in planning, preparing, and polishing programs has become an excuse for poor administration and leadership.

In late August a couple of years ago, a close mentor and advisor called and asked: "What is your job?"

This question did not seem too hard. My answer included casting vision, giving direction, providing motivation, and some other trite phrases. He hung up. I guessed my answer was wrong.

When a person I admired and respected suddenly ended his phone call, it got my attention. I waited. A couple of days later he called back and asked the same question. Again, my answer was incorrect, so he gave me the answer that has changed my life. I want to share his answer with

youth pastors because it has everything to do with the direction of leadership in youth ministry today.

"Tim," he said, "your job is to release people's potential."

Youth pastors can cast vision. In fact, they are great at it. They can be passionate, and young people need to catch their passion; however, youth pastors cannot release potential and allow youth to step up unless they learn to step down.

This idea is not new. The apostle Paul called it preparing "God's people for works of service" (Ephesians 4:12). Eugene Peterson's *THE MESSAGE* says "to train Christians in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church."<sup>1</sup>

Youth pastors need to consider this verse as it relates to youth ministry. Ephesians 4:12 defines what youth ministry should be about. Understanding that definition will change the way youth pastors lead, save them time, empower youth to lead, and provide them with a better understanding of their responsibilities as youth pastors.

Youth ministry requires vision casting. Vision casting begins the moment a candidate meets with the search committee. The person with the most passion has a real shot at getting the job. Unfortunately, the process of selecting a

cause. Equipping the saints for service would be easier if pastors were better connected to their people. This would make plugging each part of the Body into ministry much easier. This is what networking needs to be. Networking does not mean looking outside one's congregation before looking inside because everything a pastor needs to accomplish the church's

**THE PURPOSE OF YOUTH MINISTRY CAN  
BE DEFINED BY ONE WORD:  
*DISCIPLESHIP.***

mission is often sitting in the pew waiting for someone to release his potential.

One reason pastors look out rather than look in is because the youth ministry paradigm most pastoral leaders have grown accustomed to encourages making a comparison to what is happening in the church next door. Making comparisons is normal, but comparisons are not healthy. While some elements used by a neighboring congregation could benefit another congregation, many of its resources and programs may fit a specific niche and are not designed for another situation. When one church looks with envy on another, the people may convince themselves that what the other church has at its disposal might be what they need to

accomplish their goals. The truth is most congregations and pastors in most situations have what they need.

**NETWORKING IS ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP,  
DISCIPLESHIP IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIP**

The purpose of youth ministry can be defined by one word: *discipleship*. The church has one objective. Jesus began and ended His earthly ministry by calling disciples and training them to create more disciples. Unfortunately, many pastors have compartmentalized the youth ministry in their church. Youth ministry is not a separate ministry from adult church, so it carries the same objective — discipleship. What resources

are required for making disciples? The answer: *relationships*. While programs, events, meetings, and activities are youth ministry tools, students' lives are changed through relationships. These tools may help create opportunity to build relationships, but the typical church spends so much time building its youth program that no time is left for creating the relationships the program was intended to foster. If networking is about discipleship and discipleship is about relationships, then churches already have everything needed for youth ministry. Networking with other churches can have great extrinsic value, but God has already blessed each church with people who possess the true assets needed for making young disciples in their congregations.

youth pastor is often repeated in a year or two. Then the next person with crafty communication gets a shot.

I have met few youth leaders who lacked vision or whose vision was not worth investing in. On the other hand, I know even fewer who stick with youth ministry long enough to see their vision become reality. Part of the problem comes from the youth ministry paradigm followed in the church today. As youth pastors provide ministry to young people, they often work harder than necessary to plan an event, have the event, or draw a crowd. Many administration issues youth leaders struggle with come from a lack of time. The reason youth pastors are short on time is because they are doing the group's job instead of equipping youth for service.

My 10-year-old son was working at the computer. As usual, he was struggling to complete a task. What did I want do? Jump in, take over, and finish the work for him because it would have been easier to finish the task myself. But I did not.

Youth pastors cannot equip youth for service if they do not let teens learn by doing. Learning by doing is part of discipleship; the part youth pastors need to work harder at.

I believe in youth pastors, their calling, and heart for teens. Youth pastors are great at vision casting. They can be passionate, and young people need to catch their passion. However, youth pastors cannot release potential and allow youth to

step up unless they learn to step down.

Leadership is a long-term commitment that requires discipline. Youth pastors might not accomplish as much as they used to, but their efforts will have a greater impact on today's teens. Following are four steps that will eliminate a great deal of administrative hassle for youth pastors.

1. Equip youth to lead their peers in the cause of Jesus Christ;
2. Involve young people in the life and work of the church;
3. Support the mission and the ministry of Christian young people with your time, talent, and treasure; and
4. Recognize publicly and privately their achievements.

These steps will not only force youth pastors to become true visionary leaders, but they will also help create a new generation of leaders whom Jesus Christ has called to lead His cause today. If all else fails, this one rule will help youth pastors move beyond vision to leadership: Never do anything for young people they can learn to do for themselves.



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**ENDNOTE:**

1. Scripture taken from THE MESSAGE. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.



Understanding the youth culture pastors are called to care for today is paramount. Pastors cannot meet the needs of people if they do not understand where they are coming from. Pastors who take time to know and love their flock often have a much deeper impact on lives through their pulpit ministry than those who spend most of their time preparing sermons in their offices and do not spend time relating to their people. In other words, a pastor does not need to be perfect, but a real person. Someone has said, "People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care." This is true of youth and adults.

Research has tried to understand what makes the younger generation tick. Social scientists have determined that the greatest desire today's student generation has is for a significant relationship with an adult who will invest time in their lives. The power of networking is rooted in relationships. While teens are busy telling the church what they want, the church is often too busy building programs that will not provide for their deepest felt needs. Networking with the church next door will not give teens what they want — a few minutes of the greatest asset pastors have — time. Would it not be easier to give them what they want instead? That would be a win-win. Youth would know they are loved and leaders would know they are making disciples little by little.

## NETWORKING IS ABOUT PEOPLE, NOT PROGRAMS

Perhaps the time it takes to disciple others is also part of the problem. Pastors live in an instant world and have access to instant benefits. Today pastors measure results and

quantify ministry efforts based on what they can see right now. Programs and planned activities are easy to measure. Attendance is easy to measure. Relationships? Since, it is hard to evaluate the impact of relationships on people, discipleship has grown into a program instead of a foundational philosophy that encompasses everything pastors do. How can pastors measure discipleship in a way people can point

**WHILE TEENS ARE BUSY TELLING THE CHURCH  
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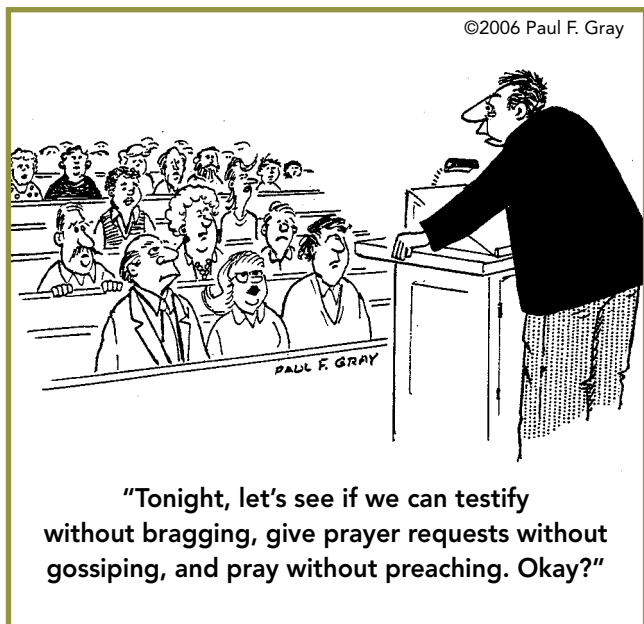
to today? What is the instant benefit of discipleship? Since society has infiltrated the church by suggesting that its efforts must show immediate return on investment, pastors have chosen to invest more time in programs than people.

People, not programs, change lives. I have never met anyone who can point to the program, activity, or event that transformed his life. A few people may talk about the place and presentation, but with a little probing, they reveal that the greatest impact came because of a personal relationship. It was not Sunday School; it was the Sunday School teacher. Summer camp was awesome, but the counselor made the difference in their lives. Last weekend's conference was dynamic, but people went because of personal invitations from friends not because of fliers on the church bulletin board. People are waiting to be networked.

Ten percent of the people in the church do 90 percent of the work. Is there something wrong with the 90 percent? Do they not love Jesus as much as the others do? Of course not. They have not been networked yet: Networking is about engaging with others for mutual support. The best source for pastoral support comes from those who care the most. Great benefit can come from relationships with other congregations. The real need, however, is not to connect for new ideas or resources, but to connect the people in the pew. They can accomplish great things in the lives of the people God sends to the church. It is a matter of stewardship and "using the oil in one's jar." The oil in the church's jar down the street is nice, but it is their oil. Can another church use some of it? Maybe, but not until they utilize what God has already given them. Pastors need to be faithful with what God has already given them.

## NETWORKING IS MENTORING

Pastors are busy, and so are the 90 percent in their congregations who do not have a ministry function in the church.





Schedules and obligations prevent them from teaching the 7th-grade girls Bible study on Wednesday nights, going on the weekend retreat, or driving to the next concert. The church usually does not have enough jobs to keep everyone actively involved either. Most people are not engaged because of their lack of time and the church's lack of promoting hands-on ministry. What does the church have at its disposal that these people could afford to invest their limited time in? Youth ministry.

Please do not jump too far ahead. I said youth ministry, not youth meetings. They are not synonymous. Meetings are important functions that can have great value, but a pastor can have youth meetings and not have youth ministry. However, youth ministry that changes lives can happen every day without ever conducting a meeting. The equation looks like this: Jimmy misses Wednesday night meetings 3 weeks in a row because of illness, catching up on school work, and finally because he was avoiding the girl who turned him down for a date. A youth leader can become so busy he does not have opportunity to call and see where Jimmy has been for nearly a month. If youth leaders rely on weekly meetings to meet the spiritual needs of young people, some may slip through the cracks. In many churches, especially in rural settings, youth leaders are volunteers. Keeping track of each student's attendance can be overwhelming. Realistically, it does not happen. If meeting is the means of measuring the church's influence on youth, then Jimmy could become a lost sheep. If relational ministry apart from youth meetings is the primary method of discipleship, then Jimmy will be okay because an adult (one of the 90 percent) is already connected to him, sharing his life in Christ, and discipling him one-on-one for the long haul. Discipleship is connecting spiritually mature adults to spiritually developing youth — engaging with others for mutual support. This is effective youth ministry when youth meetings are not getting the job done.

## NETWORKING IS POWERFUL

When people think back to what fostered their faith and nurtured their need to make Jesus the most important element in their life, they remember people not programs. Christians can network with other churches for events and evangelism and connect students to something bigger than themselves. However, churches that want to impact adolescent lives must involve the 80 to 90 percent of mature adults who are less active in the church by connecting them to a young person in a mentoring relationship.

A friend asked, "What is the purpose of an apple tree?" If to produce apples was your answer, you are in good company (but you are wrong). The purpose of an apple tree is to produce more apple trees. This answer is simple; however, it puts the challenge of this article into proper perspective.

For many years, youth ministry has been effective at apple production. Pastors plan, prepare, and polish programs to produce shiny apples in well-built apple carts. The result is programs and well-behaved young people who know how to perform in the right situation. Today, rural young people leave their communities and congregations in search of something different; they also leave the church. Statistically, churches in the United States lose nearly 90 percent of their youth after they graduate from high school. Apples left on their own do not last long. When teens leave, pastors need to worry. On the other hand, apple trees are rooted and ready to reproduce. The mark of discipleship is not apples, but apple trees.

Youth ministry is about discipleship. Discipleship is about trees. Trees require relationships. Relationships change lives. The power of networking in a pastor's rural community begins in his congregation. Rural churches across the country (the world) often do not have all the bells and whistles, but they do not need them. They are nice, but not necessary; valuable, but are not vital to discipleship.

Consider these action steps:

1. Define youth ministry more by what happens away from youth meetings and more by relationships between youth and Christian adults.
2. Take 30 days to prayerfully match each young person in the congregation who needs a mentor with an adult who needs a ministry.

Networking has many definitions today and there are many ideas on how to make it happen. The power of real networking rural churches (and every other size community church) starts with engaging others for mutual support and beginning the process with an emphasis on youth ministry. The results will be disciples who produce other disciples as Jesus intended. The greatest change will probably occur in the lives of adults first, and then they will have a lifetime effect on the young people they mentor.

Engage the church to empower young people by discipling them in their faith, mentoring them in their talents, and releasing them to serve. Then your church will have something other congregations want. That is the power of networking. ■



**TIMOTHY ELDRD** is the executive director of Christian Endeavor International. For 125 years, CE has been teaching churches to "Never do anything for young people they can learn to do for themselves." In addition to his leadership at Christian Endeavor, Tim also serves as the teaching pastor for New Beginnings Christian Family Fellowship. He resides in Michigan with his wife, Cindy, and their two sons. To schedule Tim for conference speaking or consulting call 1-800-260-3234 or e-mail [tim@allfor1.org](mailto:tim@allfor1.org).







# Youth Ministry With a 20/15 Vision

## **I am Dreaming 2015.**

Dreaming 2015 is a vision to touch 10-15 million students with the gospel, raise up 5,000 new youth leaders, and eclipse the 1 million AG youth census mark in the U.S. by the year 2015. We intend to win them, build them, and send them to fulfill the Great Commission. Dreaming 2015 is more than a growth call to this great Pentecostal church. The Holy Spirit is moving upon His church. We believe God has an inheritance for you. At 44 years of age, I no longer have 20/20 vision; I see youth ministry with 20/15 vision (that is, the year 2015).

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BY JAY MOONEY

ILLUSTRATION BY JOEL CARTER

My belief in youth ministry is fueled by a spiritual vision I will never escape. It has taken me a full decade to understand this vision that has become indelibly seared on my heart and mind. Simply put, I saw *multitudes of underdogs becoming champions for Jesus Christ, and all were young people.*

When I fast-forward one decade, I better understand what I saw. The vision was not about my ministry; it was about God choosing a generation in answer to the prayers of many people who had prayed for a long time. Today, I see many student believers who reflect the characteristics of the dream.

- Their passion is larger than their fears.
- What they lack in objective understanding they achieve in subjective daring.
- Their worship leads to action.
- They are eager to anchor their beliefs.

I believe Assemblies of God youth ministries will see a growth explosion in the next decade through this generation's ministry in the church. As church leaders it is our responsibility to arm student believers with weapons of spiritual victory. Prayer and the Word will once again characterize another generation of champions for Jesus Christ.

To this end, I ask: What do these underdogs who become champions for Jesus Christ look like? How many of these rising champions will be from your youth ministry? Do you have a clear plan concerning how to raise them up as an Assemblies of God church?

The Assemblies of God has a great philosophy of youth ministry, but an old cliché — “familiarity breeds ignorance” — wars against youth pastors recognizing the greatness of this philosophy of youth ministry. When something becomes too familiar, it is often hard to recognize its value. Furthermore, what is familiar to some can be foreign to others, especially if it has not been clearly explained.

Churches need a clear biblical plan for winning, building, and sending students to fulfill the Great Commission. This primer on youth ministry needs to be characterized by mission, culture, and metrics.

## THE MISSION

Jesus' keynote address to the core disciples is foundational to healthy and fruitful youth ministry. “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age’ ” (Matthew 28:18–20). The Great Commission includes the six components my English composition teachers believed were needed to develop a great story: who, what, when, where, how, and why.

- Who — “you”

- What — “make disciples”
- When — “always, to the very end of the age”
- Where — “all nations”
- How — “baptizing them” and “teaching them”
- Why — “to obey every thing I have commanded”

The modern emphasis of the church in obeying the Great Commission has been to “go.” However, the central imperative is to “make disciples.” “Go(ing)” is part of normal life. “Go” is an aorist passive deponent participle in the original Greek text. A literal translation could be “in your going.” “Go(ing)” was the natural order of Jesus' day as it is now. People would go to the synagogue, the market, or even to the Sea of Galilee to fish. When one becomes a believer, he immediately begins a journey called the Great Commission. Jesus said, “in going, make disciples.” In going to work, make disciples; in going to church, make disciples; in all going, make disciples.

The ultimate challenge in every generation of the church is to make disciples. While every culture has its obstacles, the imperative remains to win, build, and send disciples — disciplined followers of Jesus Christ.

The goal of national Youth Ministries is to equip the church to make disciples using the three-fold philosophy of “Win, Build, Send.” Every healthy youth ministry has a balance of these principles. Every ministry has some of these elements. (See diagram on page 88.)

Win, build, and send is grounded in Matthew 28:19,20. Yet, Jesus spoke of this earlier: “ ‘Come, follow me, ... and I will make you fishers of men’ ” (Matthew 4:19). Pastors and leaders are called to win, build, and send.

At national Youth Ministries, our organizational structure is built around this mission.



Student Outreach focuses on establishing relationships that win people to Jesus Christ. Student Outreach is also the home of proven Youth Alive ministries, like Prayer Zone Partners, Campus Missions, Campus Clubs, and the Seven Project.



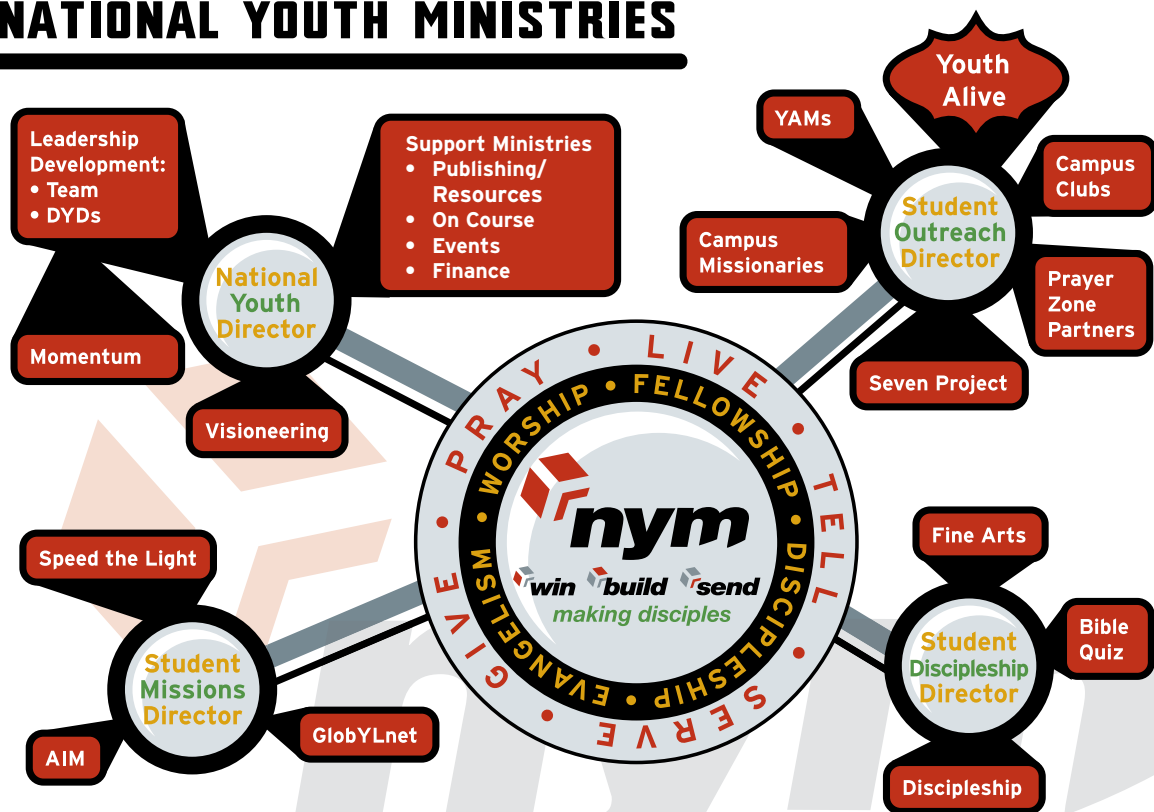
Student Discipleship serves to build biblical life and truth in youth ministry. Student Discipleship is also the home of Bible Quiz and Fine Arts. These ministries do not only develop a student's talent, but also his mind and spirit. Remember, building is key to both winning and sending. Discipleship is woven throughout our ministries.



Student Missions moves people to discover the God who sends and provides in life. Whether it is through giving to Speed the Light or going through Ambassadors in Mission or

# ASSEMBLIES OF GOD NATIONAL YOUTH MINISTRIES

"WHO/WHAT/HOW"



"Equipping the Church to WIN, BUILD & SEND students to fulfill the Great Commission."

While this diagram of youth ministry structure is from national Youth Ministries, it shows the mission, culture, and metrics of winning, building, and sending youth to fulfill the Great Commission and can be adapted locally.

Global Youth Leaders Network, Student Missions serves to advance the Great Commission in every generation.

National Youth Ministries is about igniting and synchronizing leadership development. Leadership development is not only what we do, but also who we are.

What is "win, build, and send"? It is Outreach (Win), Discipleship (Build), and Missions (Send). It is the process of the Christian life. It does not always have a perfect starting point, but if it did, it might go like this:

- Come
- Come and See
- Come, See, and Be
- Come, See, Be, and Do

"Win, Build, Send" is more than a motto for ministry — it is a strategy for victory.

## THE CULTURE

God records the cultural matrix of this mission in the Book of Acts. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and

miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:42–47). These six verses describe a culture that fosters disciple making. The culture was characterized by worship, fellowship, discipleship, and evangelism.

Modern youth ministry is just coming of age in the church. Only in the last 40 years have churches universally accepted the idea of employing youth specialists. This idea emerged from the effectiveness of parachurch venture ministries such as Christian Endeavor, YMCA, and Youth For Christ. In many cases, these organizations served as the quasi youth ministry for multiple churches in a community. As churches witnessed the effectiveness of this method of ministry, they decided to employ it closer to local fellowships. Thus, churches have youth pastors today. The culture produced a need and the

church met it with varied results.

About the time youth ministry emerged in the church, a monumental shift in American culture took place. This shift was from community life (calendars, economics, politics, and morality) built around the church to community life built around educational structures. Events once organized and planned to accommodate church culture were now arranged to accommodate the educational system.

Sunday was seen as “the Lord’s day” in America. America stopped work on Sunday because most people went to church. Most businesses closed. Youth sports events were not scheduled on Wednesday nights because participants might forego church attendance. Culture protected religious expression and practice in our nation and communities.

However, America’s shift to a more education-centered focus means Sunday is open for business since many no longer attend church. City councils structure community calendars around the school year rather than the church year. Youth sports events are scheduled on any day of the week.

For many leaders born before 1970, this can be a tricky shift. People do not come to the church looking for help like they once did via American culture in the 200 years prior to 1970. The church is once again looking for people lost in the culture. Thus, Jesus’ statement to “go” in the Great Commission makes better sense translated “in your going.” Youth pastors cannot be fooled into thinking youth ministry will come to them. American culture has shifted. Youth pastors must take youth ministry to the youth of their communities.

