



Youth Ministry Academy

Youth Ministry Training

01

Introducing
Youth
Ministry

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Lesson One: Introducing Youth Ministry

Lesson Introduction

Session Overview

- Introducing Youth Ministry: Ministry Method Map
- Youth Ministry Method: Practical Theology Exercise
- Map of Youth Ministry the Four C's of Ministerial Training
- Outlining the Book: Identifying Strengths and Challenges

Learner Objectives

At the end of this session you should:

- Possess preliminary knowledge concerning youth ministry
- Model the method of theological reflection in practical theology
- Understand the importance of the four Cs in youth ministry

Introduction

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

Lesson Body

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

Before you begin reading this module, take a minute to “answer” the following questions. Jot down your responses on a piece of paper, at least enough information you can check them later.

- *What do youth workers need to know about youth to make them good youth workers?*
- *Can you name three key personal traits essential for a youth worker?*
- *What is the difference between a Christian youth worker and a community youth-worker?*

Defining Youth

Entering into youth ministry brings a person into the very “heart” of the church. Young people represent not only the future of the church but also the congregation’s present “heartbeat.” Kenda Creasy Dean notes in her book, *Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church*, that youth often supply the kind of passion that gives life to the congregation. Youth provide fresh visions of what the church can accomplish for the Kingdom of God and youth display compassionate care for people that often challenge other members in the church to reach out as well. Youth also represent an emerging independence, the ability to be both weak and strong at any given moment. At times youth seem more fragile, like children, needing extreme protection and guidance. At other times, young adults demonstrate a kind of seasoned maturity

and resiliency that allows them to meet challenges more mature adults struggle to overcome. No longer fully dependent on adults, but not completely independent of adult guidance and support, youth provide a type of “semi-dependence” that allows them to exercise their gifts while relying on the guidance of others. Youth embody the term “relational.” In their most independent moments they still recognize the need to be in relationship with other people. In their weaker times, they recognize that relationships support their lives during tough moments.

Defining Youth Ministry

In one sense youth ministry, as ministry, seeks to help youth define the quality of their relationships through the Gospel, understood as holiness or Christ-likeness. Youth ministry focuses on work both for and with youth. Following the Apostle Paul’s confidence in Timothy we can say with confidence “¹²Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity (I Timothy 4:12, New International Version).” Youth ministry involves supporting youth in areas where they still depend on adult guidance, but also empowering youth to live out their own Christian lives to the fullness of their potential, in their witness, their lives, their loves, their faith and their purity.

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

Methods and Maps that Guide Youth Ministry

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

Practical Theology: A Method of Reflection

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

“Practical theology” describes both a domain within the broad field of theology as well as a particular method of theological reflection. When ministers use the term theology, they primarily describe a particular approach to exploring and talking about the nature and actions of God in the world. Christian theology begins with the assertion that God has been revealed in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Ministers, using

- 1) the resources found in scripture,
- 2) core Christian doctrines,
- 3) the history of the church and
- 4) the experiences of day-to-day Christian living,

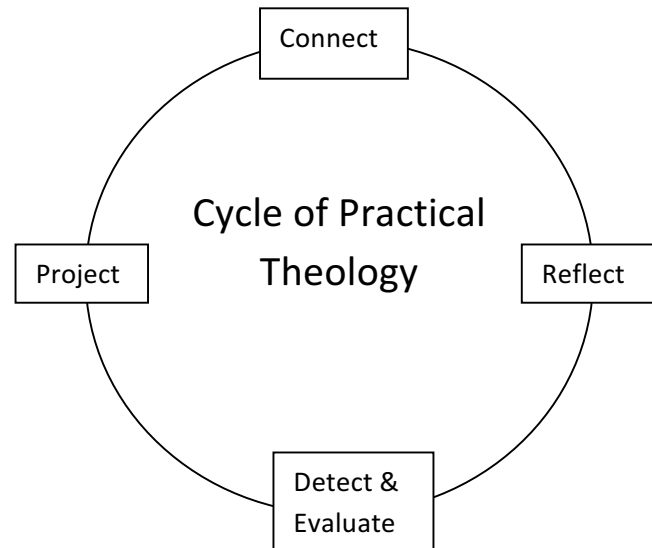
seek to name the grace of God, offer salvation through Jesus Christ and discern the movement of the Holy Spirit in the world. Over the years different specializations grew up around certain resources that inform our understanding of God and God’s work in the world. Different ministers and academic theologians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

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

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

faithful, approaches to ministry create even newer experiences that we can then connect, reflect, detect and project once more to create an even deeper more mature approach to our ministry.

