Youth Ministry Academy

Youth Ministry Training

18

Youth Ministry Shepherding - Equipping Leaders

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Lesson Eighteen: Youth Ministry Shepherding—Equipping Leaders

Introduction

Session Overview
- Identifying and Recruiting Volunteer Youth Workers
- Leadership Commitment and Training
- Empowering and Encouraging Youth Workers

Learner Objectives
At the end of this session you should:
- Understand the importance of deliberately preparing for succession in ministry
- Identify, recruit, and equip adult youth workers
- Express greater appreciation for the Ministry of Shepherding

Introduction

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

Lesson Body

Identifying and Recruiting Volunteer Youth Workers

Setting a Biblical Foundation

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

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

> 1. John 13:14-16 The Servant Leader
> Those who carry leadership positions in the church also carry—first and foremost—the responsibility of serving those volunteers, in whatever lowly manner may be necessary.

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

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

4. Ephesians 4:11-16 The equipping leader
Servant leadership does not seek to force volunteers into service or to heap guilt on them so they reluctantly take their places—counting the days until the sentence of service runs out—but to equip them so they serve with competence.

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

Leadership in History

Historically the church has adopted a number of leadership models based on context and need. Robert Banks and Bernice Ledbetter, in *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches,* offer a range of approaches from the rise of the abbot, who shepherded monastic communities, to Lutheran and Reformed pastors who challenged contexts yet also established innovated new communities, to Quakers who trusted community guidance and Pentecostals who put tremendous emphasis on individual gifts. Banks and Ledbetter note each generation of leaders seemed to negotiate three different tensions.
- Tradition and adaptation
- Preservation and innovation
- Stability and change
Each tension called leaders to both look to the past and anticipate the future in light of the needs of their communities and the conditions of their context.

Even the general study of leadership in North America, particularly in the 19th century to today, changed over time. Banks and Ledbetter note that early studies emphasized the lives of great leaders (biographical study). However, researchers later applied scientific methods to leadership to discover if leaders held common biological "traits" or possessed a particular character. By mid-century the focus moved away from the person of the leader to their particular "style." Often studies in this period noted that leaders must balance their emphasis on meeting certain tasks while also maintaining relationships with followers. By the late twentieth century, the human

resources movement expanded the style question as it focused on follower readiness. By this point researchers, like Paul Hershey and Kenneth Blanchard, in *Management of Organizational Behavior*, emphasized the need to adapt leadership based both on 1) the goals in mind and 2) a follower's ability to attain those goals in relationship to the leader. Balancing tasks and relationships proved crucial if one wanted to extend one's leadership throughout the organization.

Banks and Ledbetter observe leadership includes at least four important elements: (1) the person of the leader, (2) the relationship between leader and follower, (3) the task a leader is attempting to accomplish, and (4) the influence of the context or setting in which a leader leads. Often the quality of our leadership rests with how well we communicate trust in our personal actions (that we will be consistent), assess the ability of our followers in the tasks they must accomplish, maintain a vision for ministry and continue to study the context of our ministry. Assisting others to accept their responsibility with these four tasks remains an important part of leadership development.

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

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

1. A sense of calling and opportunity to make a difference
2. A chance to do something they do well
3. Being encouraged and empowered along the way
4. Serving with like-minded people with a real sense of community

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

Discerning Gifts and Graces

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

1. Can I model for youth the meaning of a happy, healthy and whole adulthood?
2. To what extent have I been able to forgive my own parents, and reflect their positive attributes and not reacting to my negative experiences?
3. How do I deal with "loss," learning to let go and speak of my experiences openly?
4. What is my theology of friendship and is it reflected in healthy and faithful friends?
5. Do I find time for solitude, feeling comfortable with myself in these moments?
6. Do I maintain adequate boundaries with other people, keeping them neither to distant nor too close for my personal needs?
7. Have I realized and accepted that I can't save every young person?
8. Do I focus on experiences of gratitude and cultivate a sense of being grateful?
9. Can I accept not doing everything right, do I learn from my mistakes?
10. Am I able to maintain a sense of integrity, even when I am called to make difficult decisions that may demand sacrifice?