The greatest mission field in America is the educational system. The latest national census shows that more than 98 percent of America’s population will attend public and private schools. Each of those students has a family. If the church wants to influence the larger community with the gospel, it must focus on where the people are. This approach to ministry is similar to fishing in a stocked pond where one can make a great catch every time.

William James, the father of modern psychology, said, “There is nothing so absurd that it cannot be believed as truth if repeated often enough.” For too long the church has been duped into believing the modern establishment clause interpretation of the United States Constitution. This clause teaches separation of church and state. In other words, do not talk about Jesus in public. While separation of church and state is not in the U.S. Constitution, the concept has been repeated enough to make many people in the church believe that on-campus ministry is off limits.

Thank God for the courageous champions of the free speech entitlements found in the U.S. Constitution who have overcome the twisted establishment clause interpretation made up by a few members of the Supreme Court in 1947 in *People versus Everson*. The truth is: *on-campus* ministry is on target.

It is not only legal because of students’ *free speech* rights, but it also is the natural progression of fulfilling Jesus’ call to make disciples as people go about their lives. The gospel is relevant for every culture. That is something worth repeating in the community and from the pulpit.

The truth is the culture shift in the church toward youth was the leading of the Holy Spirit. Youth ministry in the church has preserved biblical culture — worship, fellowship, discipleship, and evangelism — for teens. Youth pastors need to pay more attention to building this biblical culture in the hearts of students than trying to adjust to the shifting culture of the world. As youth specialist Duffy Robbins said, “I’m concerned that in our efforts to make the gospel more relevant we’re in danger of dressing up and dumbing down a message that Paul described as inherently foolish to those who are perishing (1 Corinthians 1:18). I suspect that what’s sometimes labeled in the youth ministry world as ‘edgy’ might more accurately be described as an attempt to round off the jagged edges of a gospel that is scandalous.” Youth pastors must stop focusing on addressing the external culture of youth. They must give their first attention to the culture of the heart, which is the focus of the New Testament.

The world’s culture will shift again. The culture of making disciples is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Youth pastors must provide for worship, fellowship, discipleship, and evangelism. This is the culture of making champions for Jesus Christ.

## THE METRICS

The metrics philosophy of youth ministry is somewhat measurable. What does an underdog who becomes a champion for Jesus Christ look like? It is not easy to describe





what a disciple of Jesus Christ looks like, but the following five indicators provide an effective measuring tool. These indicators do not guarantee a person will be like Jesus. However, a person who practices these will be walking in the way of Jesus. In Jesus' command "teaching them," foundations can be found in Scripture.

1. **Pray daily.** Jesus prayed regularly. The Bible records many of His prayers. Jesus' followers recognized how important prayer was to Him and asked Him to teach them how to pray. So Jesus taught them a model prayer (Luke 11:1–4; Matthew 6:9–13).
2. **Live by the Word of God.** Early in the Gospels we learn that Scripture was foundational to Jesus' every thought, emotion, and action. In the most trying moments, Jesus recited Scripture. On one occasion, He even reminded the devil that the Word of God is food for life (Matthew 4:4).
3. **Tell others about Jesus.** When Jesus calls people to be His disciples, He is calling them to be with Him so they can join Him in His mission for people (Mark 1:17, 3:14).
4. **Serve people in love.** Jesus clearly announced that He did not come to be served, but to serve others (Matthew 20:20–28). Serving others is implied in Jesus' teaching to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).
5. **Give generously.** Jesus gave His life to accomplish the will of God and to be a sacrifice for the sins of others. Those who followed Him learned that giving was part of the provision of life (Luke 6:38). Jesus taught that giving blessed the giver more than the receiver, and He gave generously (Acts 20:35).

Jesus explained life using two simple ideas: Love God the most; love others as much as yourself. This is characteristic of these five indicators.

I hope whenever youth pastors are asked about a student in their ministry, they can describe the student's characteristics using these foundations.

Youth pastors can measure more than individuals with this youth ministry philosophy. According to the metric of Win, Build, and Send, how healthy is your youth ministry? The following exercise may help you measure the health and effectiveness of the youth ministry you lead. It may also help you identify your strengths and weakness. Remember, do not limit your leadership influence in disciple making to only those things you like to do.

Draw a triangle on a piece of paper. Label the corners Win, Build, and Send. Take last year's calendar (or this year's calendar) and chart each activity in the appropriate area or areas that best represent the purpose of that activity. After charting the entire year's schedule, place the paper on an imaginary axis from the center of the page. Which way does it tilt? This represents your strength. Consider which side needs

balancing and make plans accordingly. The result may be a more healthy youth ministry and better disciple making.

## CONCLUSION

God preserves two component gifts for every generation. These gifts — prayer and the Word of God — ultimately make believers into lifelong followers of Jesus Christ. Every youth ministry philosophy rises and falls on communication between God and man.

A youth pastor needs to establish a mission of winning, building, and sending students founded on the Word of God and prayer. His goal is to foster lifelong followers of Jesus who pray, live, tell, serve, and give in a culture where worship, fellowship, discipleship, and evangelism thrive.

Ultimately, there is one, single measuring stick of leadership success in youth ministry — make disciples.

Youth pastors need to tool out the culture components and programmatic ministry in their local church. Youth pastors in Assemblies of God churches are encouraged to pastor their students beyond their own influence. One day youth pastors will no longer be the chief influencers of the students under their care. Either the pastor will move or the students will grow up. Be challenged to establish a youth ministry upon which another Assemblies of God youth pastor can successfully build.

The programs that are unique and familiar to Assemblies of God youth ministry are not the destination or part of any one youth ministry philosophy. Rather, these programs are long-standing, recognizable vehicles to that destination. Youth pastors have the responsibility to take youth toward that destination of "champions for Jesus Christ." Assemblies of God youth ministry programs are vehicles that have successfully journeyed thousands of youth to this destination. It is up to youth leaders to make these programs fresh and fruitful. A church with a successful youth ministry throughout a succession of youth leaders is blessed. The result brings strength and health that can greatly impact a community for generations.

The Assemblies of God in the United States can impact 10 million students in the next 10 to 15 years. We can reach 1 million youth adherents annually by 2015.

How many of those students will be yours? ■



**JAY MOONEY** is national youth director, Assemblies of God national Youth Ministries, Springfield, Missouri.

## ENDNOTE

1. Duffy Robbins, "Youth Ministry in Adolescence: A Look at the Culture of Youth Ministry," *YouthWorker*, November/December 2003, 29.





PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: SONNY CARTER



# Avoiding the **Black Hole:** Making Youth Lifelong Followers of Jesus Christ

After 24 years in youth ministry, I have come to realize that outer space and youth rooms have something in common: black holes.

**A**ccording to the department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at the University of Cambridge, “a black hole is a region of space-time from which nothing can escape, even light.”<sup>1</sup>

In youth ministry, black holes occur postgraduation when youth members disappear from their churches.

The University of Cambridge, in an effort to explain why black holes happen, gives the following example:

“Imagine throwing a tennis ball into the air. The harder you throw the tennis ball, the faster it is traveling when it leaves your hand and the higher the ball will go before turning back. If you throw it hard enough it will never return; the gravitational attraction will not be able to pull it back down. The velocity the ball must have to escape is known as the *escape velocity* and for the earth is about 7 miles a second.”

Comparatively, a youth ministry black hole occurs when the world’s pull on a student’s life generates enough velocity to draw a student who was once active in youth away from church. Sadly, many of these students are not heard from again, and many will not return to church.

But God’s pull can have the opposite effect. The more students experience God and are pulled toward Christ, His Word, and the church, the less likely they are to be pulled into one of the world’s black holes and leave a youth ministry. Unfortunately, many students attending youth ministries are

living dangerously close to a black hole. Once they graduate, many are sucked into this dark world.

For students, escape velocity results from a lack of strategic discipleship and relationships that could have transformed their lives and kept them from being lost to the church.

## **DISCIPLESHIP: PREPARING FOR BATTLE**

A youth pastor’s first step in avoiding the world’s black holes must be to renew his commitment to building disciples. We must not forget that we are fighting a spiritual battle and will occasionally experience casualties. Our enemy is patient and is willing to wait until after graduation to increase his attack. This knowledge must compel youth pastors to build students who are grounded in God’s Word, and who can withstand the enemy’s attacks long after they leave youth ministries.

“We have students who do not own their faith, but are renting it from their youth leader,” says Fabian Kalapuch, New Jersey District youth director. “As youth leaders we must teach our students to live the Christian life for themselves, and the best way to do this is to have a strategic discipleship plan.”

Discussing how to best disciple students often raises a debate between having good resources and developing quality relationships. Perhaps the answer is not one or the other, but both.



While serving as youth pastor in New Jersey, I grew weary of watching students come to our youth ministry for a season only to leave, never to be heard from again. We had the necessary elements for a successful youth ministry: great worship, small groups, devoted leaders, visitor follow-up, big events, and outreaches.

At this point, I needed to ask some tough questions. Are we building lifelong disciples or are we providing youth ministry? Do these sound the same? They are not. Youth pastors can have a good, even a great youth ministry program, and not be building students into disciples.

To combat the problem I chose to disciple four young men from our group for a school semester. Each morning, Tuesday through Friday, I drove to one student's

home, discussed Scripture, prayed with him, and got to know him outside of church. After discussing the Scriptures and praying together, I drove the student to school. As we entered the school parking lot, we prayed for his friends and campus.

Through discipling I entered their world, saw how they lived, had weekly interaction with their parents and siblings, and developed accountability and relationships that remain to this day.

A youth pastor's life is the greatest building tool he can use to build students into lifelong disciples. The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 2:8, "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us."

Youth leaders must model Christ outside the youth group. Students must see a Christian example everyday. At every opportunity I took a student or two with me to run an errand. These errands were either ministry related — picking up supplies for the evening meeting or activity — or personal business. I did this to model how a Christian adult should conduct business in the world.

It is easy to live a Christian life in our youth halls. It is more difficult to live a Christian life when an employee is rude to you as you conduct business with him.

Youth pastors are not in youth ministry to build better

students; they are in youth ministry to build better adults. A person will only be a teen for 7 years. If a person lives an average lifetime, he will be an adult for more than 50 years.

## HIGH TECH VERSUS HIGH TOUCH

Recently I saw a church sign: "Multimedia Worship This Sunday." How tragic that church ministries and worship services hinge on bells and whistles. I have no problem with church ministries being on the cutting edge, relevant, and creative. The problem I have is when a ministry plays the rele-

vancy card but folds when it comes to truly investing in people's lives.

More than flashy services with lights, sound, and video, the church needs to make connecting students to a real God on a daily basis its top priority.

One youth pastor, when asked, "How many do you have in your youth

group?" responded by sharing how many students were actively involved in his discipleship process rather than how many students attended youth services. He was committed to growing disciples more than growing a large group. For this youth pastor, building students into lifelong disciples was just as important as winning students to Christ.

Some may argue, "But we are reaching students."

I respond, "Yes, but will they be around in 4 years?"

Youth pastors must not swing the pendulum the other way and stop reaching out. They must continue winning students to Christ at any cost. But once students are won to Christ, they must be disciplined and commit to follow Christ long after the youth pastor leaves or when they are no longer in the youth group.

Students are drawn to upbeat music, lights, and videos. Yet the relationships that are built remain. A youth pastor's time spent listening and sharing his life will not be forgotten and will profoundly affect a student's eternity.

In his book *Real Teens*, George Barna wrote, "There are two key elements that teenagers feel must be incorporated into their experience. The first of those is relationships; the other is mass-media experience."<sup>2</sup>

Youth pastors cannot do away with the technical world in which they live, but they must prioritize relationships above technology. How many youth pastors spend as much time

**Once students are won to Christ,  
they must be disciplined and commit  
to follow Christ long after the  
youth pastor leaves.**

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with students in one-on-one or small group outings as they do in downloading the latest video off the Internet?

Youth leaders without high-tech capabilities should be challenged to develop a highly relational ministry while continuing to grow in the technical world. Those with high-tech capabilities must continue to provide ministry with excellent mass media and be challenged to an even greater level of excellence in relationships with students.

I visited a youth ministry in southern California that had high-tech capabilities, but was known more for its relational ministry. Small groups with caring adults were this youth ministry's foundation. I asked the youth pastor the secret of his success. He responded by relating the following incident that had happened prior to a recent youth meeting.

He had gone outside before service and noticed a student standing alone near the entrance. The youth pastor approached the student and told him it was time to come inside because the service was about to start. The student looked at the youth pastor and said, "I am waiting for my youth leader."

The student was new and had been immediately connected with a leader who had built a relationship with him. This student's likelihood of avoiding the black hole has been multiplied through quality relationships with other leaders.

## LEADERSHIP MULTIPLICATION FACTOR

Disciples make disciples. Jesus was Master of the multiplication principle. In Luke 10:1,2, He sent out 72 disciples to gather the harvest, thereby making more disciples who would go out and make even more disciples. More people can be reached when more people are involved. This is the power of multiplication.

My youth pastor, Jeanne Mayo, demonstrated this principle better than any other leader I have known. She multiplied disciples, empowered them as leaders, and then sent them out to gather the harvest. By herself she could only pastor a few people and be effective. With more leaders, she could multiply herself and reach more students. This is relational ministry in action.

Multiple leaders involved with students mean students are more likely to have multiple inputs. In addition, Mayo could not lead 20 or 30 small groups, but she could disciple leaders who could then disciple students. These multiple inputs provide multiple relationship opportunities that help students stay connected to the network. Many students from Mayo's ministry continue to attend church today, and many are involved in full-time ministry.

Youth pastors connect their students by multiplying themselves in their students' lives. This is especially true for youth

pastors in small churches or in churches where they are unable to find people willing to help in their youth ministry. The key to successful networking is to build student leaders who can help multiply your efforts in the lives of other students. Youth pastors must pour their lives into people who can then pour their lives into others.

## NETWORKING: INWARDLY AND OUTWARDLY

The September/October 2005 *Youth Specialties* article, "When the Pomp and Circumstances Fades: A Profile of Youth Group Kids Post-Youth-Group," by Kara Powell and Krista Kubiak,

## YOUTH MINISTRY: A HIGH CALLING

**F**or when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed" (Acts 13:36). God has strategically placed youth leaders across the nation to fulfill God's purposes in winning, building, and sending students to fulfill the Great Commission.

God has placed you at this time in your place of ministry to accomplish His purpose. Do not underestimate your calling. Do not underestimate God's leading you to this point in your life. Students must be reached. God has called you. It is our watch. We cannot allow the enemy to steal and destroy students' lives.

A survey by the Barna Group in 2004 shows the importance of reaching people prior to their high-school graduation. The survey indicates that 64 percent of born-again Christians surveyed in 2004 accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior before their 18th birthday.<sup>1</sup> Eternity is too long to miss this opportunity.

Another Barna Group survey from 2005 reports Mosiacs (Bridgers, Millennials, Postmoderns) are least likely to attend church on a typical weekend (41 percent) versus Baby Busters (42 percent), Baby Boomers (46 percent), and Elders (51 percent).<sup>2</sup>

God's purpose for youth leaders is to raise leaders for life, not just leaders in our youth ministry.



**ROD WHITLOCK**, Springfield, Missouri

### ENDNOTES

1. <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=Topic&TopicID=18>.
2. <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=Topic&TopicID=10>.

# Discussing how to best disciple students often raises a debate between having good resources and developing quality relationships. Perhaps the answer is not one or the other, but both.

demonstrates the great need for networking.<sup>3</sup> In a survey, students were asked to list the most difficult aspects of their transition from youth ministry to the adult world. Surprisingly, the most common responses were in regard to friendships, which included not having friends and not knowing how to make new friends. The second most common difficulty was their experience of being alone for the first time. Third was finding a faith community or church. “Many students felt they were not prepared to seek out such a community and did not know how to find a church or ministry where they felt welcome and fed spiritually.”<sup>4</sup>

Youth pastors must remember that these students — now adults — have never needed to look for a church. Are they being taught how to be a part of the larger body of Christ? Are youth pastors engaging them in multiple relationship opportunities? Are they being exposed to multiple worship encounters with other leaders and students from outside their own group?

While serving as district youth director I enjoyed watching students build relationships with other leaders and students from across the state. Students would train together for district AIM trips, attend camps or conventions, see old friends, and meet new ones. Many, including my two teenage

daughters, stayed in touch via e-mail, text messaging, IM, cell phones, and occasionally snail mail.

I least enjoyed watching a youth leader leave his church. The main reason why I disliked a change in leadership was because students sometimes scattered shortly after the youth leader left, even if a new leader came in soon after. One reason this occurred was the fact these students were only connected to one ministry style or personality. These students were not networked with other adults, leaders, or youth outside their own youth group.

Students love to have multiple possibilities. This is especially true of relationships. Youth leaders can help teens stay connected long after they are gone by providing them with multiple encounters. Through camps, district AIM trips, and conventions students meet and form relationships with other students who are committed to Christ. These relationships encourage students in their walk with the Lord.

Students exposed to various worship and preaching styles are better equipped to handle transitions, such as when a youth pastor leaves or when the student graduates from the youth ministry. When they later attend college or move to another city and experience another ministry style, students are less likely to compare it with their own youth group. Students who have been exposed to multiple ministry personalities learn to worship even when their favorite worship leader is not leading.

Students also learn to respond to God’s Word even when their favorite youth pastor is not speaking. When youth leaders expose their students to multiple relationship and ministry opportunities, they prepare them to make the greatest transitions in life: moving from their parents’ home to a dorm or apartment; transitioning from being a teenager to entering adulthood; moving from youth ministry to *adult church*.

## YOUTH CHURCH

In addition to the need to network students with other Christian leaders and students outside their own youth ministry, there is also a need to network students to people in other age groups in their church. This need for networking challenges the effectiveness of a youth church mentality. (For a more detailed discussion of networking, see the article in this issue “Rural Youth Ministry: The Power of Networking” by Timothy Eldred on page 78.)



# The problem I have is when a ministry plays the relevancy card but folds when it comes to truly investing in people's lives.

Lately, more youth ministries are moving toward a youth church mentality. This format might work well for short-term growth, but what about 10 years from now? When considering the best way to keep students involved in church after graduation, what benefit can come from creating a separate church for youth that they later leave?

I am not referring to a separate facility or separate services. Youth need something they can call their own. I am referencing the subtle attitude that can potentially discourage students from making the transition to adult church.

How will teens make the already difficult transition from youth group to adult church if leaders make the chasm greater by giving teens their own church and then placing them in a situation where they must attend a different worship service when they reach 18? Would it not be better for them in the long run to incorporate them into the church body?

In a youth church mentality, students are disconnected from the larger body of believers. Nate Ruch, codirector for the Center for Youth and Leadership at North Central University, says, "Youth church has created a culture void of multigenerational leaders. If a student tells a youth leader Wednesday night is better than Sunday morning, the youth leader needs to address this attitude or the student may graduate out of the youth ministry and not even consider going to church on Sunday mornings.

"We prepare students for a certain season of Christianity," Ruch says, "but not for life after graduation. Many students are not prepared for secular universities or choosing a non-ministerial career." Youth leaders must be aware of what takes place later in life. "Address and then teach students how to handle temptation and struggles in life beyond those that take place as a teenager."

Over the past 3 years I have been involved in a study funded by the Lilly Foundation involving the Assemblies of God and six other denominations. The study is designed to determine the common ingredients churches share that are producing quality student disciples.

This study analyzed seven denominations; small, medium, and large churches; urban, suburban, and rural areas; and churches from various geographical locations. After interviewing thousands of parents, students, pastors, and volunteer leaders as well as doing 21 site visits to these exemplary churches, one of the prominent features of every church producing exemplary youth was connecting students to the larger church body. Students who avoid the black hole are

participating in corporate body worship and have relationships with those in the other church. Further findings from this study are available at <http://www.exemplarym.com>.

Youth leaders must do everything they can to help students learn how to interact with adults. "We must help translate the culture that exists in the youth group to the adult service," says Youth Pastor Greg Wallace, Bellevue Christian Center, Bellevue, Nebraska.

This is not an easy task; yet, it may be our most important. Bridging these two groups involves being strategic about bringing the generations together. The best way to do this is to incorporate teens and adults in worship and ministry. It is important to have a youth service and other activities specifically designed for youth, but some bridging between the generations is needed.

"There is a divide between youth and adults. A good youth leader understands this and must build bridges of relationships between these two groups," Wallace says.

"The key to eliminating the black hole is the relationship between the senior pastor and youth leader," Wallace adds. Other suggestions for bridging the generations include having the senior pastor speak to the youth group or attend a youth function, or having adult leaders of various ages involved in activities where they can be themselves. These adults do not need to be youth savvy. They can help and model church life in a youth gathering. Students will see this and begin to feel more comfortable around the adults.

Allow students to participate in Sunday worship, lead in prayer, help with the media ministry, or serve as parking lot attendants. Have special youth services and give them opportunities to minister with the adult congregation. The key is to get students involved in church life.

After all, they will be in our churches for possibly 50 years or more. They will be in our youth services for only 7. ■



**Rod Whitlock**, student discipleship director, Assemblies of God national Youth Ministries, Springfield, Missouri.

#### ENDNOTES

1. [http://www.damtp.cam.ac.uk/user/gr/public/bh\\_home.html](http://www.damtp.cam.ac.uk/user/gr/public/bh_home.html).
2. George Barna, *Real Teens: A Contemporary Snapshot of Youth Culture* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 2001), 25.
3. Kara Powell and Krista Kubiak, "When the Pomp and Circumstances Fades: A Profile of Youth Group Kids Post-Youth-Group," *Youth Specialties*, September/October 2005.
4. Ibid.





DESIGN: JAMES GERHOLD



# BATTLE PLAN

## for a Lost Generation

In 1943, 100,000 young Germans wearing brown shirts crammed into the Olympic stadium, the largest stadium in the world at that time, and formed with their bodies the words: Hitler, we are yours.

This kind of commitment empowered them to take over a continent. It took World War II and America's entrance into the war to liberate and release the Europeans from the bondage of Nazism. This freedom from bondage would never have happened without an unequaled resolve from the allies to work together and formulate a battle plan.

In 2006, more than 60 million young people are in bondage. This generation called *Bridgers* (1984–present) is godless. According to Thom S. Rainer's book, *The Bridger Generation*, only 4 percent of Bridgers are Bible-believing Christians. They are the most lost generation in American history, and they represent the second largest generation in our lifetime. As Boomers and their values changed America's social and moral landscape, Bridgers will also leave their mark. Now relegated to the back pages of many newspapers, the all too common school shootings and acts of violence represent the physical manifestations of a spiritual crisis that signifies the current epidemic of pure hopelessness. America's only hope rests in the church's resolve to work together and execute a battle plan to liberate this generation.

Most students will never attend our churches. They

are not closed to the gospel or indifferent about God, but they need a church committed to living life with them. They need to see Christianity fleshed out before them.

Fortunately, Bridgers are a captive audience. Nearly 100 percent of our youth spend most of their teenage years at school. A good fisherman goes where the fish are. It is the same with students; we must take Christ to them. *The campus has become the crucial battleground for the church's future success.* It is here we must choose

to leave our legacy. We must be willing to die on this hill. We cannot find a better benchmark for success than our impact on the local campus.