Illustration: Cycle of Practical Theology



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

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

The Map of Youth Ministry Education the Four C's of Ministerial Training

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

- **Content**—Knowledge of the content of the Old and New Testaments, the theology of the Christian faith, and the history and mission of the Church is essential for ministry. Knowledge of how to interpret Scripture, the doctrine of holiness and our Wesleyan distinctives, and the history and polity of the Church of the Nazarene must be included in these courses.
- **Competency**—Skills in oral and written communication; management and leadership; finance; and analytical thinking are also essential for ministry. In addition to general education in these areas courses providing skills in preaching, pastoral care and counseling, in-depth biblical study (known as exegesis), worship, effective evangelism, biblical stewardship of life resources, Christian education and Church administration must be included. Graduation from a validated course of study requires the partnering of the educational provider and a local church to direct students in ministerial practices and competency development.
- **Character**—Personal growth in character, ethics, spirituality, and personal and family relationship is vital for the ministry. Courses addressing the areas of Christian ethics, spiritual formation, human development, the person of the minister, and marriage and family dynamics must be included.
- **Context**—The minister must understand both the historical and contemporary context and interpret the worldview and social environment of the culture where the Church witnesses. Courses that address the concerns of anthropology and sociology, cross-cultural communication, missions, and social studies must be included. (*Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, Section 424.3.)

The “big four” of Content, Competency, Character and Context describe the primary domains that guide not only ministry preparation but also life-long learning. When you think about the range of material covered under these domains you realize ministers, either dedicated lay leaders or clergy, can never master everything they need to know. Mastery is not the issue. Gaining basic competency should be the goal when we start ministry. We can then expand on our abilities throughout our ministry based on the wealth of knowledge God provides. Perhaps the key issue revolves around passion. Do we have the passion to these domains a focus for life-long study?

- When it comes to **Content**, do we have the passion to learn everything about the Christian faith that God has provided through scripture, doctrine, and Church history... particularly as they reveal God's vision of holiness?

- When it comes to **Competency**, do we have the passion to develop all the skills we need to guide congregations as faithful ministers or lay workers?
- When it comes to **Character** do we have the passion to allow God to shape and form our personal, moral, spiritual lives according to Christlikeness?
- When it comes to **Context**, do we have the passion to want to learn everything about the social/personal circumstances people live in so that we can lead and minister faithfully?

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

Outlining the Course: Identifying Strengths and Challenges

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

Overview of the Course

Context of Youth Ministry

1. Introducing Youth Ministry
2. Cultural and Social Influences in Youth Ministry
3. Psychological and Developmental Influences in Youth Ministry

Content of Youth Ministry

4. Biblical and Theological Foundations of Youth Ministry
5. History of Youth Ministry
6. Philosophical Foundations of Youth Ministry

Character of the Youth Worker

7. The Youth Worker’s Relationship with God
8. The Youth Worker’s Relationship with Others
9. The Youth Worker’s Relationship with the Body of Christ

Competency for Youth Ministry

10. Youth Ministry Discipleship—Worship
11. Youth Ministry Discipleship—Witness and Evangelism
12. Youth Ministry Discipleship—Nurture and Teaching
13. Youth Ministry Discipleship—Compassion and Service
14. Youth Ministry Discipleship—Community and Fellowship
15. Youth Ministry Discipleship—Simplicity and Retreat
16. Youth Ministry Shepherding—Offering Direction
17. Youth Ministry Shepherding—Providing Care
18. Youth Ministry Shepherding—Equipping Leaders
19. Youth Ministry Shepherding—Empowering Youth
20. Youth Ministry Craft—The Legacy of Long-Term Ministry

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

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

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

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

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

¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held

together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:11-16, NIV)

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

Application

Spend the week talking with at least five parents of youth. Ask them what they consider are their key concerns for their children and for other youth. What do they look for from a good youth worker? Write down a summary of your conversation.

Spend the week interviewing people in your church about what they believe youth workers need to know (content and context), be (character), or do (competency) in order to be faithful youth workers. Compare their observations with the overall plan for the class, what do they affirm as important for ministry? What seems to be missing? What does this exercise tell you about the church's expectations?

Select a particular experience in your ministry and "work through the cycle." Summarize the event in a paragraph. Reflect on the implications of the ministry event, reflect the implications and key observations and write down key thoughts in sentence form. Identify a scriptural passage or key theological doctrine that affirms or critiques your observations. Write another paragraph summary of this portion of connecting your ministry with the Christian faith. Finalize your exercise by suggesting one or two action steps you can take the next time to make your ministry more faithful.

Review the Table of Content, identify areas you feel comfortable with and areas that you feel challenged to learn more.

Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor:

- 1) *What was the major influence in your life that called you into youth ministry?*
- 2) *What key knowledge do we need to possess before we work with youth as leaders?*
- 3) *Name three basic skills or abilities necessary for ministry to or with youth?*
- 4) *Does any of this knowledge or these skills change if we move from one ministry setting to another?*

Review your answers with your mentor and ask how many responses focus on the supporting youth (particularly in areas where they are not yet fully self-reliant) and how many answers focus on empowering youth? Which of these answers support the goal of living Christ-like relationships? Why? What do we need to add to our list to make our approach more comprehensive, more faithful, to the role of the youth worker as one who both supports and empowers Christ-like relationships with youth?

Review the four domains of ministerial preparation (content, context, character and competency). Which of these domains seem to be emphasized the most in your youth ministry? Which of these domains represent the greatest challenge for you to develop a basic competency for ministry? Which domain encourages ongoing life-long learning?



Nazarene Youth International