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

1. Give volunteers the options of short, medium, and long-term periods of ministry service.
2. Identify the different areas of responsibility that volunteers can commit to, e.g. Adult chaperons on field trips, Bible Quiz Ministry Coaches, and Study Partners.
3. Allow for potential volunteers to meet informally with current volunteers to share experiences and ideas.
4. Always give as much detailed information as possible to help potential volunteers with their decision making.
5. Use statistics and other vital information to inform volunteers of needs and the results others have had.

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

1. Position title.
2. Position purpose. How does the role fit into the mission of the whole church?
3. Description of roles. How could the ministry be summarized?
4. Qualifications. What characteristics will be required of the youth worker?

5. Responsibilities. What are the specific assignments and expectations?
6. Accountability. To whom and for whom will the person in this position be accountable?
7. Committees or teams. Does this position involve serving on any committees?
8. Goals for the year. What measurable objectives will be used to evaluate job performance?
9. Share with each other your ministry profile.

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

Leadership Commitment and Training

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

- Motivating people
- Guiding them into the right ministry
- Supporting and supervising them as they minister.

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

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

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

1. Have a written application
2. Do criminal background checks through Nazarenesafe.org (Available in English only)
3. Ask for references and check those references
4. Have a personal interview
5. Use a team to decide who serves the ministry

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

Volunteer training encourages ongoing leadership development. Even adult leaders changing from one ministry role to the next require new skills in order to have confidence for ministry. Volunteer training often undergoes several stages. First leaders must focus on preparation, setting the climate of the training, defining the task within the context of the ministry and motivating volunteers who attend. Second leaders need to determine the best way of implementing the training, rather through local settings or attending institutes that focus on leadership. Implementation should invite continuous improvement, eliminate fear and barriers between volunteers. Hopefully implementation will result in a sense of competency and desire to take what is learned and transform it into the volunteer's ministry. Finally, training must have time for personal evaluation of one's abilities in light of the new knowledge. Trainers need to include themselves in this process, inviting short accounts of new insights, encouraging demonstrations of the teaching, offering themselves as mentors and engaging in loving confrontation to encourage volunteers grow through the training. As trainers, we must remember Christian commitment remains crucial for everyone since it serves as the foundation for all improvement. Commitment ultimately includes young people, adult youth workers, parents, church and lead pastor. We must ask for commitment, there is a difference between interest and commitment. People interested in doing something often do it only when it is convenient. People committed to something, accept no excuses.

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

Empowering and Encouraging Youth Workers

Empowering and encouraging youth workers reflects the best of contemporary leadership. Banks and Ledbetter, reviewing the most recent leadership literature, offer the following observations about leadership in our current context.

- Leaders frequently define leadership as a potential in everyone, not just a special group.
- Leaders see authority as shared, distributed, or pervasive throughout the ministry.
- Leaders emphasize the servant-leader paradigm or the image of the leader as a steward or trustee.

- Leaders use the language of ministry purpose and vision rather than merely exercise power based on their position in the group.
- Leaders focus on transformational language, attitudes, and practices.
- Leaders model what they want to accomplish and focus on encouraging others.
- Leaders serve as key figures on a team rather than as soloists.
- Leaders accept a reciprocal relationship with co-workers as vital.
- Leaders emphasize the importance not only of ethics but also of wider values in relation to their ministry.

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

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

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

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

- Use scripture to teach the importance of loving, caring ministry teams.
- Draw upon church life to illustrate the viability of supportive volunteer groups.
- Feature people who are part of encouragement teams by allowing them to testify in public services.
- Stimulate the development of new teams by putting people with similar passions together in ministry.
- Demonstrate the importance of mutual support by being part of a small group that provides strength and encouragement for each other.

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

Application

Write down your own approach to leadership, which scriptures, historical perspectives and contemporary concerns inform your understanding?

Develop a written process for recruiting new youth workers based on the session. Set criteria for screening volunteers in your setting.

Develop a written, one year, plan for training new youth workers based on the session.

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

Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

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

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

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

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