Too often youth ministry randomly covers the spiritual bases without adequately measuring its effectiveness and success. Campus ministry provides the means to assess your youth ministry's legacy. *You cannot have a biblical youth ministry and overlook, avoid, or ignore your schools.* For this reason, Youth Alive can play a key role in bringing health and vitality to your church's youth ministry.

Youth Alive's battle plan has four guiding axioms: prayer, empowerment, network, and outreach. Youth Alive's logo clearly demonstrates each axiom and a ministry name represents each axiom's mission.





## PRAYER ZONE PARTNERS (PRAYER)

Prayer is powerful and is the key to having a hell-shattering youth ministry. Youth ministers must acknowledge prayer and do all they can to rally support for it in youth ministry. Youth leaders must pray; they must at every opportunity rally a team of intercessors. Imagine 10 to 50 adult church members turning school zones into prayer zones. Every time they drive by a school they pray for students in the youth group and the lost in that school. Not only would heaven be bombarded with what George Herbert called “reverse thunder,” but you are also providing adults opportunity to have tangible ownership in youth ministry.

Use your PZPs as an integral part of everything you do in youth ministry. When you take students to camp or a convention, send your PZPs the names of students who will be attending. Your PZPs will take the event and your students to God in prayer. The benefits of rallying church members to become PZPs are exponential. Imagine 10 to 50 PZPs in more than 12,000 churches across America. At a minimum, more than 120,000 PZPs would be interceding for students.

*“Call to Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things ... which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3, Amplified Bible).*

Use this axiom as a staging point for integrating prayer into your youth ministry. Free PZP brochures are available through GPH that inform and challenge church members to become a PZP. Brochures have a commitment form so recruits can sign up. They can also commit to being a PZP online at <http://www.prayerzonepartners.com/>. Register your PZPs and pursue their involvement. Keep them informed on youth ministry endeavors; these prayer warriors will become your greatest allies.

*“You can do more than pray, after you have prayed, but you can never do more than pray until you have prayed.”*

—A.J. Gordon



## CAMPUS MISSIONARIES (EMPOWERMENT)

The single greatest resource for successful youth ministry is the student who sees himself as a campus missionary. Empowering students to become missionaries enables them to accept their responsibility to reach the lost of their generation. The late Keith Green said, “This generation of Christians is responsible for this generation of sinners.” How true. Being a light to the lost is not an option for believers.

Making campus missions a priority helps students live out their faith. When Christian students focus on merely surviving high school, their mission is compromised. God did not call Christians to survive, but to live. The greatest commodity believers have is true life. We cannot do ministry as usual. Our students should not sit by their peers who are unsaved and nonchalantly do or feel nothing. If our teenagers are moral, good students who participate in our churches, but never assume spiritual responsibility for the person they sit next to in history class, we have failed the Lord’s commission and our students by not teaching them the passion of Christ.

Students reaching students is what youth ministry is about. Christian youth are the key. Students become like a Trojan horse; they are casually received in the fortified city called the public school.

Refuse to have an impotent youth ministry that merely desires to protect teens from the world. Believe God for

***The campus has become the crucial  
battleground for the church’s future  
success. It is here we must choose  
to leave our legacy. We must be  
willing to die on this hill.***

warriors. If the church successfully helps teens share their faith on the secular campus, it will also help prevent losing our teens after graduation. Helping our students build a bridge between their church life and school life will reap rewards beyond reaching the lost; they will learn to live out their faith with a Christian worldview. Their spiritual world *must* collide with their secular world. Join me in a battle cry for this generation to rise up and take their rightful place as light bearers who proclaim God’s hope and power to the lost.

*“Some people want to live within the sound of chapel bells, but I want to run a mission a yard from the gates of hell.”*  
—Unknown

The best way to begin a campus ministry is to become familiar with tools that will help you rally your church and students to respond to the call to become campus missionaries. One resource for developing students into campus missionaries is the *Campus Missionary Packet*. The packet includes the book *G5: Growing in the Five Commitments of a Campus Missionary*. This powerful discipleship manual encourages campus missionaries to cultivate five habits before they graduate: pray, live, tell, serve, and give. Review this book at <http://www.yausa.com/g5/>. Consider having a service dedicated to vision casting and signing up students interested in becoming CMs at least once every 3 months. These services acknowledge and challenge students in their ministry.

Youth Alive also recommends a minimum of two campus missionary-dedication services every year. Honoring your missionaries in front of your congregation achieves five important objectives: (1) esteeming and exhorting the students who are following your vision; (2) establishing campus ministry as a credible mission movement in your church; (3) enhancing student accountability in the community; (4) enlisting prayer for students; and, (5) elevating and highlighting youth ministry and the work your students are accomplishing. It is amazing what happens when adults put a face to their church's youth ministry and mission. Share testimonies with your congregation. An underlying premise to Youth Alive is: Youth ministry cannot be an island to itself. Youth ministry needs support from the whole church to succeed. Use CM certificates and post pictures of CMs in a visible place in your church. Students can sign up to be campus missionaries online at <http://www.yausa.com/>. Every CM who registers either online or by hard copy receives access to a free e-mail entitled *G5: The E-mail*, five copies of the *Book of Hope*, and multiple downloads. Each resource is created with your students and youth ministry in mind. Youth Alive exists to serve youth pastors and help them fulfill this battle plan.



## CAMPUS CLUBS (NETWORKING)

Campus clubs can bring Christian students from different church backgrounds together with one primary mission: campus ministry. By working with other Christian stu-

dents, Christian clubs become a staging platform for ministry. Your campus group is not a place for students to hibernate and survive high school. Rather, it is a meeting place where believers draw strength from one another and strategize how to reach their campus.

It is paramount that campus clubs have a game plan. Each ongoing Youth Alive campus ministry needs good organization, planning, and programming. Youth Alive has a strategic way to move your school group toward effective campus ministry. The Infield Strategy provides methods for success in campus ministry.

On average, there are 9 months in a school year. By building themed ministry around each month, the Youth Alive Infield Strategy provides direction and programming for its clubs



and overall ministry. For example, week one emphasizes *including* students through small-group ministry; week two

## Preparing for an effective, inclusive, and mission-focused outreach is hard work. It will cost you, and it needs to.

emphasizes *inspiring* students through guest speakers and leadership development; week three's focus is *involving* students in ministry through their testimony, talents, and prayer; week four emphasizes *investing* students back into their campus with the gospel.

The Infield Strategy is the basis for how Youth Alive operates on the campus. The method is simple and purpose driven. How does a student, leader, or Youth Alive campus ministry learn how to use the Infield Strategy concept? Youth Alive offers a programming tool called the *Campus Ministry Playbook*. This playbook contains 9 months of material for students to utilize during their school year. These resources can be purchased online at <http://www.yausa.com>. Additional innings — topical series for Youth Alive clubs — are available as free downloads on this site.

Many youth leaders have asked, "What should we do if there is an existing Christian club meeting in our school?" Every community has its own unique variables, but the heart of Youth Alive is to work with other Christian communities. Unfortunately, many clubs have lost sight of their mission and care little about realigning themselves. If the existing club refuses to be a staging platform for campus ministry, begin a Youth Alive club and charter it with Youth Alive campus ministries. While chartering a club is no guarantee its focus will stay on the mission, Youth Alive does provide clubs and club leaders with materials to help keep them on course. One example of these materials is *AliveWire*, a free e-publication sent monthly to America's Youth Alive club leaders. *AliveWire* is a source of encouragement and is packed with practical tips and testimonies. YA Forums are also available for students at <http://www.yausa.com>. These forums allow students to support and interact with each other.

Your local youth leaders network can help. The youth workers network in Syracuse, New York, is an example of the potential synergism. This group of more than 20 churches researched the resources available for campus ministry and collectively decided to adopt Youth Alive and the Infield Strategy as their campus ministry plan. Before the 2005 See You At The Pole took place, they networked and assigned one church leader for each of their campus clubs. Now each school has at least one leader supporting and coaching the Youth Alive club at every school in the Syracuse area. This is a great example of the power of networking. Campus clubs ceased being a



mere social gathering and became an organized assault on the powers of darkness in their schools.

The battle cry must be for students and not for one's personal turf. If there is a youth leaders network in your community, become involved and help your community see the validity of working together. More information and locations of networks are available at <http://www.youthworkers.net/>. Campus club leaders may also want to check out their school's spiritual PULSE at <http://www.everyschool.com/>.



## THE SEVEN PROJECT (OUTREACH)

A youth pastor in Montana spoke about The Seven Project, and his story caught my attention. He was excited about his outreach and how God used Seven. With visible conviction he exclaimed: "The Seven Project is the event that came to my city and never left." This pastor described his journey and how Seven came to his town. He was adamant that even if the school assemblies or the 7@Night rally had not taken place he would still have The Seven Project in his community.

Prior to the school assemblies and evening rally this youth pastor's youth group doubled in size. Why? In preparing for The Seven Project, students and leaders from various churches caught the vision and were mobilized into action.

The Seven Project is more than a school assembly and evening rally. It is an outreach strategy equipping and training leaders and students for effective evangelism and follow-up. An effective outreach must be done right. A mere school assembly will not bring lasting fruit. It may create an initial "wow," but often will yield little of the true growth that is so important.

A church's campus missionaries are the backbone of this outreach. When The Seven Project is completed, campus missionaries remain to carry on the ministry. The Seven Project is the launching pad for further and deeper ministry. Local church leaders and students are the heroes and champions of this event.

Alisha, a campus missionary in Nebraska, longed for God to do more with her life during her final year of high school. She teamed up with 12 other students, and the group called themselves *Team 7*. Team 7 began working to bring The Seven Project to their community. By the time the day of the event arrived, they had completed the groundwork in partnership with their district.

"Finally, it was the day I had been waiting for, March 15, Seven Project day," Alisha says. "I remember waking up that morning with butterflies in my stomach. Throughout the day, I could not shake it. I was so excited. The school assembly came and went. Before I knew it, it was time for 7@Night — the night rally."

Located in a rural community, Alisha's school has 180 students. That evening 205 students came to the rally. After Alisha stood before her class and shared her testimony, the student body stood and gave her a standing ovation.

Here is what happened next: "Pastor Jeff Baker (Youth Alive coordinator) presented the gospel, and then came the moment of truth — the altar call. All the months of preparation, all the hard work the team had put in, the months of waiting, all boiled down to the next few moments. Pastor Jeff commanded that on the count of three if students wanted to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, they were to come down to the front. One ... two ... and on the count of three all students except one approached the stage to receive their place in heaven for eternity.

"I was so overwhelmed that I began to sob — and I might say hysterically — at seeing so many students in my school, at one time, being won for the glory of God.

"What I have learned from this experience is: When God calls you to do something and you obey, He will reward you tenfold. God had no limits for where He could take my school. He also has no limits to where He can take your school, workplace, or for that matter, your life."

Elm Creek, Nebraska, will never be the same.

Every good outreach has key components that make it connect with the audience for maximum effectiveness. Here are ours:

### Networking resources

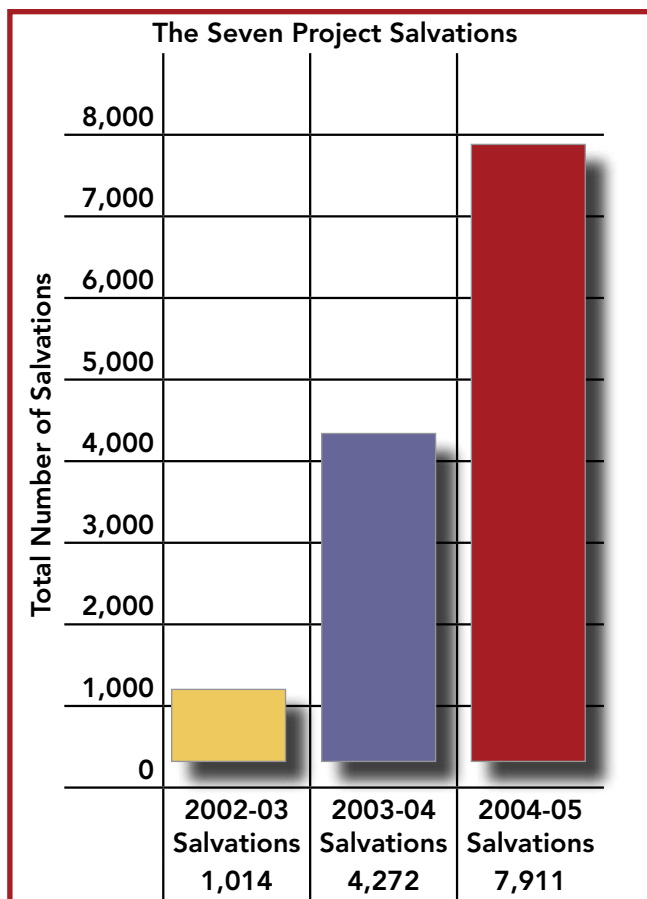
Leaders are provided the tools needed for cultivating a relationship with churches in their community. These resources include a detailed plan with practical tips and timelines to ensure the event's success.

### Student leadership development

Christian students are taught how to be a positive influence on their campus. Seven weeks before the school assembly these students are given specific assignments to complete on their campus before the school assembly program. These assignments are designed to help develop student leaders.

### Evangelism training

One often-overlooked aspect of The Seven Project is the evangelism training and opportunities students receive when The Seven Project comes to their town. During the last 2 1/2 years, more than 7,000 students have participated in evangelism training and have learned to use the Student Action Box. The Student Action Box includes all the materials and resources a student needs to advertise, prepare for, and promote their Seven Project.



### Internet community for students to discuss issues and concerns

The Web site <http://www.thesevenproject.com> provides opportunities for student leadership development. This site provides Christian students with a clean, safe environment for discussing relevant issues with non-Christian students. Some students who demonstrate exceptional leadership skills and observable spiritual growth are invited to act as moderators on the site. Currently, more than 14,000 registered members are enrolled on the Seven site.

### School assembly programs dealing with life and character issues faced by students

School assemblies include fast-paced video segments dealing with specific issues, such as antiviolence, scholastic achievement, peer pressure, integrity, substance abuse, and abstinence. Trained speakers relate to students the benefits of making proper character decisions. Classroom discussion guides are provided for each topic to help teachers who want to discuss these critical issues in the classroom.

### Evening events that include a clear presentation of the gospel

These events include high-impact video segments and other activities designed to attract nonchurched students.

Trained speakers present the gospel in a clear, relevant manner. During the last school year, more than 7,900 students gave their lives to Christ. (*See the Seven Project Salvations graphic.*) In October 2005, Owensboro, Kentucky, hosted The Seven Project. Eleven schools participated and more than 8,000 students attended. The week concluded with a 7@Night, and more than 3,500 students came to the rally. After the gospel presentation, the altars were crowded with young people. Students were hungry for the truth. As the night ended, local youth leaders collected more than 650 decision cards.

Incorporating strategic outreaches is crucial to the battle plan. One word describes the key to successful outreaches: *work*. Preparing for an effective, inclusive, and mission-focused outreach is hard work. It will cost you, and it needs to. Although he was dealing with different circumstances, I appreciate King David's response and conviction: "I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing" (2 Samuel 24:24). If outreach ministry is important, and it is, then it is worthy of our time and energy. Be intentional and lay the foundation for an event that will bring lasting fruit.

### BATTLE PLAN

Presently there are 22 Youth Alive home missionaries who are dedicated to campus ministry and making sure every student hears a clear gospel presentation. If one of these missionaries is in your district, utilize him in your church. District youth directors are also allies in this battle for a generation. Sunday morning services, youth rallies, outreaches, or retreats are events that DYD and YA missionaries can help you with. Check with your district office to learn what other campus ministry resources are available.

America's hope rests in the church's resolve to collectively and strategically reach teenagers. Let us not get hung up on labels, but rather let us endeavor to follow a battle plan. If Youth Alive can assist you, we welcome the opportunity to serve. *Embrace* the strategy, *mobilize* your resources, and *train* your students for a spiritual campaign to reach the lost. Whatever strategy you choose, I pray God will bless your efforts. It is important that we do something to reach teens. Time is too short, and the need is too grave to do youth ministry as usual.

*"If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. If they must perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees. Let no one go there unwarned or unprayed for."*—Charles Spurgeon ■



**Rick Lorimer**, student outreach director, national Youth Alive of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.

# MINISTERING to Hurting and **AT-RISK** Teens

BY T. SUZANNE ELLER

**G**abby's parents are drug addicts.<sup>1</sup> She has tried living with either her mom or dad at different times, but each time their addiction forces her to move back into her grandmother's home. Gabby often wonders why other teens have normal families, and she does not. She struggles when girls in the youth group judge her for seeking relationships to fill the void in her life. Her perception of a Heavenly Father is clouded because her biological father sees her only when he has time. The stepfather who was a loving presence in her life committed suicide 2 years ago.

Lance just turned 13. He has not had sexual intercourse yet, but he has experimented with cybersex. His family is active in church and struggles to keep him in youth. Lance loves God and hates the stronghold pornography has on his life. He started viewing porn at age 11 when he discovered it on his father's computer. He has never told anyone about his or his dad's secret.

Kaitlyn is 15. She began attending church with a friend 3 years ago and never misses a service. I met her mother once, but I have only seen a picture of her dad. The day her dad was sent to prison, a mug shot was taken. Kaitlyn downloaded his picture from the Internet. Kaitlyn's mother works two jobs and is happy her daughter has somewhere to go, though she does not attend church herself. Youth group is Kaitlyn's sanctuary where she finds friends, a second family, and normalcy.

On the outside, these teens appear no different than other teens, but they represent thousands of

youth who are affected spiritually and emotionally by problematic issues. This growing trend transcends boundaries; it affects many teens in your youth group.

Anthony Roe, a junior varsity youth pastor at Bridge Assembly of God in Mustang, Oklahoma, says, "Every week at Crossfire I hear about alcoholic stepfathers, moms who are on drugs, parents who cuss out their kids because they want a ride to church, and upper-class parents who care more about their job than about their kids. Teenagers are hurting. When they hurt, I hurt. These problems are impacting the youth pastor's role. It creates an emotional roller-coaster ride."

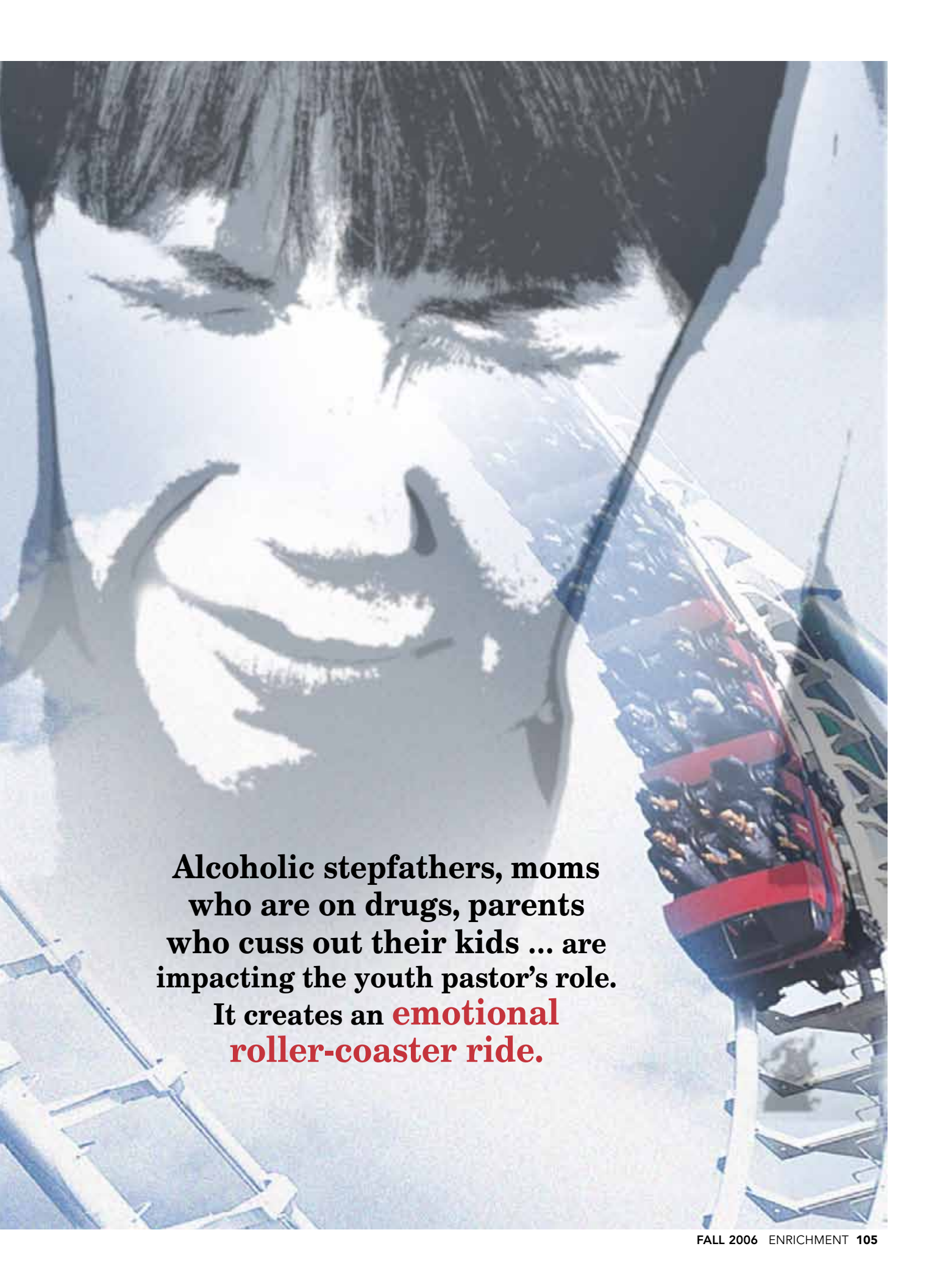
Youth ministry is already pressure packed because of its transitional nature. Every 4 years new students cycle into the youth group, giving most youth pastors only a brief time to impact each student. Is it even possible to address problematic issues in that limited time? Are tools available to help with spiritual and emotional roadblocks? What boundaries must be drawn when ministering to hurting or at-risk teens?

These questions emerge as youth pastors battle to impact hurting teens.

"Youth ministry is not practice ministry where pastors can make their rookie mistakes so they can some day be promoted to do real ministry with adults. Youth ministry is the frontline work," says Roe.

The good news is that steps can be taken to help Roe and other youth ministers as they reach out to at-risk youth.





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## RECOGNIZE THE PROBLEM

Children and teens need guidance, limits, and loving parental or adult interaction to grow up healthy and well-adjusted, but many teens are not given opportunity. Youth ministry can become unbalanced when every teen is seen through the same lens.

Recognizing that teens have unique problems does not diminish the power of God; it shows teens have a diversity of needs. Every teen in your youth group has a unique experience. Their backgrounds are different, and the struggles in their family are diverse.

Diverse ministry begins when you ask: *What level are my teens at spiritually and emotionally? What baggage do they carry when they enter the youth room? What methods are available to show them how to live their faith in their real-life circumstances?*

Rob Bell, pastor and author, says in his book, *Velvet Elvis*, that this generation is asking the difficult question of what it means to be a Christian here and now, in this place, at this time.<sup>2</sup>

Effective youth ministry begins when the ministry's approach is as multifaceted as the teens themselves. A 14-year-old may be spiritually ready to step into leadership or service, while an unchurched, newly saved 18-year-old might need to grasp the definition of a Father's love.

