

Youth Ministry with a Plan: Matching the “How” to the “Why”

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Faith identity

Psychologically speaking, the main task of adolescence is to create a coherent identity. In youth ministry, we are concerned with the formation of a **faith identity** in our youth.

Faith is the belief system at the center of a person’s being that gives meaning and purpose to life. Faith determines our values; our values shape our motivations; motivations shape behavior.

Components of faith identity:

1. The rational: understanding who God is and what God wants.
2. The relational: connecting to God and God’s people.
3. The lived: living one’s beliefs daily, being good news.

Understanding the mission of God

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Then he [said], “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” —Luke 4:18-19, 21

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit...” —John 20: 21-22

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. —II Cor. 5:18-20a

What God is doing in the world is reconciling people to God, each other and creation. As God sent Jesus into the world, Jesus sends us to bear witness to this reconciliation

Joining God’s mission

We join in God’s work by being friends with God, God’s people and God’s world.

As followers of Christ, we express our...

- ...**friendship with God** through practices like prayer, Bible study & memorization, worship, tithing, keeping Sabbath
- ...**friendship with God’s people** through practices like forgiveness, hospitality, singing, footwashing, mutual aid, ritual & celebrations
- ...**friendship with God’s world** through practices like service, evangelism, conflict resolution, stewardship, giving to the needy

Youth and Church

What keeps youth involved in church? Churches with involved high school seniors met these three needs in their youth:

Meaning What is the meaning of life?

Belonging Where do I belong?

Opportunities do develop competence What am I good at?

Connecting Youth with the Mission of God

Friendship with God through practices like prayer, Bible study & memorization, worship, tithing, keeping Sabbath meets the need for **meaning**

Friendship with God’s people through practices like forgiveness, hospitality, singing, footwashing, mutual aid, ritual & celebrations meets the need for **belonging**

Friendship with God’s world through practices like service, evangelism, conflict resolution, stewardship, giving to the needy provides opportunities to develop **competence**

Goals: What are we trying to accomplish in youth group?

Set goals for your youth group that are in line with the conceptual frame above, your congregation’s mission and setting, and the specific needs of your youth.

Ask yourselves...

How do youth group activities address the big questions of God and life? How well do your youth group activities integrate youth into congregational life? Do youth group activities offer kids opportunities to use their gifts?

Does your church have a mission statement? A particular emphasis for the coming year? Has your congregation articulated goals for itself?

Last year, what went well in youth group? What did not go well? What does God seem to be doing among the youth? How will you work with God to nurture what God is already doing among them? Answering these questions will help you determine generally what you are trying to accomplish with your youth group activities.

Brainstorm possible goals for your group for the coming year:

Look at your list of possible goals and narrow them down to one, two or three that can be accomplished in the coming year. Talk together about how you will know when they are accomplished.



Our 2011-2012 Calendar

Date	Activity	Goal the activity addresses
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		
January		
February		
March		
April		
May		
June		<p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;"> Sustainable Youth Ministry by Mark DeVries Thriving Youth Groups by Jeanne Mayo Choosing Church by Carol Lyrch Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens by Dorothy Bass & Don C. Richter </p>