In my church, Sunday morning discipleship is comprised of several classes taught by spiritually mature volunteers. Classes are open to all students and last 4 weeks. Age does

not determine who can attend each class. Classes are Bible-based, and there are several topics to choose from. One session might include an in-depth Bible study entitled, "Life Answers From the Book of James," or a culturally driven class called "What Would Jesus Say Today?" Relationship-based classes are also offered. One class called "Just You and God: Discovering Spiritual Intimacy" addresses taking your relationship with God to the next level. Another class called "ElimiNATE: Dating With Standards" addresses personal relationships in dating.

## Youth ministry is not practice ministry where pastors can make their rookie mistakes so they can some day be promoted to do real ministry with adults.

Teens choose which class to attend. They generally gravitate to classes that help them at their level as they seek biblical answers to real-life issues.

Youth ministries must level the playing field among teens. Some teens have the full support of their parents, while others navigate their faith life alone. Invite trusted adults in the congregation to privately adopt youth financially and spiritually. A teen's life is changed when he knows someone will pray for him daily and listen if he hits a wall. He is excited when he realizes someone will pay the \$90 fee for summer camp or help him raise funds for a mission trip. Privately adopting youth can help youth groups become equal opportunity environments.

## STATISTICS

### Consider these statistics:

- 72.2 percent of the U.S. population believes fatherlessness is the most significant family or social problem facing America.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 2 of every 5 children in America do not live with their father.<sup>2</sup>
- 43 percent of Americans have been exposed to alcoholism or addiction in their families.<sup>3</sup>
- 34 percent of U.S. women have lived with men outside of marriage and 2 of every 5 couples cohabitating have children in the home.
- Parents spend 40 percent less time with their children than they did a generation ago.<sup>4</sup>
- 34 percent of adults remain unchurched.<sup>5</sup>
- 47 percent of families believe pornography is a problem in their home.<sup>6</sup>
- The divorce rate among born-again Christians (27 percent) and fundamentalist Christians (30 percent) is higher than the rate for non-Christians (23 percent).<sup>7</sup>
- A Promise Keepers survey revealed that 50 percent

of men who attended a Promise Keepers rally viewed pornography within 1 week of the event.<sup>8</sup>

- 13 percent of teen girls have been physically abused by a boyfriend and 26 percent have been verbally abused repeatedly.
- 10 percent of American teenage girls self-injure themselves.

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### ENDNOTES

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3. <http://www.drug-statistics.com/alcohol.htm>
4. Chris Slane, III, "Why Are Kids So Angry?" *Family First*, 1999, 7.
5. Barna Research Group, "The Barna Update," 12. <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=185>
6. Focus on the Family Poll, October 1, 2003.
7. Jim Killam, "Marriage Partnership, Don't Believe the Divorce Statistics," Summer 1997, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/mp/7m2/7m2046.html>
8. <http://www.blazinggrace.org/pornstatistics.htm>



## RE-EVALUATE YOUTH MINISTRY TO INCLUDE THE FAMILY

How does a youth pastor help teens make healthy choices when parents do not? What if a teen's parent is a new believer? What if a mom or dad is facing his or her own problems?

Rob McClure, an Assemblies of God district youth director, said: "Youth ministry is more family ministry today than it ever has been. I'm not sure if this is because it's something new as much as it is that we are figuring out that if we don't do something with the family, we are pretty much wasting our time dealing with the students. Most youth leaders begin their ministry feeling like schools and parents are the enemy, but if they are worth their salt, they will eventually do most of their ministry with schools and parents. I think the hope of youth ministry is that students can break out of the cycle their family has been stuck in."

Are resources available for moms, dads, or guardians

## Effective youth ministry begins when the ministry's approach is as multifaceted as the teens themselves.

through the church or youth ministry? What books can pastoral staff recommend? What area seminars or conferences are available? Are there local experts (counselors, speakers, family ministries), perhaps even within your church, that would hold 1-day relational seminars at a minimal cost?

How can youth ministers involve unreached parents in their teen's spiritual life (beyond financial expectations)? They can send online or printed newsletters with events and information. They can mail a note or make a phone call to parents when a teen is doing something great. The church can invite parents, youth leaders, and students together twice a year for worship, food, and fun. Provide opportunity for parents to see their teens in their faith environment. One month out of the year, offer parent-teen discipleship classes.

A youth pastor must expand his view of youth ministry as he moves intentionally toward family ministry. Remember, youth pastors might spend a maximum of 5 hours a week with a teen, but that same teen spends 100 hours a week with peers and family. When a youth pastor impacts a teen's family, he can change the life of a teen.

## REVEAL GOD

A paradigm shift is occurring in youth ministry as youth pastors focus less on programs and events, and more on God. Churches are starting to realize that teens cannot be continuously occupied with programs and activities. Teens

have access to entertainment in every facet of their lives through media and technology. Entertainment is plentiful while relevant faith is much harder to find.

Kenda Creasy Dean says in *The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry*, "The risks facing contemporary teenagers bear solemn testimony to the church's ineffectiveness at addressing adolescence. Youth look to the church to show them something — Someone — capable of turning their lives inside out and the world upside down. Most of the time we have offered them pizza."

How can youth pastors show God to teens? First, they can be role models. Society inundates teens with messages on what to wear, how to act, how to think, and what is image and what is not. After awhile, words carry little weight. Teens are looking for someone to follow. They know what not to do. At-risk teens need to be shown what they can do and what they are capable of through God. Youth pastors need to model integrity in their own faith walk.

A few years ago our former youth pastor, Andy Greene, held a Speed the Light service. I was a youth staff member and was sitting in the crowd. He had shown a cool STL video. He emphasized giving. Teens yawned, waiting for Andy to move to the next portion of the service. He stopped and asked the teens to pray about their pledge. Sarah, Andy's wife, joined him and they knelt at the altar. He wrapped his arm around her and their 3-year-old daughter ran from the crowd and snuggled in between them. I watched as many hurting teens gazed at this portrait of a man and wife seeking God together. It was genuine. He gave a powerful sermon in that one sincere act, though no words were spoken. It was a model of what

## AT-RISK YOUTH MINISTRY RESOURCES

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T. SUZANNE ELLER, Muskogee, Oklahoma

they could one day have in their own life. It showed them how to seek God in every matter.

It was an example they could follow.

Second, a youth pastor must also provide opportunity for teens to put their faith into action. Teens are community driven and serving empowers their faith. Our home church adopted a local elementary school in a challenging socioeconomic area. The paint was peeling off the walls, the courtyard was

## In today's culture, youth ministers must guard their reputations and use common sense when dealing with problematic issues.

overgrown, and the playground was in disrepair. The youth pastor, Jason Fullerton, encouraged teens to participate in the project. Teens swept concrete, hauled dirt, painted walls, and planted trees.

As I watched teens work hard throughout the day, I realized the majority of them were once at-risk teens. This project not only encouraged them to demonstrate their faith, but it also connected them to adults in the church as they worked side-by-side. Teens, no matter what their struggle, find purpose in giving and enjoy feeling the sense of accomplishment that comes from serving others.

Third, a youth pastor can create small groups where teens can discuss spiritual issues. Teens are low-tech spiritually and high-touch emotionally. Teens love and expect technology in their everyday lives, but one-on-one relationships in simple settings — without lights, dazzle, and music — allow them to ask difficult spiritual questions, as well as search through the Bible with a mature believer.

Youth services can range in size from 10 to 500 teens. Services are fun, interactive, spiritual, and vital in youth ministry, but the at-risk teen can get lost in the crowd. Youth ministry is enhanced by smaller group settings that create a safe place for teens to share their struggles.

### REALIZE YOUR LIMITS

Many ministers have difficulty realizing their limits. God heals and delivers, but pastors are not God. Ministers need to make this distinction.

Youth pastors are often looked to as counselors. Brandon Liebe, senior high pastor at First Assembly in Fort Myers, Florida, says: "The first thing I state in counseling situations is that I am not a licensed counselor. Pastors give spiritual and biblical counseling, but there are times when we need to refer people to a Christian licensed counselor."

In today's culture, youth ministers must guard their

reputations and use common sense when dealing with problematic issues. Establishing boundaries is a proven way to do this. Boundaries define what is acceptable and what is not. For example, youth pastors can give students their church phone number and the times they are available to meet one-on-one. Clearly define meeting times from the beginning so students learn to rely on God, not you. When counseling teens, make sure another adult is present. Listen, give biblical advice, set

attainable goals, but remember you are not their source — God is.

Roe concurs, "It's important that we don't develop a messiah complex. I will try my best but I cannot help everyone."

Youth pastors need to pray with their students. Believe in them. Encourage them. But also be aware that occasionally students need additional help from a licensed counselor. Making referrals, when appropriate, is not a sign of failure. It is wise and loving to allow someone with greater knowledge or experience to help.

Boundaries are not limited to the student. Boundaries benefit the youth pastor and his family as well. Balance is key. It is important that a youth pastor maintains his relationship with God and with his family. Work hard. Rest hard. Play hard. Remember, a youth pastor is a role model. Teens need to see balance in your ministry life and in your personal life. If a youth pastor allows his problems to consume him, his ministry will lose its effectiveness.

### REACHING A GENERATION

"Youth ministry reaches out to hurting teens and lets them know Jesus is the only person who can fill their void. Jesus is the answer. Youth ministers deliver that answer to those in need," Liebe says.

Youth ministers and leaders are in a unique position to help at-risk teens. When a youth pastor takes time to distinguish who teens are, what their distinct obstacles are, and shows them what God can do for them where they are, he helps them find another way.

How do I know? I was once a hurting teen myself. ■



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### ENDNOTES

1. Names used in this article are pseudonyms.
2. Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 13.



# YOUTH MINISTRY RESOURCES

## ASSEMBLIES OF GOD RESOURCES

<http://www.youth.ag.org/gnet/>  
<http://www.momentum.ag.org/ylo.cfm>  
<http://www.oncourse.ag.org/leaders.cfm>  
<http://www.oncourse.ag.org/>  
<http://www.thesevenproject.com/>  
<http://www.finearts.ag.org/>  
<http://www.bq.ag.org/>  
<http://www.youth.ag.org/discipleship/>  
<http://www.stl.ag.org/>  
<http://www.aim.ag.org/>  
<http://www.empower.ag.org>

## Teen Challenge International

1-417-862-6969  
<http://www.teenchallengeusa.com/>

## Highlands Child Placement Services and Maternity Home

1-501-262-1660  
<http://benevolences.ag.org/highlands/>

## JUNIOR HIGH RESOURCES

### Simply Junior High

26981 Vista Terrace, Unit C  
 Lake Forest, CA 92630  
 Phone: 1-866-9-SIMPLY  
 Web site: <http://simplyjuniorhigh.com>  
 E-mail: [simplyyouthministry@hotmail.com](mailto:simplyyouthministry@hotmail.com)

## GROUP Magazine's Web portal site for youth leaders

Group Publishing Inc.  
 P.O. Box 481  
 Loveland, CO 80539  
 Phone: 1-800-447-1070  
 Web site: <http://www.youthministry.com>  
 E-mail: [info@group.com](mailto:info@group.com)  
 E-mail: [Info@youthministry.com](mailto:Info@youthministry.com)

## RECREATION RESOURCES

### RECFX Intentional Concepts

RecFX, Inc.  
 500 N. 56th Street, Suite 21  
 Chandler, AZ 85226  
 Phone: Customer Service/Orders 1-800-486-7671  
 Web site: <http://www.recfx.com>  
 E-mail: [info@recfx.com](mailto:info@recfx.com)

## Jaroy Carpenter — Solid Rock Resources

P.O. Box 3042  
 Coppell, TX 75019  
 Phone: 972-668-6175  
 Web site: <http://www.solidrockresources.com>  
 E-mail: direct from Web site, select "Contact"

## Amberg Entertainment Inc.

1925 E. Bennett St. Suite H  
 Springfield, MO 65804  
 Phone: 1-866-657-1863  
<http://www.ambergentertainment.com>

## SERMON HELPS

### Sermon Central

Outreach Web Properties  
 2230 Oak Ridge Way

Vista, CA 92081-8341  
 Phone: 1-866-899-4426  
 Web site: <http://www.sermoncentral.com>  
 E-mail: [support@sermoncentral.com](mailto:support@sermoncentral.com)

## ILLUSTRATION HELPS

### eSermons.com

4202 Gwynne Rd  
 Memphis TN 38117  
 Phone: 1-800-350-8339  
<http://www.sermonillustrations.com>  
 E-mail: direct from Web site

## Wayne Rice

*Hot Illustrations for Youth Talks on CD-ROM: 400 Attention-Getting Stories, Parables, and Anecdotes.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan.  
 ISBN: 0310238404

## Toolzone4leaders.com

<http://www.toolzone4leaders.com> (search under "Youth Ministry")

## GENERAL YOUTH MINISTRY RESOURCES

### Youth Specialties

300 S. Pierce St.  
 El Cajon, CA 92020  
 Phone: 619-440-2333  
 Web site: <http://www.youthspecialties.com>  
 E-mail: [YS@youthspecialties.com](mailto:YS@youthspecialties.com)

## See You At the Pole

P.O. Box 60134  
 Fort Worth, TX 76115  
 Phone: 817-447-7526  
 Web site: <http://www.syatp.org>  
 E-mail: [syatp@syatp.com](mailto:syatp@syatp.com)

## Youth Source

P.O. Box 450309  
 Atlanta, GA 31145  
 Phone: 404-284-8262  
 Web site: <http://www.youthsource.com>  
 E-mail: [info@youthsource.com](mailto:info@youthsource.com)

## Center for Parent/Youth Understanding

P.O. Box 414  
 Elizabethtown, PA 17022  
 Phone: 717-361-8429  
 Web site: <http://www.cpyu.org>  
 E-mail: [cfrick@cpyu.org](mailto:cfrick@cpyu.org)

## The Barna Group, Ltd.

1957 Eastman Ave. Ste B  
 Ventura, CA 93003  
 Phone: (805) 639-0000  
 Web site: <http://www.Barna.org>  
 E-mail: [barna@barna.org](mailto:barna@barna.org)

## LEADERSHIP

### Nexlead

P.O. Box 330517  
 Fort Worth, TX 76163  
 Phone: 1-866-9-LEADER  
 Web site: <http://www.nexlead.org>  
 E-mail: [info@nexlead.org](mailto:info@nexlead.org)

## Up Close

Youth Source  
 P.O. Box 450309  
 Atlanta, GA 31145  
 Phone: 404-284-8262  
 Web site: <http://www.youthsource.com>  
 E-mail: [info@youthsource.com](mailto:info@youthsource.com)

## NEWSLETTERS

### Doug Fields

Each month Simply Youth Ministry sends two free ministry newsletters. The first newsletter of the month contains ministry encouragement and training by Doug Fields, Jim Burns, and Kurt Johnston. The second newsletter contains youth ministry freebies you can download from their Web site. To subscribe visit <http://nct.digitalriver.com/fulfill/0102.001>

## John Maxwell

*Leadership Wired* is written by John C. Maxwell and is available via e-mail on a free subscription basis. You can subscribe at: <http://www.INJOY.com/Newsletters>.

## Jeanne Mayo

Youth Source  
 P.O. Box 450309  
 Atlanta, GA 31145  
 Phone: 404-284-8262  
 E-mail: [info@youthsource.com](mailto:info@youthsource.com)  
 Web site: <http://www.youthsource.com>

## MISCELLANEOUS RESOURCES

### National Child Abuse Hotline:

1-800-422-4453

### American Association of Suicide – Counseling and other resources

1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
<http://www.suicidology.org>

### The National Youth Crises Hotline

1-800-HIT-HOME

### Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network (RAINN)

1-800-656-HOPE  
<http://www.rainn.org/>

### Al-Anon/Alateen (For families of alcoholics)

<http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/>

### National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD)

1-847-831-3438  
<http://www.anad.org>

### National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)/ 1-800-787-3224  
<http://www.ndvh.org/>

### Operation Lookout National Center for Missing Youth

1-800-782-SEEK (7335)  
<http://www.operationlookout.org/>

Check out *Enrichment* journal's Web site for these and other great ministry resources.  
[www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org](http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org)



## THE MILE THAT BRINGS A SMILE

The writings of Bill Bright, founder and former chairman of Campus Crusade for Christ, continue to bless the church world in his absence. Bright's gift for simple yet thorough exposition comes into play with this treatment of Matthew 5:41. Bright clearly connects "going the second mile" with the broader life of discipleship.

## HEARING THE UNHEARD

This essay offers cautionary advice to pastors everywhere — true ministry requires us to get beyond the superficial and begin to sense the currents of the spirit.

With his characteristic down-to-earth approach to communicating life truths, Rachels interweaves personal experience and even a parable to make his point. The end result: a gentle call to recognize even the subtlest cries for help.

## Improving Your Welcome

Charles Arn, president of Church Growth, Inc., presents a strong case for a fundamental church growth principle — making visitors feel welcome. And he starts by redefining "visitors"

as "guests" in order to reshape "the outlook of everyone in your church who is concerned with extending hospitality to those who truly are guests in God's house."

*Welcome Guests*

## PASTORING CHILDREN

Dick Gruber, longtime children's ministry specialist for the Assemblies of God, calls on children's pastors to treat their young flocks with the same care and dedication as any senior pastor would his or her congregation.

Gruber fleshes out pastoral characteristics, all with the underlying premise to children's pastors that "God has personally placed you over His children for such a time as this."



## DEMOGRAPHIC EVANGELISM

Jim Wilson pastored First Baptist Church of Alameda in Albuquerque when this article appeared in *Your Church* magazine in 1998. But these evangelism principles are just as applicable to Assemblies of God pastors in 2006.

The article offers church case studies, some basic generational profiles and fundamental outreach strategies. But no matter how hard a church works to identify specific community needs, Wilson emphasizes, they must remain ready to share the good news with those inside and outside their target group.



## How the Church Can Minister to Single Senior Adults

Single seniors have much to offer the church, so specialized ministry to this demographic should be one of ministry partnership. Seniors' lifetime reserves of wisdom and experience mean the church that seeks to include them can only win in the process.

This article calls on churches to recognize the unique needs of this growing segment of society.

# Gene Testing: **HELPFUL** KNOWLEDGE or **HARMFUL** INFORMATION?



PHOTODISC

BY CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL

Pastors live and minister in exciting times. Medical and scientific advances, such as the completion of the Human Genome Project in 2003, bring promises of new knowledge for treatment of diseases. But they also bring new ethical questions on how this vast wealth of biological information should be used.

According to the Human Genome Program of the U.S. Department of Energy, more than 900 genetic tests are available. Pregnant women, newborns, adults with a family history of certain diseases, and adults with illnesses whose diagnosis can be confirmed by genetic means may undergo genetic testing. Many church members will encounter genetic testing at least once in their lives. As a result, ministers may be called on to provide a Christian perspective to church members seeking counsel when faced with the ethical issues surrounding these genetic tests.

## WHAT IS A GENE TEST?

Genes come in pairs. One copy is inherited from one's mother and one copy is

inherited from one's father. Genes make up the chemical blueprint that determines a person's inherited potential and limitations. Some genes determine external traits, such as eye color, while other genes determine less obvious traits, such as a predisposition to diabetes, heart disease, or certain types of cancer. More than 4,000 diseases, such as cystic fibrosis, Tay-Sachs, and sickle cell anemia, are genetically inherited.

A *gene* test involves taking a small sample of blood, body fluids, or tissues to extract DNA from cells found in these samples. The DNA may show a change from normal cell's DNA. This can be as subtle as a change in or the absence of one link in the DNA chain (a missing or mutated chemical base). Some changes are obvious enough to detect under a microscope — a missing or added piece of an entire chromosome or even an extra chromosome (such as in Down syndrome). A *genetic test* is a broader term that includes tests for the presence or absence of key proteins that result from altered genes.

The most common use of genetic testing is newborn screening for inborn errors of metabolism, such as phenylketonuria. Phenylketonuria is a genetic disorder caused by a lack of an enzyme necessary for metabolizing the essential amino acid, phenylalanine.

## WHEN IS A GENE TEST HELPFUL?

Newborn screening for diseases such as phenylketonuria is beneficial. A gene test can alert doctors and parents to make timely dietary changes for a newborn to prevent mental retardation.

Gene tests can be beneficial for adults as well. For example, a gene test that determines whether an individual in an affected family has inherited a gene for adenomatous polyposis can lead to the timely removal of colon growths and save an individual's life.

Whenever a gene test can be used to guide a physician to the appropriate treatment

for patients, the test has the potential to dramatically improve lives. In this context, we can view gene testing as a blessing.

## WHAT ARE THE LIMITS OF GENE TESTS?

As with all developing technologies, gene testing has its limits. For some adult-onset diseases such as Alzheimer's disease and certain cancers, the interpretation of gene test results and the determination of appropriate treatment are complex.

Gene tests work well for people who have no symptoms of the disease but are considered high-risk because family members have the disease. But tests can only give a probability for developing the disorder. Some who carry a mutated gene associated with a disease may never develop the disease. The scientific term for the probability of getting the disease when mutation is present is *gene penetrance*. *Incomplete penetrance* is the scientific term used for an individual with a mutation who may never get the disease.

For genes that show incomplete penetrance, many factors may come into play that keep the diseased condition from taking place. Perhaps more than one mutated gene is needed to cause the illness or certain environmental factors must be present in addition to genetic mutation for the disease to manifest itself.

One such disease is a rare, inherited form of breast cancer for which predisposition tests have been available since 1996. Most breast cancer cases occur in women who have no family history of the disease. However, nearly 10 percent of breast cancer cases are inherited (*familial*). In these *familial* cancer cases, mutations in two genes called BRCA1 and BRCA2 (for BReast CAncer), are thought to be involved. More than 200 mutations have been found in the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes, and each family typically carries its own characteristic mutation. While research suggests women who carry these mutations run an increased risk of developing breast cancer, some women who have the mutations never develop the disease.

Also, the presence of a mutated gene does not indicate the severity of a disease. For example, genetic testing may enable a pregnant woman to know her unborn child carries the gene for cystic fibrosis. The test, however, will not indicate if

for treating the condition that is discovered. In the example of inherited forms of breast cancer, while it is possible to screen for BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutations, there is no clear strategy for appropriate follow-up for those carrying one of these mutations. Two possibilities for treatment include increased surveillance, such as more frequent mammograms, or the removal of healthy breasts as a preventive measure. Surgery, however, carries its own risks, and there is no guarantee all tissue capable of becoming cancerous will be removed.

Gene testing carries potential psychological risks for those diagnosed with a mutant gene. These include increased anxiety and depression. The resulting depression can lead to an increased risk for suicide in some individuals.

Individuals who learn they did not inherit a harmful mutation while other family members did may experience survivor's guilt. Tension may develop between family members when they receive test results. Psychological risks can extend to a patient's children as well, since children are at risk for inheriting mutant genes from parents. A chaplain or pastor can provide a much-needed spiritual perspective in these situations, as well as promote harmonious family relationships in the wake of their receiving disturbing test results.

Another potential risk of genetic testing is discrimination in obtaining insurance and employment. The identification of a mutant gene might constitute a pre-existing condition that may be excluded from insurance coverage. If test results became part of one's medical record, a future employer could access them and these results might influence a hiring decision. Yet, if people identified as high-risk withhold results from their insurance company, they may experience difficulty getting their insurance company to pay for frequent screenings or other preventative measures that are needed in light of their test results.

## Ministers may be called on to provide a Christian perspective to church members seeking counsel when faced with the ethical issues surrounding these genetic tests.

her child will only have a mild cough or will have severe lung problems leading to fatality before 30 years of age.

Different mutations of the same gene can lead to differing degrees of symptoms. More than 700 mutations exist in the gene responsible for cystic fibrosis. Not enough is known about which mutations lead to which set of symptoms. The scientific term for this issue is *gene expressivity*.

All medical tests, including gene tests, are subject to the possibility of laboratory errors — sample misidentification, or contamination of the chemicals used in processing samples. While such mistakes are rare, they remain a limitation of gene testing that must be considered.

## WHEN COULD A GENE TEST BE HARMFUL?

Occasionally the technology for testing for a given gene outpaces the technology



Prenatal genetic testing involves unique risks. While one potential use of prenatal gene testing is to prepare prospective parents for the birth of a potentially handicapped child, prenatal testing also can influence the choices made concerning the life or death of an unborn child. Identifying Down syndrome, cystic fibrosis, or other chromosomal disorders often results in the parents terminating the pregnancy.

Some prenatal tests, such as chorionic villus sampling (CVS) and amniocentesis, can cause a miscarriage. A 3 to 5 percent miscarriage rate is associated with CVS when performed between weeks 10 and 12 of a pregnancy. The risk of miscarriage following amniocentesis (performed at 15 to 18 weeks gestation) is between 1 in 400 to 1 in 200.

Many limitations to gene testing already discussed also apply to prenatal gene tests. However, when the decision arising from the test results is whether or not to terminate the pregnancy, a testing error may lead to the tragic loss of a developing life.

## WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE?

While gene testing can save lives, improve health, and even aid realistic planning for future medical needs, ministers need to be aware of its limitations, its potential for harm in specific situations, and its spiritual implications. Gene testing at any age can lead to a fatalistic outlook on life that fails to consider the sovereignty of God. Christians believe God knows the number of their days (Job 14:5; Psalm 39:4) and that He is the Great Physician. In many cases where a gene test shows a genetic predisposition for a disease (incomplete penetrance), lifestyle and dietary changes may prevent disease symptoms from ever appearing. In these cases, patients are encouraged to apply godly wisdom to their diet, exercise, and lifestyle habits.

Prenatal gene testing raises ethical

issues regarding the value of human life. What genetic handicap renders a life not worth living? What message do we send to disabled adults when doctors and parents decide to end the life of an unborn child who has the same handicap? Beyond the more obvious sanctity of human life issues, prenatal testing and the option of terminating a pregnancy reflect conditional parental love. Often a mother

## Pastors need to avoid extremes such as blanket condemnation of new scientific techniques as well as wholesale acceptance of the latest supposed medical advance.

awaiting prenatal test results holds her pregnancy and developing child at an emotional distance until she is sure the child is not handicapped and the pregnancy will continue.

Many times couples agree to routine prenatal tests and are suddenly forced to make hard decisions in a short period of time. It is important for prospective parents to clarify their values and fully understand the nature of any medical test before giving consent.

## WHAT GENERAL PRINCIPLES CAN BE LEARNED FROM GENE TESTING?

Gene testing is a developing technology that can illustrate important principles about other medical technologies. Gene testing provides information. Information itself is morally neutral, but what people choose to do with information can have moral implications. Information can be used to save lives or as a rationalization for ending life. Information can bring hope and reassurance or increase one's anxiety. Information can be used to help people or discriminate against people. Some information may overwhelm people. Treatment technologies often lag behind diagnostic technologies. Sometimes, perhaps, people are better off without information.

Ministers must realize discernment is necessary whenever people are faced with decisions regarding the use of new medical technologies. Pastors need to avoid extremes such as blanket condemnation of new scientific techniques as well as wholesale acceptance of the latest supposed medical advance. Rather, pastors need to encourage people faced with decisions regarding medical testing to ask their medical providers questions and make sure they understand the important issues involved before they consent to any test or procedure.

Finally, ministers need to be prepared to meet the spiritual and emotional needs of those receiving medical treatment for physical needs. Gene testing can bring powerful emotions to the surface because patients are faced with difficult issues such as family dynamics, attitudes toward disability, and one's own vulnerability and mortality. Spiritual issues such as God's sovereignty, the sanctity of human life, and one's eternal destiny arise as a patient prepares to receive test results. My prayer is God will prepare each minister with the wisdom, discernment, and sensitivity to guide those under his care who encounter the complex issues related to genetic testing. ■



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# CALLED ALONGSIDE: The *Paraclete's*

## Roles in Discipleship

BY DEBORAH M. GILL

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in discipleship? What is His heritage among us? How should the Holy Spirit shape our future?

The biblical term *Paraclete* is rich in imagery. Each modern version has its preferred English translation. When *Paraclete* is used of the Holy Spirit, the KJV renders it “Helper”; the NASB, “Comforter”; the RSV and NIV, “Counselor”; and the *Message*, “Friend.”

References to Jesus as *Paraclete* are rendered “Mediator,” “Advocate,” and “Intercessor.” Yet, “no single word can

provide an adequate rendering.”<sup>1</sup> Understanding *Paraclete* as “legal advocate” or “encourager” is too restrictive, and “helper” is too generic.<sup>2</sup> To complement our understanding of the noun, insights from its related verb are illuminating. Real treasure is found in what our *Paraclete* is called alongside to do — the kind of assistance the Holy Spirit offers the Lord’s disciples.

### PRESENCE

The most common use of the verb *parakaleo* is “to ask to come and *be present* where the speaker is, to call to one’s side,” that is, “to summon to one’s aid, to call upon for help.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, *Paraclete* identifies “one who appears in another’s behalf, who is called to one’s aid; an assistant, supporter, or helper.”<sup>4</sup> Jesus unpacked the significance of this important role of the Holy Spirit in discipleship during His farewell discourse prior to the Last Supper.

Discipleship is first and foremost about *being with Jesus* (Mark 3:14,15). Personal

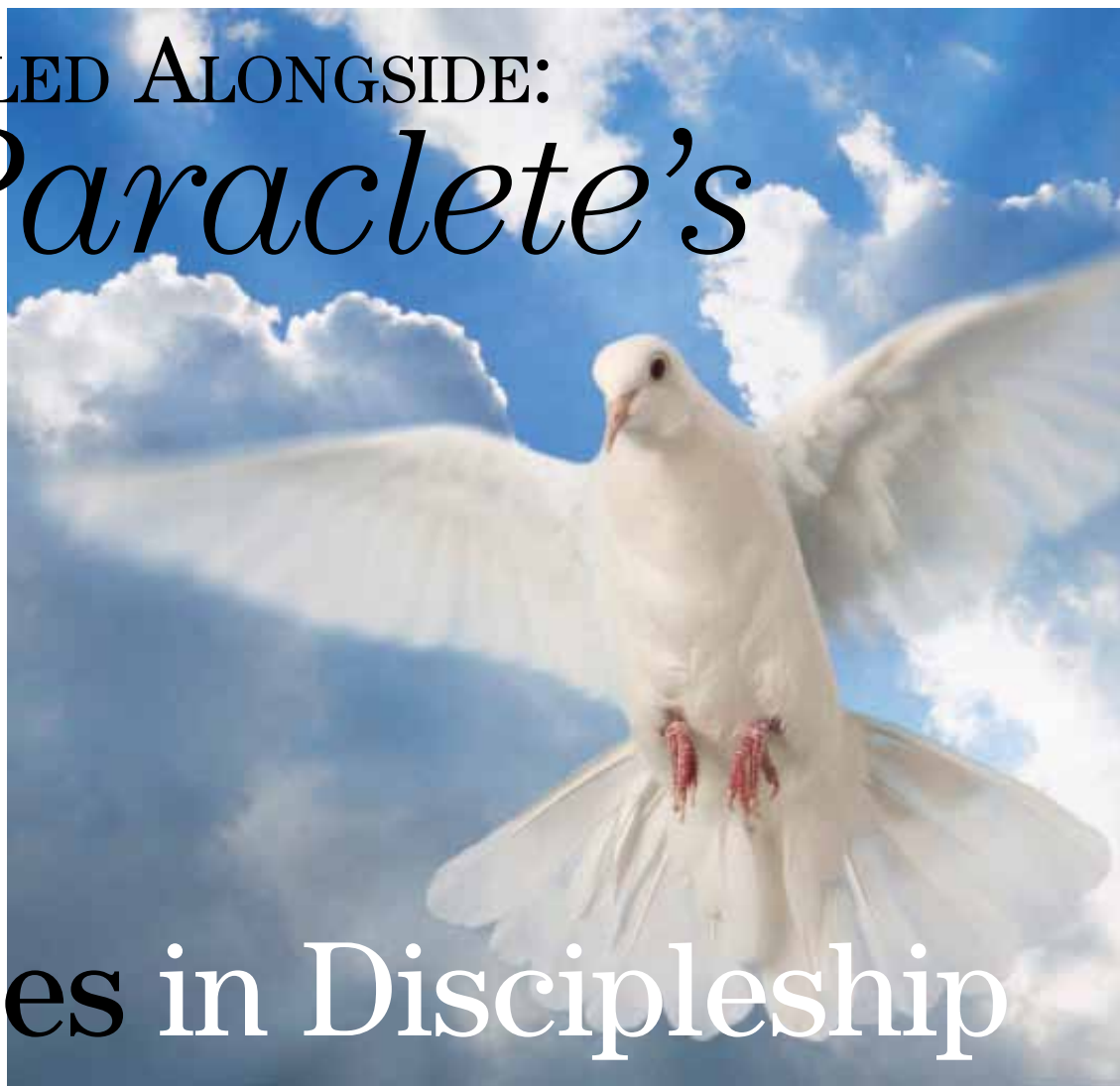


PHOTO: DESIGNPICS.COM

relationship was primary in Jesus' method of spiritual formation. He kept constant company with those He called. But in the Upper Room, Jesus broke the news to His closest friends that He would be leaving them (John 13:1,33). How could this be? How could they carry on without Him? The disciples were troubled, confused, and fearful (John 14:1–18).

Anticipating their loneliness, Jesus shared this promise: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another [*Paraclete*] to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you

## The companionship of the Paraclete makes possible the experiential dimension of Christian life.

know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:16–18, *Paraclete* transliterated from the Greek).

Jesus was *not* leaving them alone; He was leaving someone with them. Someone they already knew — who lived within them. “Another” (just like Jesus) — would be called alongside them. Their Master was passing the baton from one *Paraclete* (compare 1 John 2:1) to another — from the Word Incarnate to the Spirit of Truth.

Though no one had ever seen God, Jesus made Him known (John 1:18). Jesus was the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15); the Word made flesh, who dwelled among us (John 1:14). What Jesus had begun, the Holy Spirit would continue. “The Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me” (John 15:26). The first *Paraclete* made God human; the second made Him spirit. Both came from the Father for this essential aspect of discipleship — to be *with* the disciples. And since the Holy Spirit could be with the disciples, inside of the disciples, every one of them at the same time — forever, it was best that Jesus went away. For in this way Jesus comes to us again: through the person of the Paraclete (John 14:16–18; 16:7).

The first and foremost role of the Holy Spirit in discipleship is as our *Divine Companion*, keeping us close to Jesus in our walk with Him and our journey to Christlikeness.

People of the Presence have a precious heritage. The companionship of the *Paraclete* makes possible the experiential dimension of the Christian life. God's nearness infuses every aspect of New Testament discipleship: inspiring evangelism, anointing ministry, authenticating community, deepening formation, heightening worship, and empowering the supernatural. Ever since the birth of the Church, the *Paraclete* has been making Jesus intimate to His followers.

If we hunger to experience God's glory — the manifest presence of God — we will court the companionship of the *Paraclete*.

The remaining work of the *Paraclete* in its role in discipleship can be described as two alternate aspects of His relationship as Companion. As only an intimate ally can, the *Paraclete* brings to bear all the authority we have granted Him to help us conform to the image of Christ and cooperate in the Great Commission. At times, He asserts control forcefully — with the same urgency as a cautionary sign by the highway: ATTENTION — BRIDGE OUT; WRONG WAY — DO NOT ENTER; CONSTRUCTION ZONE — FINES DOUBLE; or LANE ENDS — MERGE. At other times, His influence is gentle. His whispers are more like road signs giving important information (Last Exit Before Tollway); directional clues (I-35 Exits Left); input for our comfort (Next Rest Area 34 Miles); tips to decrease our stress (Diamond Lane Ahead); or ideas to enrich our experience (Scenic Overlook).

## EXHORTATION

The first of these alternate aspects of His companionship comes from the next most common use of the verb *parakaleo*: “to urge strongly, appeal to, make a strong request; to implore, or entreat.”<sup>5</sup> This verb is regularly translated throughout the New Testament as “to beg, urge, beseech, and plead,” sometimes, even “to demand, or require.” The corresponding meanings of the noun *paraklesis* that describe the outcome or effect of this kind of action are “admonition, a strong request or appeal”; and “exhortation, the act of emboldening another's course of action or belief.”<sup>6</sup>

When our divine Companion becomes the *managing partner* of our lives, the *Paraclete* sets up His office in our hearts to supervise, manage, and monitor our progress. The Holy Spirit begs us, urges us, and pleads with us to do what is right. He admonishes us not to sin and exhorts us to act in obedient faith in ways we think are beyond us. Through this prodding of the *Paraclete*, God works in us “to will and to act according to His good purpose” (Philippians 2:13).

David A. Reed, a Wycliffe College professor, wrote a case study on the charismatic renewal in the Anglican Church of Canada.<sup>7</sup> Charismatic Anglican doctrine does not hold to tongues as the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but Reed included it as one of six categories of various kinds of charismatic experiences he studied. (The six range from “a crisis experience accompanied by *glossolalia*” to “a respect and sympathy for what the charismatic renewal represents.”)<sup>8</sup> “The type of experience most common [to Canadian Anglican charismatics],” Reed explains, “is the classical Pentecostal one in which *glossolalia* accompanied the experience. ...” Based on their kinds of charismatic experiences, Reed correlated positive change in the lives of believers in three areas:



their personal lives, the spiritual disciplines, and the gifts of the Spirit.

Those who had an identifiable charismatic experience scored highest in positive changes in their personal life, testifying of an infusing of their spiritual life with a meaningful experience with God, an increase in their church involvement, and a significant increase in their giving of time and money. Those who spoke in tongues with their initial charismatic experience led in 6 of the 9 spiritual disciplines identified. And “those who received *glossolalia* at the time of their charismatic experience were highest in the ‘supernatural’ charisms such as prophecy, interpretation of tongues, knowledge, wisdom and miracles.” Reed summarizes his findings as follows: The decisive factor in the personal changes and the motivation for service is the charismatic experience. The more definite the experience (a crisis experience accompanied by *glossolalia* or another *charism*) the greater the personal change, motivation and commitment.<sup>9</sup>

People full of the Spirit, who live and walk in the Spirit, display the

## The intensity with which the *Paraclete* exercises authority varies, as He deems appropriate.

fruit of the Spirit, and live lives controlled by the Spirit (Acts 6:5; 7:55; 11:24; Galatians 5:16–25; Romans 8:8–14).

### ENCOURAGEMENT

The final uses of the verb *parakaleo* include the *Paraclete*’s more gentle roles. They are: “to be friendly to or speak to in a friendly manner”; “to treat someone in an inviting or congenial manner”; and “to instill someone with courage or cheer.”<sup>10</sup> The corresponding meanings of the noun *paraklesis* that describe the outcome or effect of these kinds of action are “comfort, encouragement, and address.”<sup>11</sup>

Disciples who value the divine companionship of the *Paraclete*, and align themselves with His directives as managing partner, become the intimate understudies of their own *spiritual director*. As One who fathoms the deep things of God, the Spirit invites the Lord’s disciples to join Him as guide on the adventure of discovering His directives (1 Corinthians 2:9–16; John 16:13–15). His anointing welcomes Christ’s followers into a realm of revelation (1 John 2:20,27), encourages unction in utterance (Acts 2:4), and offers empowerment in the supernatural to do the greater things Jesus promised (John 14:12).

By making room for the Holy Spirit and giving careful attention to His desires, we can learn the spiritual disciplines of *spaciousness* and *attentiveness*. Our spiritual director coaches us to create space: on our calendars as well as in the Sunday service schedule, in our budgets, and in our emotional and physical reserves. By narrowing our focus we can increase our margin, but He wants the *middle*. He desires that the prime real estate of our lives belongs to Jesus. The *Paraclete* teaches us attentiveness by helping us practice heightened focus on and sensitivity to Jesus, His desires, and His purposes. Lavishing undivided attention and resisting distraction or multitasking to be fully present is a gift of singular value — a high form of worship. The sacrifice required to learn the spiritual disciplines of spaciousness and attentiveness results in the radical transformation of a disciple from the inside out.

The intensity with which the *Paraclete* exercises authority varies, as He deems appropriate. The Holy Spirit is aware of many things that we are not: the gravity of a situation, the urgency of a need, the potential of an opportunity, and the duration of a divine moment. But the alternation from His forceful exercise of authority to more gentle influence is not arbitrary, but progressive.

The more we cooperate with the Holy Spirit, the more intimate our relationship and the more satisfying His role becomes. The more we mature in our discipleship, the more we grow to recognize the *Paraclete*’s love and regard for us.

### CONCLUSION

The Holy Spirit’s role in discipleship is rich and varied — just as the many translations of His title, *Paraclete*, would suggest. Instead of settling for a single word to capture the various kinds of assistance the Holy Spirit provides us, it is illuminating to compare the verb from which His title comes. The common Greek word, *parakaleo*, helps us to appreciate more fully the



Holy Spirit's role as *divine companion*, *managing partner*, and *spiritual director*.

The *Paraclete* is God's agent of the experiential dimension of the Christian life. His role as divine companion can make us people of the Presence. May we always reverence His person, be careful not to quench or grieve the Holy Spirit, but to welcome and work with Him, both in our personal lives and in the church.

In His role as managing partner, the *Paraclete* persists in strongly urging us to please the Lord. Building on His trusted relationship as our closest companion, the *Paraclete* turns His focus to spiritual formation, determined to direct us as disciples to become ever more like Jesus and to reproduce the Christ-life in others. As initial physical evidence accompanies baptism in the Holy Spirit, Spirit-controlled living evidences life in the Spirit.

## The more we cooperate with the Holy Spirit, the more intimate our relationship and the more satisfying His role becomes.

God has designed things for His disciples that are beyond human comprehension. Known only to the Holy Spirit, who searches them out, the *Paraclete* guides us on the adventure to discover them. Having received the Spirit of Truth, we can understand what God has freely given us; we can express spiritual truths with spiritual words; and we can have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:9–16). But our spiritual director is not content that our message and ministry be characterized merely by wise and persuasive words. New Testament discipleship demands demonstration of the Spirit's power.

The character of our precious *Paraclete* is to hide behind the Lord Jesus Christ. As Jesus explained, the Holy Spirit would never speak of or represent himself (John 16:13). "He always comes in the name of and representing another."<sup>12</sup> Though He never calls attention to himself; I want to call attention to Him today, and to express great appreciation to the Father and to the Son for sending us this precious Partner. ■

### NEXT ISSUE: "When God Forgets : The Good News, The Bad News."

Maybe in your ministry you have had several important times: your first decade in ministry; the second decade; or maybe the first community you lived in; the first church you served; the second? Maybe you did well. But in the end, when the record is written, none of that matters as much as how you finish the race.

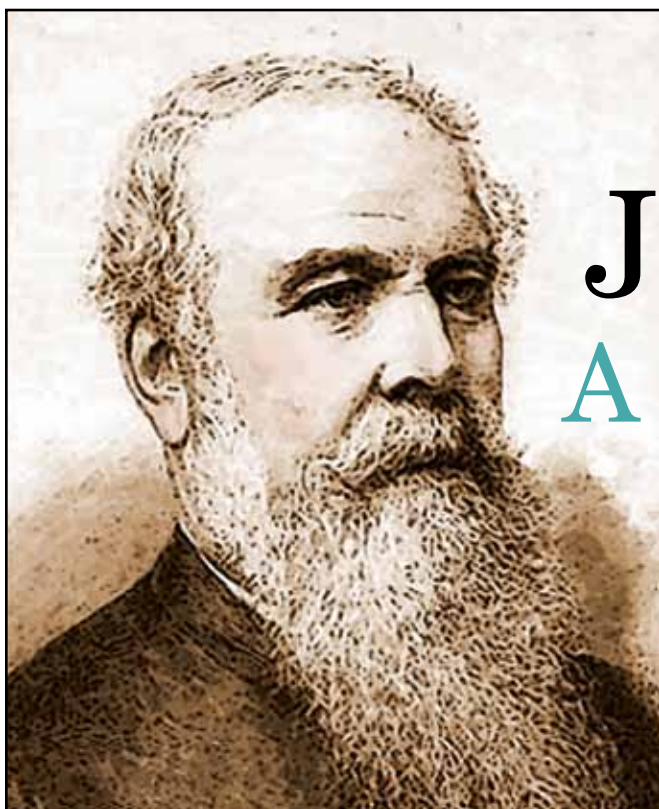


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# J.C. Ryle: A 19th-Century Evangelical

BY WILLIAM P. FARLEY

(This is the second installment in a series of articles on great 19th-century Christian leaders.)

A friend and his wife were on a long journey. While she drove, he retrieved a book from his briefcase entitled *Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century*. The author's short, pithy sentences, compelling logic, and penetrating insight into the spiritual power that worked through Wesley, Whitefield, and Romaine affected him deeply. He closed the book in tears, longing to see that same power in today's church. The book's author was 19th-century saint, John Charles Ryle.

Time has a way of winnowing the important from the superficial; the permanent from the transitory. Most books published in 2006 will be out of print in 10 years. However, many authors — such as Arthur W. Pink and C.S. Lewis, who were relatively unknown in their generations — have become

increasingly influential with the passing of time.

Ryle was a 19th-century Anglican pastor. He was born in 1816. When he died in 1900, he was relatively unknown outside the Anglican Church in Britain. But since Ryle's death, his books have slowly grown in popularity. Writing a tribute to Ryle in 2002, J.I. Packer noted that Ryle's books had sold more than 12 million copies and had been translated into at least a dozen languages; the numbers continue to climb.<sup>1</sup> Many pastors have probably read Ryle's most popular works — *Holiness*, *Five English Reformers*, or *Great Leaders of the Eighteenth Century*. "A hundred years later," wrote his biographer, "we can see that there were few more influential evangelicals in the Victorian era than Bishop Ryle."<sup>2</sup>

Ryle was a contemporary of Charles H. Spurgeon, Dwight L. Moody, George Mueller, and Hudson Taylor. When Ryle was 15, Charles Darwin graduated from Cambridge. His was the age of Dickens, the American Civil War, and a British Empire on which the sun never set.

Who was Ryle, and what can pastors learn from his life?

## CHILDHOOD AND CONVERSION

In 1816, Ryle was born in Macclesfield, England, into an immensely wealthy and socially elite family. His grandfather earned a fortune, and then bequeathed it to Ryle's father. John Charles was the oldest son and grew up lacking no comfort. The oldest son of a wealthy English family was expected to seek a career in Parliament, and this was Ryle's ambition.

Ryle attended Eton and then entered Oxford in 1834. He was an excellent student, earning scholarships and competing favorably with his academic peers. He

developed into a tall, broad-shouldered, handsome man, and excelled at rowing and cricket. Of his manliness others would later write, “His virile personality dominated two generations of Evangelicals, and set an ineradicable mark upon a third.”<sup>3</sup>

At 21, he suffered a protracted lung infection. During his confinement, he began to read the Bible, something that, according to his own admission, he had not done for 14 years.

One Sunday during his convalescence he entered an Oxford church just as Ephesians 2:8 was being read: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” He came under great conviction, was converted, and “from that moment to the last recorded syllable of this life,” notes his biographer, “no doubt ever lingered in John’s mind that the Word of God was living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword.”<sup>4</sup>

## EARLY CAREER

After graduation, Ryle lived with his parents and prepared for Parliament. One morning he awoke to the sudden and unexpected news that his father was ruined. In June 1841, his father’s bank, unable to pay its debts, went into receivership. Overnight, the Ryle family lost their magnificent estate with its attendant wealth. This event scarred Ryle for the rest of his life. He later wrote, “We got up one summer’s morning with all the world before us as usual, and went to bed that same night completely and entirely ruined. The immediate consequences were bitter and painful in the extreme, and humiliating to the utmost degree.”<sup>5</sup>

Raised in opulence, Ryle never expected he would need to earn his living like a commoner. Now, for the first time, young Ryle needed a job. His Oxford education and conversion pointed him toward the ministry. At 25, he became a clergyman in the Church of England. God uses evil for good.

Ryle’s bishop sent him to Exbury. Then, at age 27, he was transferred to the parish church at Winchester. A few months later, he was moved to Helmingham where he remained until his mid 40s. Helmingham was a small, quiet parish. At Helmingham, Ryle had time to read. He providentially discovered writings from great Christian leaders of past centuries that profoundly influenced his later preaching and writing.

## Ryle’s life reminds Christians that sometimes it is necessary to swim against the tide.

His favorites were 18th-century men, such as Wesley and Rowland; men of 17th-century Puritan stock, such as Charnock and John Bunyan; and 16th-century Reformers — Knox, Cranmer, Calvin, and Luther. “His evangelical sermons,” notes one writer, “based on a personal study of Reformation and Puritan ‘saints,’ remained the heart of his ministry.”<sup>6</sup>

## MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

In addition to Ryle’s financial woes, he also suffered through the poor health of his first two wives. At age 29, he married Matilda Plumptre. After a few years, she died leaving him a baby daughter to care for. Then, death took his mother, older brother, and younger sister. He felt like Job undergoing God’s trials.

At age 33, he married longtime friend, Jessie Walker, and once again, joy and happiness filled his rural cottage. After 6 months of marriage, Jessie developed a

lingering sickness from which she never recovered. Ryle nursed her for 10 years while managing their growing family (Jessie gave birth to four children). In addition to this stress, he managed his pastoral responsibilities.

During these years, Ryle began receiving speaking engagements. Because of his love for Jessie he often traveled 30 miles in an open carriage in the dead of winter rather than spend a night away from her. In Ryle’s 43rd year, Jessie died. For a second time he was widowed, with five children for which to care.

At age 45, he was transferred to the parish at Stradbroke. There he met Henrietta Clowes and married a third time. Unlike his previous wives, Henrietta enjoyed good health. This marriage proved long and fruitful. She was a good musician, practical, and a Christian who had deep faith.

## WRITING

Despite his troubles, Ryle’s reputation as a preacher and writer continued to grow. His writing ministry began with tracts and expanded to books and commentaries. He wrote his first pamphlet in response to the death of 100 villagers when a local suspension bridge collapsed. God gifted Ryle with the ability to write clearly, simply, and logically. Many have tried to copy his style, but none have mastered it.

“Before his death,” notes Otis Fuller, “Bishop Ryle was to write 300 messages in pamphlet form. Their printings would pass the 12-million mark and be read in a dozen different languages.”<sup>7</sup> Feeling a deep responsibility to his father’s creditors, Ryle used the royalties to retire his father’s debts.

Ryle was at his best when writing church history. He wrote passionately, as if he were a witness. One admirer said Ryle wrote history as an “enthusiastic admirer”<sup>8</sup> of the men he sketched. This was especially true when describing the lives of martyrs or leaders of great revivals.<sup>9</sup>



## BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL

In 1880 when Ryle was 64, the prime minister unexpectedly appointed him bishop of Liverpool. The appointment surprised many. Ryle was past his prime, and the government nominated few Evangelicals for these positions. Ryle labored in Liverpool diligently for 20 years, doing much good for the cause of the gospel. Describing his bishopric, G.C.B. Davies wrote, "A commanding presence and fearless advocacy of his principles were combined with a kind and understanding attitude in his personal relationships."<sup>10</sup> After Ryle's death in 1900, his successor described him as "that man of granite with the heart of a child." These words summarize Ryle's character and ministry well.

## LESSONS FROM RYLE

Today's pastor can learn several lessons from Ryle. First, Ryle's life reminds pastors to attend to their family duties. Although he had a warm, close relationship with his three sons, each eventually abandoned his father's faith. In his old age, this was a source of great grief to Ryle.

Second, Ryle's life reminds Christians that sometimes it is necessary to swim against the tide. Ryle was a passionate

Evangelical at a time when Evangelical theology was not popular in the Anglican church. During his lifetime, Ryle contended with John Henry Newman's Tractarian Movement, and the growing infiltration of liberal German theology. He did so with unflinching loyalty to the first principles of Scripture — justification by faith alone, substitutionary atonement, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the importance of preaching.

Third, Ryle modeled Christ's attitude toward his opponents. (He had many.) He coupled strong theological convictions with love and respect for his opponents. He took his motto from an old Puritan saying: "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity." Ryle sought to model these principles. Some of his fiercest opponents attended his funeral. In spite of their differences, they spoke of the great love they felt from Ryle.

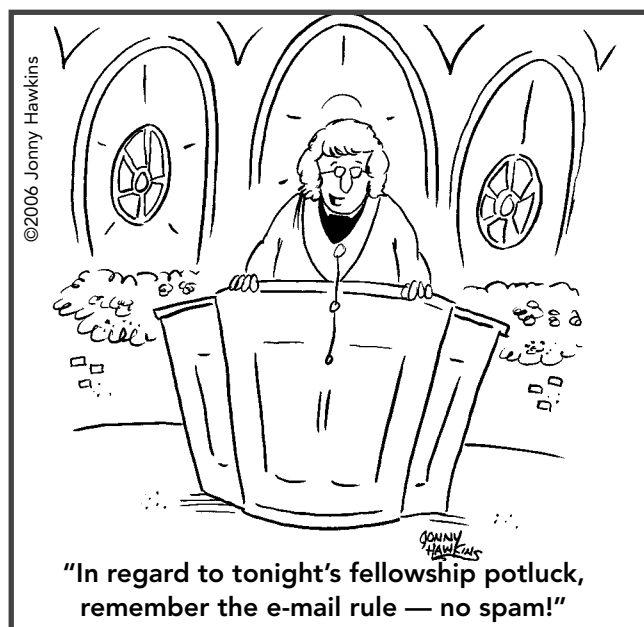
## Ryle was at his best when writing church history. He wrote passionately, as if he were a witness.

Fourth, Ryle did not treat church history as trivial. Rather, he steeped himself in it and learned from God's work in past generations. The results were a rich, vibrant faith, doctrinal precision, tolerance for opponents, and a great expectation and longing for the spiritual power experienced by past generations. Ryle knew the holy dissatisfaction those who study God's work in history often feel.

Fifth, pastors can learn from Ryle how to serve in old age. Retirement was not on Ryle's agenda. He actively served God to the end, praying to "die in the harness." God heard his prayers. His best and most fruitful years of ministry took place after 64.

Sixth, Ryle's life demonstrates the importance of persevering through trial. He endured his family's financial collapse, the death of three wives, and the constant criticism of theological foes. In spite of these, he applied himself to God's disciplines and through his trials grew in the "peaceful fruit of righteousness." In Ryle, the old Puritan saying took on flesh: "He that suffers conquers."

History is His story. ■



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# Seekers and Skeptics at **YOUR DOOR**



PHOTOS.COM

BY RUSTY WRIGHT

**H**ave you ever had an unbelieving student whom you have never met approach you and say, “Please tell me what life is all about?”

Perhaps you have, but in my experience, such queries are rare. Many non-Christian university students are not yet at that point. They may be focused on studies, social life, finances, or sports. Perhaps they are skeptical about matters of faith. If they are seeking, they may prefer talking with someone they know and trust.

What if pastors could have increased personal contact with seeking students at their points of keenest interest? Suppose pastors could interact with them in such a way that they felt relaxed and under no pressure to respond? Suppose

they invited a pastor’s interaction and sincerely wanted him to share his spiritual insights? Consider this story:

The e-mail subject line read “Life After Death.” It was from James (not his real name), a recent university graduate who was troubled about his fruitless job search. But mostly, he was worried about death. Here is what he wrote. (I have polished his somewhat rough e-mail prose.)

“Hi. I read an article you wrote in which you talked about Mike.”

The online article to which he referred, “One Minute After Death,” deals with near-death experiences and life after death. It seeks to tap current interest in this theme, answer questions about NDEs, and point readers to Jesus and His resurrection for assurance of eternal life. This article tells of Mike, my college fraternity brother who was struck by lightning while playing golf. A thunderstorm arose, he sought shelter under a tree, and the lightning killed him instantly. For days afterward our fraternity was in shock; members wondered what life was all about if it could be snuffed out in an instant.

“Is there life after death?” the men wanted to know, and “If so, how can one experience it?”

James continued: “I have been job hunting for a month now since finishing college, and it has been hard. In my free time I wonder about death. I am a logical

thinker. I find the concept of dying terrible. I do not want to stop existing. So far, the only truth I have found is that people are born and they die.

"I have also been thinking about spirituality. I do not believe in one God. I was an anthropology student and understand about primitive beliefs. I see the fear of death as something common to human beings, so people need to feel there is an afterlife.

"Anyway, I am looking for the truth and would appreciate it if you would show me what you have found. Thanks for taking time to read this."

Paul encouraged his readers to "pray for us ... that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ" (Colossians 4:3). I do not always read God's signals correctly, but I perceived that this was an open door.

I told James that I, too, had wrestled with skepticism and fear of death. I related that my wife Meg's undergraduate degree was in anthropology and that she has continued to use her inquisitive mind both in work and faith since becoming a follower of Jesus. I explained that I had come to know Christ while attending a university. I

## **The Internet is a 21st-century Roman road, office water cooler, marketplace, backyard fence, and dorm or Greek house bull session.**

sent James links to Internet articles on anxiety, evidences for Jesus' resurrection, and the Gospels. Might God use these articles to reach his heart?

James appreciated the articles and, after reading them, replied that he had placed his faith in Christ. He said he could see his life changing. His emotional problems were beginning to clear up, his outlook was becoming more positive, and he was

beginning to think more of others and less about himself. I sent him links to an online Bible and other articles to help him grow in his faith. He planned to attend church. He described his journey:

"After reading the articles, I began to think more about Jesus. ... Since I accepted Jesus in my life ... I have been thinking more about living than about death, and that is what I wanted. I am doing fine now. ... Thank you very much. I hope we can be in touch."

God used the Internet to take my message into James' living room or Internet café. Then He used the Internet to bring James into my living room for conversation. The result: angels rejoiced in heaven as a new believer passed from death to life.

## **INTERNET EVANGELISM AND CAMPUS OUTREACH**

The Internet is a powerful tool for



reaching secular university students and professors. Internet evangelism can play an important role in campus outreach. What principles or lessons might this story hold for campus pastors' efforts to spread the gospel on campus?

### ANONYMITY AND PRIVACY

James could access articles by himself wherever he had an Internet connection. He could read these online or save digital or hard copies for later. No one knew he was investigating spiritual things. Like Nicodemus in the night, he could seek spiritual truth without anyone knowing but Jesus. Some people are shy or embarrassed about discussing spiritual matters face to face. The Internet affords privacy for seekers of darkness. It also affords privacy for seekers of light.

### REFLECTION WITHOUT PRESSURE

James could digest the articles and e-mails at his own pace and respond if he felt comfortable. He was free to make up his own mind.

### WRITTEN MATERIAL CAN ANSWER QUESTIONS

James had serious questions about the validity of Christian faith. He thought believing in an afterlife was wish fulfillment. He then read articles on Christian evidences and how faith could calm his anxieties. As he thought through the articles, God was planting seeds and working in his heart. Some skeptics want to argue, but some genuinely seek truth. I am glad I found friendly people to answer my questions and recommend good reading when I, as a skeptic, was ready to listen.

### INTERNET UBIQUITY

Good reading is now just a few clicks away. Nearly 1 billion people worldwide use the Internet. In North American universities, Internet use has become a given. The students you seek to reach

for Christ can access good outreach material 24/7. If pastors can find ways to point students to quality materials, pastors can help nudge them toward Him.

### INTERACTIVITY

James and I were able to interact online. God uses many means to draw people to Christ. Reading, reflection, and discussion are offline ministry staples. Similar approaches work online. Some of my colleagues have had success communicating

## The Internet affords privacy for seekers of darkness. It also affords privacy for seekers of light.

faith in online chat rooms and blogs. Many students are thirsty for interpersonal connections and look to the Web to fill this need. Pastors and their disciples can be there to meet them.

### FACILITATING FOLLOW-UP

Some of my Internet partners who publish my material online are seeing hundreds — in some cases, thousands — of their Web site visitors indicate decisions to trust Christ. They connect inquirers with online volunteers who seek to answer their questions, help them grow in faith, and point them to a church. It is a team effort that is bearing much fruit. Software exists that can direct inquirers from a church's site directly to ministry volunteers.

### EASY PROMOTION

Kristi was visiting a friend at James Madison University. Christians at JMU had displayed campus posters and were wearing T-shirts pointing to an intriguing outreach Web site. Kristi visited the Web site, read numerous articles, and trusted Christ as Savior. Interaction via e-mail with Web site representatives helped her grow in faith. She began telling her friends about the Web site and now encourages others to spread God's truth via the Web. Campus posters and T-shirts got Kristi's attention and pointed her to what would become a life-changing online encounter.

### RESOURCE AVAILABILITY

Chi Alpha Campus Ministries recommends Evangelism Toolbox, <http://www.evangelism.com>, an online Yellow Pages of evangelism resources. Featured among Evangelism Toolbox resources is <http://www.InternetEvangelismDay.com>, a site to help believers design and conduct Internet outreach. It is packed with ideas from Web evangelism veterans and gives examples of ideas for student Internet outreach. There is plenty of excellent material on the Web to assist campus ministry efforts.

Internet evangelism cannot be a church's only evangelism tool. But it can complement a campus ministry and bring seekers and skeptics to the church's door, where the pastor can introduce them to his best friend, Jesus.

The Internet is a 21st-century Roman road, office water cooler, marketplace, backyard fence, and dorm or Greek house bull session. If it had existed in Paul's day, I suspect he would have used it for gospel outreach. Might God want pastors to do the same?



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# Pastoral Issues Surrounding Suicide

BY RICHARD D. DOBBINS

According to the Center for Disease Control, 30,622 Americans succeeded in taking their own lives in 2001. That same year, however, more than 120,000 attempted suicide. Among the adult population, most suicide attempts are made by women in their 20s and 30s. Those most likely to succeed, however, are white males in their 40s and 50s. One explanation for this is males use more violent means in their suicide attempts.

Even though suicide rates among teenagers have declined slowly since 1992, suicide is still the third highest cause of death among people 15 to 24 years of age. In 2001, nearly 4,000 young people committed suicide (86 percent were male), and 5,393 Americans older than age 65 took their lives (85 percent were male).<sup>1</sup> By multiplying these

numbers several times pastors can realize how many families in their churches and communities can be affected by this heartbreaking crisis.

## BIBLE SUICIDES

Suicide is not foreign to those who study the Bible. The most famous examples of suicide in Scripture are those of Saul, Samson, and Judas. A careful look at these stories reveals the motivation for suicide to be different in each case.

For Saul, the humiliation of military defeat was too great for him to bear. He chose to fall on his own sword rather than be captured and put to death by his enemies.

For Samson, taking his own life was his way of compensating for compromising himself with Delilah. He considered this a small price to pay for bringing down the temple of Dagon on the Philistines. Remember, Scriptures say he killed more Philistines in his death than he did in his life.

Judas, who betrayed Jesus, is the most famous suicide in the Bible. Suicide was Judas' way of dealing with the overwhelming guilt he experienced for taking 30 pieces of silver in exchange for betraying his Lord with a kiss. Rather than face his Lord as Peter did following his denial of Christ, Judas hanged himself.

These biblical examples indicate the many different motivations driving people to suicide. Only God knows the weight to give these motivations in the final judgment of the person who committed suicide. A wise pastor will not assume this role.

A pastor is expected to deal with suicide-related issues from two different perspectives. First, there are people threatening to take their lives who need pastoral protection from themselves. Other than “his only begotten son” (John 3:16, KJV), life is the greatest gift God has given.

Second, the families of people who took their own lives need the pastor’s prayers, comfort, and emotional support.

## PROTECTING SUICIDAL PEOPLE

Sooner or later, nearly every pastor will be called on to give pastoral care to people in his congregation who have experienced a suicide. Several years ago I was discussing teenage suicide in a seminar when one pastor expressed his need for help in dealing with both of these perspectives. Here are the questions he asked:

- How can a pastor know when a person is going to commit suicide?
- Are there any reliable indicators?
- Is it true people who talk about suicide seldom commit suicide?
- Is the person who threatens suicide simply asking for help?
- What should a pastor say to someone who has lost a family member to suicide?

As one might suspect, a week before this pastor came to the seminar a young person from his congregation had taken her life. He had talked with her, prayed with her, and felt she had experienced real deliverance from her troubling situation. Imagine how shocked he was to learn the day after they had talked she took her life.

## PREVENTING SUICIDE

There is no way to eliminate the possibility someone might take his life. Well-informed families, however, can limit the possibility by taking timely action. Here are some suggestions I gave this pastor.

Do not believe the myth that people who talk about committing suicide seldom do it. The fact is many people who commit suicide do talk about it.

## Sooner or later, nearly every pastor will be called on to give pastoral care to people in his congregation who have experienced a suicide.

Most people think suicidal thoughts at some time during their lives, and they may share these thoughts with their families and friends. Healthy people, however, do not entertain these thoughts for long. On the other hand, those who do take their own lives dwell on suicidal thoughts and often share these thoughts with their families and friends. Unfortunately, uninformed people may not take these remarks seriously.

If a person begins talking about not wanting to live anymore, get him to his family doctor or a trained mental health professional who knows how to assess suicidal risk. Even those who are trained to evaluate suicidal patients find these evaluations challenging and difficult. A pastor should not rely on his own judgment.

For example, once a person has made the decision to take his own life, he often appears to be less anxious and depressed. Unfortunately, family members may perceive this apparent improvement in their loved one’s mood means the threat has passed.

The apparent improvement results from no longer being in conflict over the decision;

the person has made up his mind. He will commit suicide. He feels he can no longer endure the misery of life. He may not want to die, but he sees death as the only way of relieving the pain of his present misery. Being able to anticipate the end of his misery brings relief.

A competently trained mental health professional is not likely to miss this observation. Among other things, he will want to know:

- How often does the person think about suicide?
- Does the person have a plan for committing suicide?
- What has kept him from committing suicide?

People who have planned how they will commit suicide and do not have a good reason for not committing suicide are most at risk.

If a person’s talk of suicide is simply a cry for help, counseling is recommended. When this is the case, it is important the counselor is a Christian since the underlying issues are often more spiritual than psychological.

However, if a person is considered at risk for suicide, a doctor will want to hospitalize him for his own protection. Pastors need to support this decision. The suicidal person may strongly protest hospitalization, but later will be grateful to God for a family who cared enough to ignore his protest and provide him the protection he needed.

## OTHER MYTHS ABOUT SUICIDE

*1. Suicide runs in families.* In certain families there may be a history of suicide. This history may unconsciously suggest suicide is a means of coping with life’s overwhelming moments. Pastors need to assure people that suicide is not genetic in origin.

*2. People who talk about suicide never commit suicide.* This myth has been debunked. Threats of suicide should never be ignored, even when these threats appear manipulative.



Every threat of suicide needs to be given serious consideration. In most instances, this means the threat should be professionally evaluated.

3. *Suicide happens without warning.* Careful studies of events leading up to a person's suicide reveal this is seldom, if ever, true. Usually there are several warnings given to those close to the victim. Because these warnings are often disguised, families and friends need to learn to recognize them.

A father took his golf clubs to his son's home and gave them to him. "Here, Son," the father said, "you may as well have these. I will not be needing them anymore." Unfortunately, the son was so excited about getting the golf clubs he did not hear the suicidal warning his father had given in this gesture. Two days later, his father killed himself.

4. *People who take their own lives are fully intent on dying.* In most cases, nothing could be farther from the truth. Most people who commit suicide do not want to stop living; they only want to alleviate their pain. At that moment the overwhelming pain of living seems intolerable, and they want to escape it.

5. *Once a person is suicidal, he will always be suicidal.* The chronically suicidal person is rare. This is evidenced by the fact few people who escape a serious suicide attempt ever try to take their lives again.

6. *Improvement in a person's mood after a suicidal crisis means the risk of suicide is over.* This is one of the most dangerous myths about suicide because the opposite is true.

The apparent improvement often means the person is no longer carrying on a mental battle over whether or not to commit suicide. He has already chosen a method and set a time.

Making this decision has resolved the person's ambivalence making him less anxious and depressed. The person appears to have improved. However, what looks like improvement to the uninformed person automatically alerts

the mental health professional to a dangerous escalation of suicidal risk.

7. *Suicide occurs more frequently among the rich than it does among the poor.* The fact is suicide cuts rather equitably across socio-economic boundaries.

8. *The most common myth is all suicidal persons are mentally ill.* Although suicidal people usually feel hopeless and depressed, most do not suffer from severe mental illness. This explains why it is important to protect at-risk suicidal persons from themselves. Once most people survive a suicide attempt, they never try again. But suppose a person succeeds in taking his life. What can be said to comfort his family?

## CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF SUICIDE

Institutionally, the church's theological perspective on suicide can be traced to the 4th century. Until then, Christianity made no formal link between suicide and sin. During this time, however, excessive martyrdom moved St. Augustine to categorically reject suicide. He defined suicide as a crime because it involved killing without any provision for repentance.

## Only God knows the weight to give these motivations in the final judgment of the person who committed suicide. A wise pastor will not assume this role.

St. Thomas Aquinas later identified suicide as a mortal sin because it usurped God's power over life and death. The 16th Council of Toledo in A.D. 693, decided to excommunicate any person who attempted suicide, but this view was later modified.

For the Christian, the fear of going to hell still remains a strong deterrent against committing suicide. This fear often rules out suicide as an option for desperate Christians, and a wise counselor will not remove it.

What about the eternal state of a person who commits suicide? For a Calvinist, this poses few, if any, problems. However, among Armenians there is great concern over this issue.

Surviving members of a suicide victim's family may ask their pastor: "Since my loved one took his life, is he in heaven or hell?"

Since the moral circumstances of each victim's death are unique, the honest answer to that question is, "I do not know."

An ambiguous answer, however, will not bring much comfort to the victim's family. When I was pastoring, I responded to this question by saying, "Your loved one is now in the arms of Someone who loves him even more than you do. Why not leave him there? Believe that our loving God will not only deal with your loved one justly, but mercifully." Such an answer avoids meaningless speculation, reaffirms God's love for the victim, and respects the sovereignty of God. ■



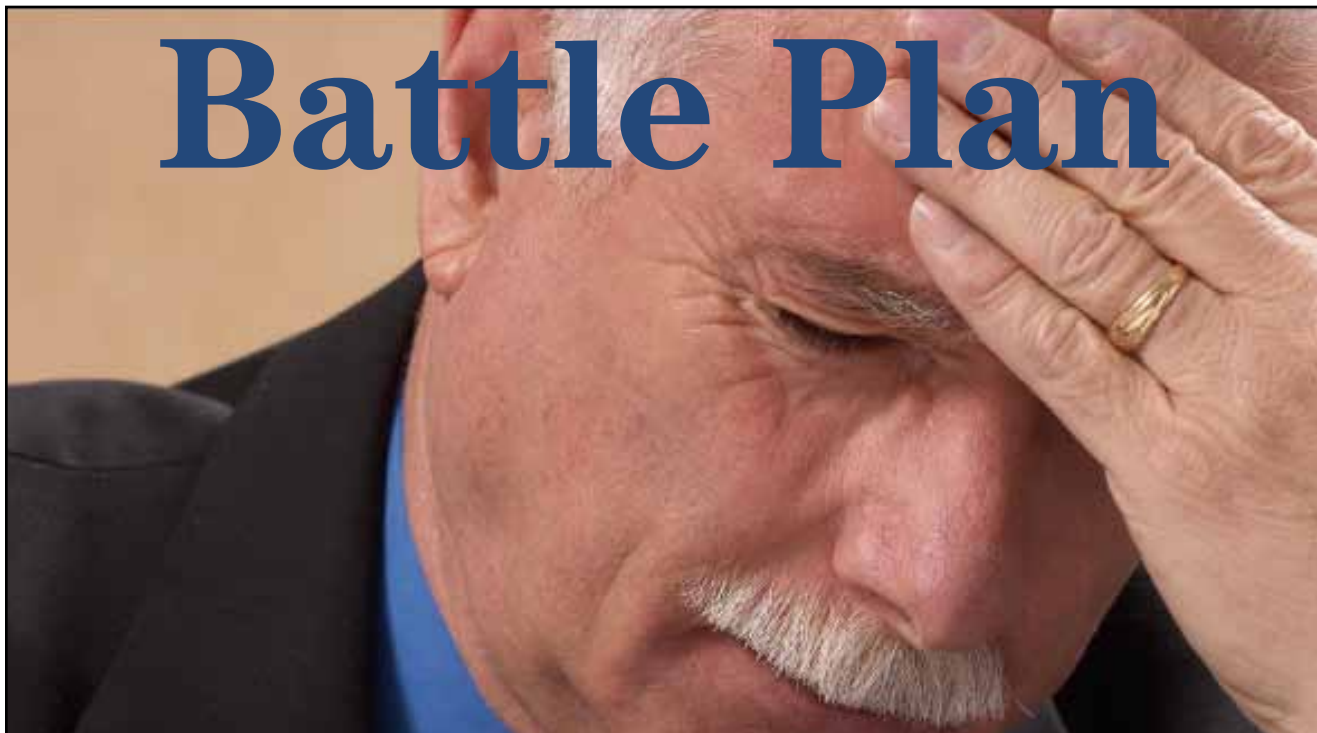
**RICHARD D. DOBBINS, Ph.D.**, is a clinical psychologist and founder and clinical director of EMERGE Ministries, Akron, Ohio. His book, *Invisible Imprint: What Others Feel When in Your Presence*, published by VMI Publishers, Sisters, Oregon, 2001, can be purchased through Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, Missouri (1-800-641-4310).

### ENDNOTE

1. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/suifacts.htm>



# Battle Plan



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BY JUDI BRADDY

**T**he weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Satan desires to destroy God's people, especially those in leadership. Every day pastors are on the front lines, fighting the battle and binding up wounds. Even pastors' homes become a target for Satan's fiery darts. As the war against rebellion in our child rages, it is imperative to remember that the enemy is not our child, our church, or even those who hurt us, whether deliberately or not. Our enemy is Satan, the evil accuser, who wants to discourage us from pursuing God and accomplishing His will. No wonder, despite the scriptural admonition not to be "weary in well doing" (Galatians 6:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:13, KJV), pastors frequently find themselves facing burnout.

For pastors struggling with seemingly

## Satan desires to destroy God's people, especially those in leadership.

out-of-control circumstances in the home, here is something more positive to ponder.

First, pastors are not alone. The apostle Peter's words give encouragement: "Resist him (the devil), standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings" (1 Peter 5:9).

Second, the battle is the Lord's. God is on the pastor's side. According to Scripture, more is happening in the heavenly realms than pastors can possibly see or know (1 Corinthians 2:6-16).

Third, Christians need to actively participate in spiritual warfare. God's Word provides a detailed diagram to prepare Christians for battle.

Here is the fighting formula found in Ephesians 6:12-18 from a vicar's-eye view.

### RECOGNIZE THE REAL ENEMY

"For our struggle," Paul writes, "is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (verse 12).

This verse reminds me of a bumper sticker I once saw: "Just because we're paranoid, it doesn't mean they're not out to get us."

Pastors have a real enemy who desires to harm them. Rather than being paranoid, pastors need to be prepared. Paul begins by identifying the enemy because to battle effectively there must be no confusion about who the enemy is. In the heat of battle, this is crucial. Whatever circumstances pastors are dealing with they need

to remember that their family and church are not their enemies, nor are those who intentionally or unintentionally hurt them. Our enemy is Satan. He wants to discourage and defeat pastors from pursuing God and accomplishing His will. Satan will find ways to come against pastors physically, mentally, and emotionally. At those times, pastors must protect themselves spiritually. Their families depend on it, as well as those they influence through ministry.

## DRESS FOR SUCCESS

“Therefore put on the full armor of God,” Paul says, “so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand” (verse 13).

Notice that Paul wrote “when” the day of evil comes, not “if” it comes. Every pastor will have days that seem incredibly diabolic, even when he has done everything

## When pastors are fighting a constant battle on the home front, this business of doing good can wear them to a frazzle.

he knows to do. On these days, he tries his best to stand his ground and may even feel blessed to be standing at all. How does a pastor stay on his feet? By doing what his mother taught him. Before a pastor goes out the door in the morning, he needs to be dressed right.

## BUCKLE UP FOR SAFETY

“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place” (verse 14).

There is a distinct difference between standing weak-kneed and wobbly, and standing firm. Ephesians 6 seems to indicate that standing firm requires tightening the belt of truth.

Someone once said that truth is always its own best defense. In other words, if pastors are serving God, they do not need to worry about what people may do. In the confusion of battle, however, the lines may become blurry. No proper pastor would deliberately do anything dishonest, but many may be tempted to compromise for the sake of peace. Pastors need to know how far they can bend without breaking God’s law if they are to communicate it clearly to their families and congregations.

Buckle up. Know God’s Word. When the belt of truth keeps a pastor’s spiritual pants up, he is not so apt to stumble on the path of righteousness.

How does a pastor keep the breastplate of righteousness in place? By checking daily to ensure his relationship with the Lord has not changed. Should he discover a change in relationship that causes his armor to not fit properly, it is critical he make immediate adjustments in his walk with God. It is important that the breastplate of righteousness be in place because it is the only piece of armor guarding his heart.

## PLUNGE FEET FIRST INTO THE FRAY

Now that pastors are standing firm, Paul draws attention to their feet: “and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace” (verse 15).

A couple of years ago, I was invited to speak at a Mother’s Day service at a large church. Using Proverbs 22:6, I talked about what I call the “time-released principle” of Christian training. The seeds parents plant in their children, like physical seeds,

do not always bloom in the time or way parents expect. One illustration I used was a brief but emotional reference to my own children.

After the service, a lady approached me. “I wanted to tell you,” she said with a shy smile, “that you have beautiful feet.”

I looked down, assuming she was complimenting my shoes. Then she continued. “You know the Scripture: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news’ (Isaiah 52:7; Romans 10:15). I needed some good news today. You gave me hope.” Then she said again, “You have beautiful feet.”

It was the best compliment I have ever received; one I will never forget.

No matter what a pastor’s circumstances are, he must be ready to carry the gospel of peace to others. From his own struggles come words that may encourage someone else — even if pastors have days like I do when they must keep reminding themselves to put one beautiful foot in front of the other.

## HOIST UP THE FIREWALL OF FAITH

“In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (verse 16).

Some days the fiery darts fly fast and furious. A pastor approaching burn-out may have this thought searing his spirit: *I am not sure I have enough faith for this*. Is there a way to measure faith? If Christians could, would it still be faith?

Elton Trueblood said, “Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservation.” My husband observes that most people ask for more faith before they have used the faith they already have. Even a mustard seed will not grow until planted in the dirt.

## MAKE EVERY DOUBT A P.O.W.

“Take the helmet of salvation and



the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (verse 17).

If Satan can cause people to doubt their salvation, then defeat is imminent. Can this also happen to ministers? Perhaps, if they entertain thoughts like these long enough: *Do you see what your kid is doing? From whom did he learn that? How can you call yourself a Christian, much less a minister?* To plant doubt, the enemy needs to get inside the pastor's head.

One of the enemy's greatest battlefields is the fertile soil of our minds. The apostle Paul suggested pastors take few prisoners of war: "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God," he instructs, "and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Pastors know they belong to God. They must demolish doubt and make POWs of every disobedient thought.

Should pastors ever be in danger of losing the battle for their minds, they need to pull out the Sword. God's Word applied in the Spirit's strength will defeat every devilish maneuver. It worked for Jesus, and it will work for pastors.

## PRAY IN DOLBY STEREO

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints" (verse 18).

Prayer is the weapon pastors can use any time, any place. Why is prayer sometimes the last weapon pastors draw? Maybe pastors do not know what to say, or they feel like a scratched CD, repeating the same pathetic plea. Maybe Satan has convinced them that their prayers are not working.

Pastors need to absorb Paul's pep talk to the Ephesians. Ministers are not praying alone. They are praying in Dolby Stereo. Pastors' prayers can be inspired and directed by the Holy Spirit. Paul said to pray at all times and in all ways. Pastors can pray about whatever comes to their mind. Then they need to be alert, not only for the enemy's rustle, but also for the faintest whisper from heaven.

Remember to pray for others.

"Lord, Your Word says the battle belongs to You. We claim that promise right now. We come against the enemy of our souls by arming ourselves with the

## Someone once said that truth is always its own best defense.

knowledge of Your Word. We do not want to duel through another day without Your protective armor. Whatever the enemy launches our way, help us defend our ground. We read the last chapter and we know who wins. Help us fight like conquerors and claim victory in the name of the King. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen."

Pastors are in this battle together. Ministers must determine to focus their energy on the real enemy, arming themselves daily with the weapons divinely designed for Satan's defeat.

## SEEK A SOLID STRATEGY

If pastors have a theme Scripture, it must be Galatians 6:9: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Paul was telling pastors to keep going. There is much to do and much to be gained if pastors hold out to the end. But when pastors are fighting a constant battle on the home front, this business of doing good can wear them to a frazzle. It is then that pastors may need to consider stepping off the battlefield long enough to seek a solid and objective strategy. ■

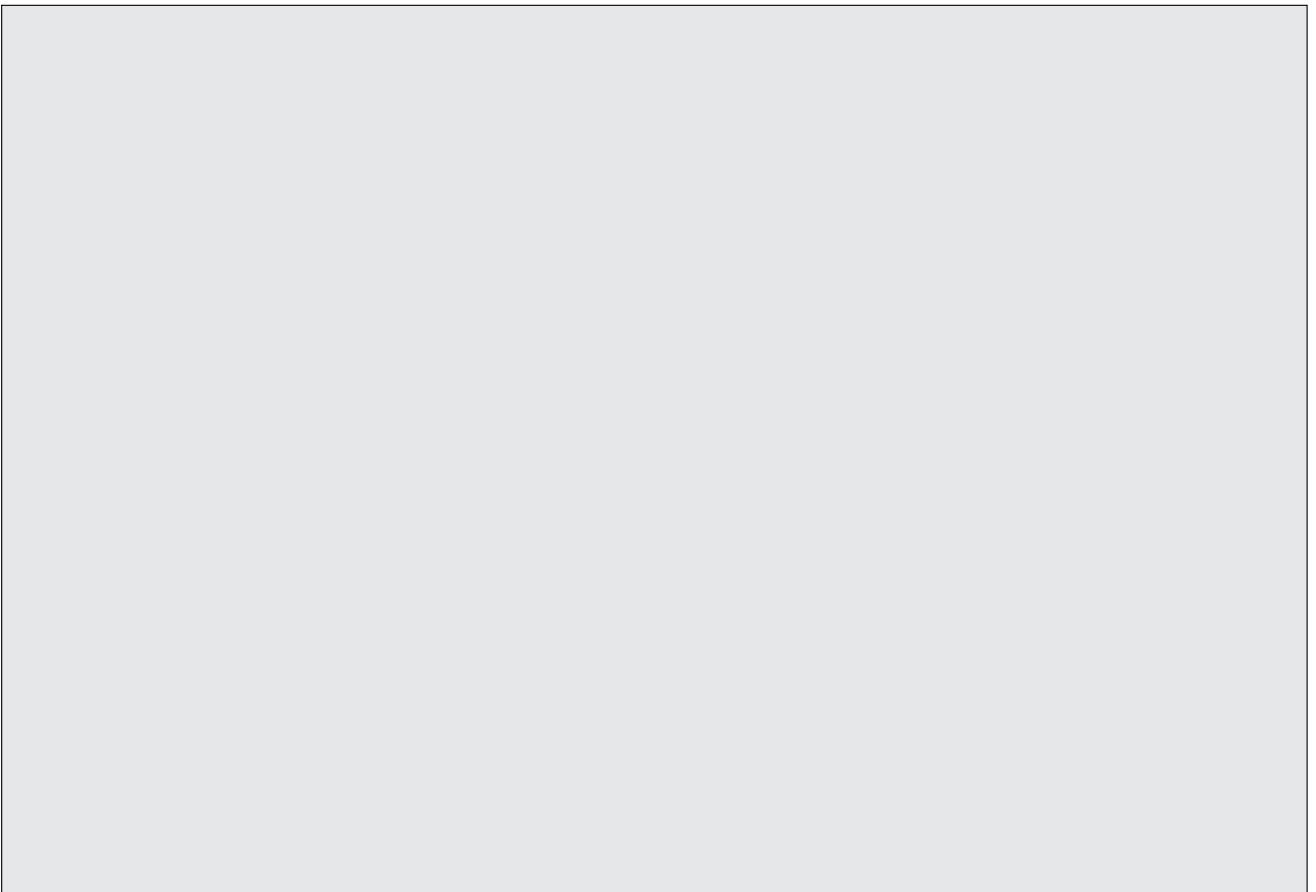
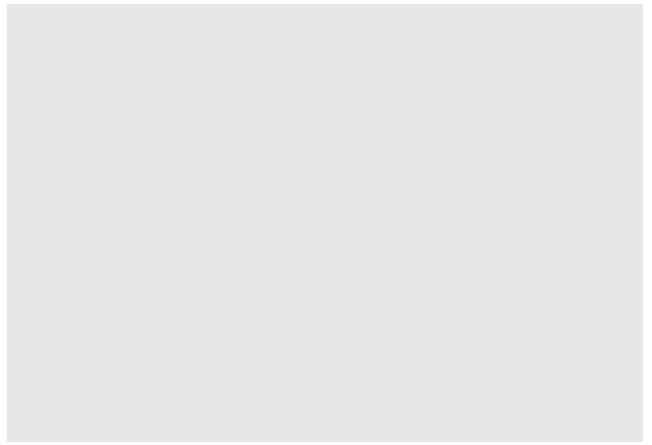
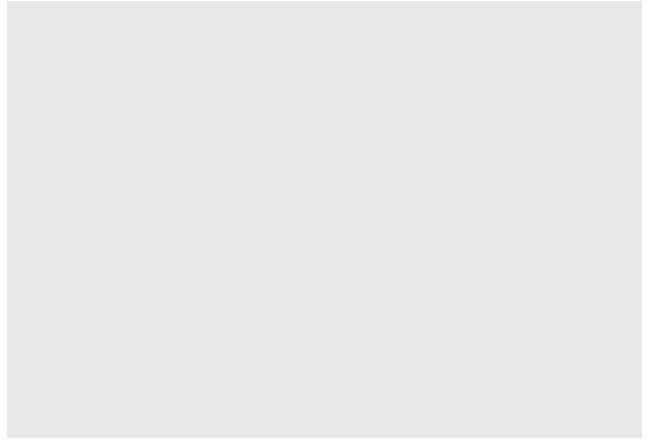
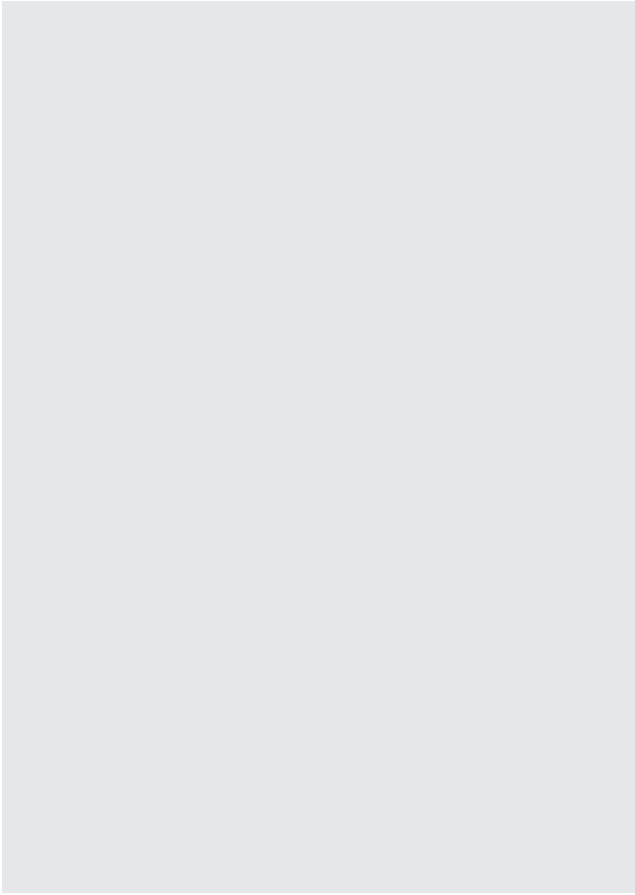
## COMING NEXT QUARTER

The next issue of *Enrichment* will contain a final article by Judi on the benefits of seeking Christian counsel entitled, "Hanging Between Heaven and Help."



**JUDI BRADDY** is a writer, motivational speaker, and credentialed minister. This article was adapted from her book, *Prodigal in the Parsonage: Encouragement for Ministry Leaders Whose Child Rejects Faith*. For more information about her writing and speaking, visit her Web site at <http://www.judibraddy.com> or contact her by e-mail at [judibraddy@aol.com](mailto:judibraddy@aol.com).





# When Money Woes

**D**o you remember the excitement of receiving your first paycheck? I was 15 years old and had worked for 3 days taking inventory for a local plumbing supply company. The total of my first check was about \$35. I was thrilled to get it. I tithed on it, too.

Those were the good old days. Income was not foremost on my mind and any amount of money was fun to have. But time and life definitely change one's view.

Money woes can create real pain, especially for ministers who feel their decisions to serve in full-time ministry have cost them financially. Perhaps they have noticed friends who have big salaries, fat retirement portfolios, and few financial issues to wrestle with — or so it seems. Mounting financial problems might even cause some pastors to wonder how God could let them get into such a mess. In fact, financial struggles rank high on the list of why pastors and other church employees leave full-time ministry.

If this describes your story, what should you do? These five R's may lift up your woeful outlook:

## REMEMBER YOUR CALL

In 1977, I was a junior math major in college wrestling with the decision to enter the ministry. One day, the Lord spoke to my heart, clearly, vividly, and out of the blue. Suddenly, I sensed His clear call to preach. I knew, however, that this choice would probably mean a lower salary. (I was preparing for a career in computer science.) Yet, I had a sense that God would provide for my needs financially, physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

This conviction has led me through dark times. His grace has always been sufficient. With each challenge, God has provided for my family and me. If God has called you, He will provide for you.



PHOTOS.COM

# Get You Down

BY KREGG R. HOOD

## REVIEW THE FRUIT FROM YOUR MINISTRY

Ministry is not the only profession with a lower level of pay. I have friends and family members who are teachers, social workers, and police officers. One conviction that keeps them going is the knowledge that they are making a difference in people's lives. Ministry is even more significant because it provides daily opportunities to influence young people for eternity.

If you are tempted to brood over your lack of money, ask the Lord to bring to mind the people He has used you to touch for eternity. The positive perspective and deep satisfaction you discover will be priceless.

## REALIGN YOUR FINANCES

When money is tight, learn more about managing money. Balancing income and spending is a key issue, as important as picking the curriculum for your next series of Sunday School lessons. Here are some top financial skills to master, especially when you are on a tight budget.

Increase your income. Regardless of your income and expenses, the goal is to have more money left at the end of the month than when you started. This amount is your margin. There are only two ways to increase your margin: either increase your income or decrease your expenses (or both). In ministry, the options for making more money are limited. Sometimes you can ask for a raise or, if you're married, your spouse can find a job that helps cover more expenses. Perhaps your church will allow you to occasionally speak at seminars where you will receive an honorarium. Plus, don't forget about unexpected gifts of cash, rebates, or tax refunds. Anything that increases your income, even if small or irregular, can help create margin.

Decrease your expenses. First, eliminate unnecessary fees and penalties for paying bills or credit cards late, or overdrawing bank accounts. Think ahead and save hundreds of dollars each year. Next, look at your spending and see what can be cut or reduced. Lay out 2 months receipts and analyze every check, ATM withdrawal, and credit card charge. Some expenses are essential and others are discretionary. Also, notice that within those two groups, your expenses are either fixed (the same every month) or variable (different each time you shop). This means that every expense will fit into one of four categories:

- (1) essential and fixed;
- (2) essential and variable;
- (3) discretionary and fixed;
- (4) discretionary and variable

Start with the top priority expenses, essential and fixed (tithe, house or rent payment, taxes, etc.) and pay these first. Next, look at essential and variable expenses, and reduce or postpone as many of these as possible. For example, buy fewer groceries and clothes, lower utility bills, or drive fewer miles. Then, look at discretionary and fixed expenses: cable TV, cell phones, and some insurance policies. Know the differences between needs and wants. Keep only what you really need. Remind yourself that, as finances increase in the future, you can reconsider this decision. For now, your goal is to create margin. Finally, look at your discretionary and variable expenses. If you are like most Americans, you will see many ways to reduce, cut, and adjust. Stretch your dollars, because learning these skills prepares you for an increase in income (see Luke 16:11,12).

Plan all spending in advance. Impulse buying is incredibly dangerous. When people buy without thinking ahead of time, they spend much more money than they should. When shopping, resist the urge to buy anything you have not already decided to buy. If you see something you want (and believe you need), go home and think about it for a few days. Later, if this purchase still makes sense and will not blow your priorities, it might be a good buy. When you wait and let the buying impulse cool, you will often discover you do not really want (or need) the item in the first place. Or, if you want to make the purchase, it might now be on sale.

Curb your credit cards. If you can't pay your entire credit card bill each month, stop using it. Put it away. If necessary, lock it up. Credit cards should only be used for convenience and security. If credit card debt is strangling you, consider asking a reputable Christian credit counselor for advice and a plan. Plus, find a friend with a track record for wise spending and realistic budgeting. This person can encourage you and hold you accountable without becoming the financial police.

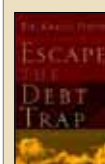
## RESIST THE ENEMY

"Our struggle is not against flesh and blood" (Ephesians 6:12). Satan will tell ministers they are financial failures (they are not); they will never be able to pay their bills (they can); their church members are stingy (they may be); or they are "out of God's favor" (hardly). Satan often tries to discourage pastors who do not own a bigger house, a nicer car, or better things than the people in their congregation. Satan also sells this faulty outlook to those in the church.

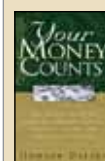
Pastors can praise God in advance for knowing and meeting their needs. They need to thank God ahead of time for delivering them from financial trial. Rebuke Satan's efforts by quoting Scripture. My favorite passages are Psalm 23:6; Matthew 6:33; Romans 8:28; Philippians 4:19; and Hebrews 11:5. Pastors need to express their convictions and exercise their faith. Satan's attacks will boomerang when ministers give God constant praise and persistent thanksgiving. These will cause Satan to flee (James 4:7).

## RESOURCES TO RESTORE FINANCIAL STRENGTH

These books can be ordered from AG Financial: <http://www.agfsg.org>.



*Escape the Debt Trap:  
Let the Lord Lead You  
Out* by Kregg Hood



*From Debt to Life: 10  
Proven Steps  
to Beat Credit  
Crisis and Build Finan-  
cial Freedom*  
by Kregg Hood  
*Your Money  
Counts* by Howard  
Dayton



**KREGG R. HOOD**, Springfield,  
Missouri

## REFOCUS YOUR EFFORTS

Pastors should not allow their feelings to stop them from taking action. They need to take their thoughts captive. Develop and use new financial skills to gain a foothold on a positive future. Pray God's peace will replace anxiety (Philippians 4:6,7). The problem with financial disillusionment is multifaceted: spiritual, mental, and financial. A minister needs to be candid about his situation and skills and the time it will take to improve his circumstances. God is on your side. As Psalm 23:6 promises, "Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life."

When money woes get you down, Remember, Review, Realign, Resist, and Refocus. As you persevere, He who is your ever-present help in time of need, will reach down and lift you up. ■



**Kregg R. Hood, Ed.D.**, is senior vice president, AG Financial, Springfield, Missouri.



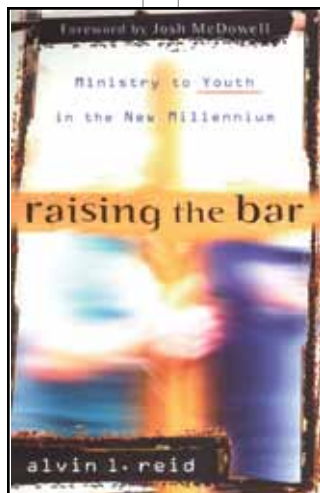
## RAISING THE BAR: MINISTRY TO YOUTH IN A NEW MILLENNIUM

Alvin L. Reid (Kregel, 195 pp., paperback)

Have you ever wondered how a powerful worship experience can complement powerful biblical preaching without overwhelming it? Are you ready to evaluate today's youth ministry? *Raising the Bar* scrutinizes both the successes and failures of student ministry.

In part one, Reid puts youth ministry to the test. Contemporary practice is evaluated through biblical teaching. *Raising the Bar* challenges youth leaders to treat students like emerging adults instead of children finishing childhood. Reid views adolescence as a myth, and he analyzes the millennial generation's positive characteristics. After reviewing the impact youth have had throughout history, youth leaders are challenged to assemble an army instead of entertaining students. Reid also examines the Jesus Movement and points out its benefits and problems.

In part two, Reid reinvents youth ministry using his own research, experience, and family to provide insight, biblical foundation, and practical application. He asserts that expository preaching is the best method to teach a biblically illiterate generation the eternal truths of God's Word. His view of expository worship is a new approach worth



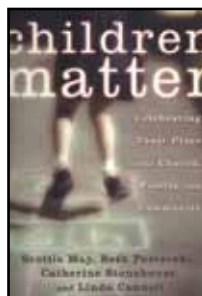
considering. Reid proposes more than theory. His examples have been tested, and he offers specific models. *Raising the Bar* is worth reading for the practical tips on prayer, teaching, worship, and principles for parents. —Reviewed by Stephen Pulis, Youth Alive, missionary development

coordinator, Springfield, Missouri.

## CHILDREN MATTER: CELEBRATING THEIR PLACE IN THE CHURCH, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Beth Posterski, et al., (Eerdmans, 374 pp., paperback)

Children's ministry is valued by today's church. Unfortunately, the church's focus on children may be more of a means to an end (entertaining children to attract them to church) than a true desire to reach and disciple them. *Children Matter*, however, balances entertainment and ministry. The book acknowledges the place children have in God's kingdom and discusses the value of investing in children's lives through discipleship. *Children Matter* gives insight into methods churches can use to attract families with children and minister to those children.



This excellent book is not only for the children's pastor, but can also be used by the senior pastor as a manual for evaluating the church's children's ministry — something often difficult to judge.

One weakness of the book seems to be an inherent negative view of published Sunday School curriculum. The book seems to suggest that curriculum has not changed, grown, modernized, or improved. More research into current Sunday School curricula (especially the new Radiant Life curriculum) may have helped balance the authors' views of Sunday School. As a whole, however, *Children Matter* is an excellent study of discipling children.

—Reviewed by David Boyd, director of Children's Ministries Agency/BGMC, Springfield, Missouri.

## BECOMING A HEALTHY TEAM: FIVE TRAITS OF VITAL LEADERSHIP

Stephen A. Macchia (Baker Books, 189 pp., paperback)

A developing trend in business and ministry leadership models places greater emphasis on team building. Stephen A. Macchia in *Becoming a Healthy Team* examines team development throughout the Bible and defines Christian ministry teams using 1 Corinthians 12.

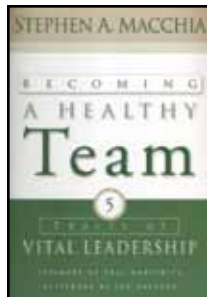
Macchia's definition for Christian ministry team is: "a manageable group of diversely gifted people who hold one another accountable to serve joyfully together for the glory of God by: 1) sharing a common mission, 2) embodying the loving message of Christ, 3) accomplishing a meaningful ministry, and 4) anticipating transformative results."

Drawing from numerous literary sources, Macchia explores team

development by presenting five common characteristics of healthy teams using the acrostic TEAMS: Trust, Empower, Assimilate, Manage, and Serve. Macchia explains the foundational importance of each trait and suggests practical tools ministry organizations can use to integrate these principles in their team-building systems.

*Becoming a Healthy Team* is a worthwhile resource for leaders working with team-oriented ministries.

Pastors will benefit from the practical information and examples given by Macchia. In addition, the book offers a team prayer and discussion questions following each chapter. These make the book an excellent training tool for existing and emerging ministry teams. —Reviewed by Craig Cunningham, connections pastor, Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri.



## CONTOURS OF CHRISTOLOGY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Richard N. Longenecker, ed., (Eerdmans, 345 pp., paperback)

This volume is an excellent antidote to a preacher's tendency to read only how-to-do-it ministry books. Without neglecting practical studies, pastors need to enhance their biblical and theological understanding and thereby put sturdier foundations under both their preaching and theology of ministry.

Longenecker has collected essays from prominent colleagues (Ben Witherington, I.H. Marshall, Ralph Martin, Ramsey Michaels, and others) that help the reader better understand the Christology of individual New

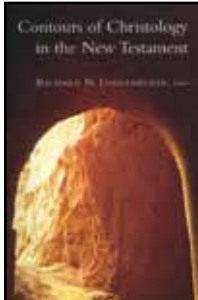
Testament books. Christology is "theological interpretation of the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth" (xii).

Divided into four parts, the essays address "The Setting," "Gospels and Acts," "Pauline Letters," and "Hebrews, Catholic Epistles, and Apocalypse." While "The Setting" is academic, the chapters thereafter provide crisp, informative studies of the unique ways New Testament writers viewed the Christ, providing wonderful enrichment for solid expository preaching.

Typically illuminating is Marshall's observation that in Luke's Gospel, "We might have thought that Jesus had the power and authority in himself as 'the Christ' and 'the Son of God.' But Luke stresses that He was empowered by the Spirit (cf. Acts 10:38)." Likewise helpful is Donald Hagner's tracing out of the high priesthood of Jesus in Hebrews to the point "that priest and offering have become one and the same!"

The pastor, preacher, or teacher who spices sermons and lessons with such insights will surely rise above the humdrum and mediocre.

—Reviewed by Edgar R. Lee, S.T.D., professor of spiritual formation and pastoral theology, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary.



## EXTREME CHURCH MAKEOVER: A BIBLICAL PLAN TO HELP YOUR CHURCH ACHIEVE UNITY AND FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Neil T. Anderson and Charles Mylander (Regal Books, 276 pp., hardcover)

Can a church experience a spiritual extreme makeover? Anderson and Mylander give an affirmative answer to this question.

The makeover is a setting your church free event. A six-step plan for implementing this makeover constitutes the core of the book. The plan uses the letters to the seven churches as a pattern (Revelation 2:1–3:22). However, the chapters about leadership types, balance of power, and the church's powerful connection to Christ are helpful preludes to understanding the event.

Churches and pastors going through major spiritual challenges or repeated cycles of conflict can benefit from this book. This book

presumes the reader has an understanding of spiritual warfare. Some may feel too much emphasis is placed on this aspect of the makeover.

However, most ministers in the daily struggle will recognize the hallmarks of this warfare. District leaders will identify with the discussion about churches that have experienced repetitive patterns of conflict.

Other books by the authors, such as *The Bondage Breaker* and *Victory Over Darkness* series, and *Steps to Freedom in Christ*, are frequently referenced. It is assumed the reader has read these books. This can be distracting if one is not familiar with them. Being unfamiliar with these books, however, will not keep one from benefiting from this book.

—Reviewed by Warren Bullock, Ph.D., senior pastor, Northwest Family Church, Auburn, Washington.



## GENERAL COUNCIL CREDIT UNION MOVES FORWARD WITH NAME CHANGE

General Council Credit Union members unanimously approved the credit union name change at their annual meeting and banquet held March 7, 2006, in Springfield, Missouri. The new name, Assemblies of God Credit Union, better represents the credit union's association and membership.

"The General Council Credit Union has had a stable and successful history serving the constituency of the Assemblies of God," James K. Bridges, treasurer of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, said. "It seemed appropriate to change the name to the Assemblies of God Credit Union, giving the ministry a nomenclature that best expresses its wider and broader dimensions of service to the entire constituency."

AGCU is a full-service, not-for-profit financial institution designed to meet the needs of individuals affiliated with the Assemblies of God. Membership is open to individuals who work at or attend college at any Assemblies of God affiliated organization, members of Assemblies of God churches in Greene and surrounding counties in Missouri, and extended family of current AGCU members.

Every member of AGCU is a part owner of the credit union. A volunteer board of directors, elected from its membership by its members, runs the credit union.

In 2005, AGCU added many new services, including online banking, BillPay, gift cards, church credit cards, business credit cards, certificates of deposit, and new mortgage products in its lending department. AGCU offers great savings rates, low-lending rates, and personal service.

"The Assemblies of God Credit Union has served this Fellowship with distinction for more than 50 years," Thomas Trask, general superintendent of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, said. "Its future has never been brighter."

## GLOBAL UNIVERSITY RECEIVES TOP HONORS

Global University won top honors for one of its distance learning courses at the annual Association of Continuing Christian Education Schools and Seminaries convention in San Diego, California. ACCESS holds a competition for best course of the year during its January meeting. Global University's Berean School of the Bible won in the Online Non-Degree Course of the Year category for its Prison Epistles course. Prison Epistles is one of the new Berean

courses developed to fulfill recent changes to ministerial credential requirements. Prison Epistles was written by LeRoy Bartel, and edited, designed, and published by Global University staff.

Wade Pettenger, Global University's director of Internet Development, said, "It's a joy to know that our online resources are helping students from many different backgrounds and walks of life to reach their goals." President Ron Iwasko added, "Our determination is to develop and produce only top-quality study materials and programs. These awards are a welcome affirmation that we are doing just that."

In addition, in the Print Non-Degree Course of the Year category, the Berean Ministerial Internship course, written by Michael Clarensau, won runner-up honors. This course is different from other Berean courses because it requires the student to work with a mentor, and a portion of the grade is based on the mentor's evaluation.

In the Graduate Print Course of the Year category, Global University's Islam and Animism, by Lazarus Chakwera, also took the runner-up position. Chakwera is general superintendent of the Malawi Assemblies of God. The graduate courses are developed for a worldwide audience, and most of Global University's postbaccalaureate students learn in graduate studies centers strategically located throughout the world.

Global University is the endorsed Assemblies of God distance-education school and offers undergraduate and graduate degrees. Berean School of the Bible is a nondegree program that trains men and women for ministry. One-third of all Assemblies of God ministers and half of all new ministers receive their training through Berean.

For more information about Global University, visit <http://www.discovorgu.com> or <http://www.thenewberean.com>.

## GLOBAL UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES HEROES OF THE FAITH WEB SITE

The Heroes of the Faith Web site is a kid-friendly, safe way for children to have fun on the Web without being exposed to harmful or objectionable content. Developed by Global University, the new Web site combines the popular avenue of comics with the Bible to present the gospel in a new and relevant way. The comic series was written and illustrated by Faith and Jerry



McCollough, missionaries with the Assemblies of God.

The new Web site serves as a promotional and evangelistic



tool to reach people for Christ by providing the gospel through a medium that is not only popular, but also fun. Wade Pettenger, Global University's director of Internet Development, said, "I definitely see this as an evangelistic tool that could reach many different people. I see it appealing to church kids, nonchurch kids, and people of all ages."

The comics are also available in print through Global University. Translated into several languages, these comics have been widely distributed around the world. Global University missionaries believe the Web site will lead to an even wider distribution.

The Heroes of the Faith Web site became available to the public in February. In the future, Global University plans more additions to the Web site, including adding other languages. "As time goes on we hope to expand this into an even more developed children's Web site where the comics are just one of the many things we will offer," Pettenger said. Global University hopes to create more ways to reach children online and provide them with even more Internet resources. Paul Myers, designer of the Web site, said, "This could be the catalyst to an entire children's network."

For more information, visit <http://www.theheroesofthefait.com>.

## GPH RELEASES NEW CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

GPH's newest release, *HighPoint*, mixes large-group fun and small-group relationships. Children travel to destinations where they explore the character traits every parent wants their children to learn. Then small groups help children apply the truth to their own lives.

*HighPoint* sessions build on themselves, but each session intentionally stands on its own allowing visitors to fit in as easily as those who have been attending sessions for months.

Plus, *HighPoint* works in any size church. Children's pastors and volunteers are thrilled with how easy *HighPoint* is to use.

Check out *HighPoint* today at <http://www.gph.org/highpoint>.

## TEACHING TITHING AND PERSONAL FINANCE MADE EASY

*Managing God's Resources*, an AG Perspectives brochure, can help pastors teach their congregations biblical principles for finances. *Managing God's Resources* is an excellent tool

for sharing key issues about sacrificial giving, tithing, credit, and responsible debt, and realizing a Christian's important role in building God's kingdom. *AG Perspectives* brochures can be used in Sunday School classes and small groups. They are also designed to fit church information racks.

*Managing God's Resources* (item 34TL4225) cost 95 cents for a pack of 10. Higher quantity discounts are available. To order, call 1-800-641-4310 or visit <http://www.GospelPublishing.com>.



## KEY BEARERS' GOAL TO REACH 100,000 INMATES PER WEEK

Key Bearers has sponsored up to 14,000 copies per week of *Today's Pentecostal Evangel* to more than 600 correctional institutions across the United States. But now there is an opportunity to lead many more inmates to Christ.



"Our immediate goal is to provide as many as 22,000 *Evangelists* each week to those behind bars," says *Evangel* Editor in Chief Hal Donaldson. "Since these magazines are readily passed along in prisons, we can easily reach 100,000 inmates on a weekly basis with the gospel."

More than 1,100 prisoners made documented decisions to follow Jesus Christ through the ministry of the *Evangel* last year. The nearly \$1.3 million donated to Key Bearers since 1996 has supplied more than 5.6 million copies of the English-language *TPE* and the quarterly Spanish *Evangelio Pentecostal Hoy*.

"I'd like to express my appreciation to the hundreds of individuals and churches involved in Key Bearers over the years and to those responding to the recent appeals," says Donaldson. "We are believing God for more churches to become involved in this vital ministry. Most of our churches have correctional facilities in close proximity to their communities. This is an opportunity to reach behind the bars and touch the nation's 2.2 million incarcerated."

Churches can join the Key Bearers ministry by calling Light for the Lost at 1-800-988-0292 or by visiting the *Today's Pentecostal Evangel* secured Web site and clicking on the KB logo.







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Butte, Nebraska

**Wheeler W. Anderson**  
Overland Park, Kansas

**Wilfredo Baez, Sr.**  
Reading, Pennsylvania

**Virgil W. Baldwin**  
Springfield, Missouri

**Frances L. Barron**  
Bethany, Missouri

**Lloyd Bates**  
Spring, Texas

**George M. Bingham**  
Topeka, Kansas

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|                                               |                         |                                         |                   |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------|
| AGCU .....                                    | outside back cover, 140 | Global University.....                  | 85, 140           |
| AG Information Series.....                    | 91, 141                 | HelpLine.....                           | 131               |
| AGTS .....                                    | 13                      | HighPoint Curriculum.....               | 61, 141           |
| AG U.S. Missions.....                         | 69, 119                 | International Bible Society .....       | 123               |
| Assemblies of God Credit Union ....           | outside back cover, 140 | James River Assembly.....               | 75                |
| Asia Pacific Media Ministries .....           | 123                     | L3 Student Ministries Conference.....   | 75                |
| Berean School of the Bible .....              | 85, 140                 | Life Publishers .....                   | 83                |
| Bible Alliance.....                           | inside front cover      | Ministerial Enrichment Office .....     | 131               |
| Carpenter Bus Sales .....                     | 127                     | National Evangelist Office .....        | 54                |
| Center for Ministry to Muslims .....          | 2                       | National Youth Ministries .....         | 5, 35, 67, 77     |
| Central Bible College.....                    | 23                      | National Youth Workers Conference ..... | 13                |
| Christian Higher Education .....              | 135                     | Office of Public Relations.....         | 91, 141           |
| ConnectionPower .....                         | 55                      | Prayer & Fasting.....                   | 16                |
| Counseling Referral Service.....              | 135                     | Project Rescue.....                     | 43                |
| Divine & Associates.....                      | 125                     | ReachAmerica Coalition.....             | 69                |
| Dream06 Conference.....                       | 5                       | Revista de enriquecimiento .....        | 135               |
| Empower 2006: Back to Pentecost.....          | 54                      | The Seven Project .....                 | 35                |
| <i>Enrichment journal</i> .....               | 107, 143                | Southeastern University .....           | 67                |
| Eurasia .....                                 | 127                     | Stevens Worldwide Van Lines .....       | 135               |
| the fifty two.com.....                        | 77                      | Steward Church Insurance .....          | inside back cover |
| Focus on the Family Pastoral Ministries ..... | 27                      | Sunday School.....                      | 115               |
| Gospel Publishing House .....                 | 61, 141                 | Transitions .....                       | 119               |



# So Why Youth Ministries?

BY TOM GREENE

**M**y 30-year ministry primarily committed to teens has prompted me to ask “Why?” more times than one can imagine. Many of my colleagues cannot comprehend why a man “at your age” is still involved in youth ministries. My reply is: “God’s will.” A review of these three decades provides many answers. Interesting enough, these same answers could be offered as reasons youth ministry should be priority in every church.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Experts vary in their statistics and opinions, but the overwhelming consensus is up to 90 percent of young people who do not accept Christ as Savior before their high school graduation never will. How can churches continue to trust children’s and youth ministries to inexperienced workers when the Great Commission is best fulfilled in the early years of life? Our students must be priority.

Too many of our leaders have excused themselves from this opportunity and responsibility of the local church. Leaders often say, “We do not have any young people.” The nearby schools and neighborhoods are our opportunity and our responsibility. Just because teens are not in our church does not mean they should remain outside our influence.

## THE TRAINING

Solomon wrote: “Train a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6). I learned firsthand from many years of youth ministry that a child trained to be a giver would be a giver for a lifetime.

Train children through BGMC and Speed the Light today and your missions budget will be blessed for many years.

Many of today’s missionaries were yesterday’s AIMers. Today’s teens are tomorrow’s preachers and deacons. A scary thought? It will be if pastors do not commit to their mandate to train a child in the way he should go.

## THE HARVEST

The reward of this 30-year investment in youth ministry is greater than can be expressed on paper. Seed sown in students’ lives when combined with the work of

**Many of today’s missionaries were yesterday’s AIMers. Today’s teens are tomorrow’s preachers and deacons.**

the Holy Spirit produces a great harvest when young adults become mature servants of our Lord.

At a recent district council banquet, four ministers reminded me of the harvest of youth ministries:

“I went with you and your wife on that AIM trip to Russia more than 10 years ago. I am going back as a fully appointed missionary.”

“You may not remember me. You spoke at my high school graduation. I am a church planter in this district.”

“I remember being in those preachers’ kids retreats. My husband and I are pastors now.”

“I grew up attending your camps every summer. I am a youth pastor taking my kids to camp this summer.”

I did not plan for the day when I would be a grizzly veteran of youth ministry, but the greatest thrill has been in the harvest.

## SO WHY YOUTH MINISTRIES?

Youth ministry was never an option. There is too much *opportunity* to impact lives that are still open and searching for God’s best in life. The *training* can have value for those who cannot remind you that, “We tried that in 1962.” And the *harvest* is a gift that keeps on giving.

Are you still involved in youth ministries after all these years? We are ... and should be. ■

**TOM GREENE** is former Assemblies of God national youth director. He now serves as director of Men’s Ministries and Light for the Lost, Springfield, Missouri.