

YOUTH MINISTRY

1. Challenges Youth Face.¹

- a. From Word of Life:
 - (1) Teens are only getting 7 hours of sleep per night.
 - (2) Their body is changing.
 - (3) Many are experiencing depression or anxiety.
 - (a) The rapid pace of change has created a huge culture gap between grandparents, parents, and children.
 - (b) Many young men come from broken homes and don't have strong male role models.
 - (c) They are disconnected and isolated.
 - (4) They have instant access to any information they want.
 - (5) They are experiencing romantic and sexual feelings for the first time.
 - (6) They are inundated with social media.
 - (a) Youth must exercise more self-discipline today than at any time in human history.
 - (7) Many believe it is impossible to know whether God exists.
 - (8) Many are apathetic about the Bible.
 - (a) How do we get teens addicted to computer games to be interested in Jesus and daily Bible study?
 - (9) Many are stressed out about school and their career.
 - (10) Many are indoctrinated with non-biblical worldviews.²
 - (a) They do not understand the biblical worldview and cannot defend it.
 - (b) Struggle with doctrines such as the exclusivity of Jesus, the inerrancy of Scripture, what the Bible says about LGBTQ issues, and hell.
 - (c) Feel outnumbered and believe it is easier to just give in and conform.
- b. The result is that most walk away from Christianity even before they leave home.
 - (1) Current stats say 60 to 70 percent of teens raised in a Christian environment will reject their faith when they leave for college.³
 - (2) In the U.S., 35 million Christian teens will leave Christianity by 2050 if nothing changes.⁴

2. The Importance of Youth Ministry.

- a. Every historian knows the importance of winning the hearts and minds of youth.
 - (1) "One of the signs of a great society is the diligence with which it passes culture from one generation to the next."⁵

¹ Word of Life NZ.

² Word of Life NZ.

³ David Eaton and Jeremiah Callihan, *Engaging Your Teen's World*, 84.

⁴ David Eaton and Jeremiah Callihan, *Engaging Your Teen's World*, 20.

⁵ Winston Churchill.

- (2) “Give me just one generation of youth, and I’ll transform the whole world.”⁶
- (3) “Give us the child for eight years and it will be a Bolshevnik forever.”⁷
- (4) “The ‘Long March through the Institutions’ was a phrase attributed to the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) and then coined as a succinct mission statement by Marxist student activist Rudi Dutschke in the 1960s. The phrase is used to describe the intellectual takeover of a society without need to resort to a military conflict. Instead, the strategy focuses on slowly winning over the chief institutions that determine the direction of a culture and thereby creating a soft revolution from within those institutions. So, the focus was on the universities, then the unions, the arts, the K-12 schools, the media, then corporations, and finally the society as a whole.”⁸
- b. Youth ministry has always been important in the Aotearoa New Zealand context.
 - (1) “They [the Maori] are also gaining a knowledge of the theory of religion; and there are some very curious inquiries among them, to know who that Great Saviour is that we so much talk to them about. In addressing them in a body, it is no uncommon thing to hear them say: ‘Well, this is what my child told me the other day; and though I do not know much about what the missionaries say, yet my child does.’”⁹
- c. Today’s missionaries of wokeness understand the importance of youth ministry.
- d. Youth ministry must be a priority in our local churches.
 - (1) “Youth are the church of today, not the church of tomorrow.”
- e. If one doesn’t believe in Jesus before age 18, he or she probably never will.
 - (1) The most common age for conversion to Christianity in the U.S. is 13.¹⁰
 - (2) 67% of believers receive Jesus by age 18.¹¹
- f. To make youth ministry a priority, it is recommended for local churches to:
 - (1) Spend \$1000-\$1500 per youth per year on youth ministry.
 - (2) Hire one full-time staff person for every fifty youth.
 - (3) Recruit one adult volunteer for every five youth.
 - (4) Expect the youth group to be ten percent of the worshipping population.¹²

3. Responsibilities.

- a. Parents.
 - (1) **Dt 6:4-9 [MSG]** 4 Attention, Israel! God, our God! God the one and only! 5 Love God, your God, with your whole heart: love him with all that’s in you, love him with all you’ve got! 6 Write these commandments that I’ve given you today on

⁶ Vladimir Lenin.

⁷ Vladimir Lenin.

⁸ Bobby Harrington, “The Long March through the Institutions of Society,” <https://renew.org/the-long-march-through-the-institutions-of-society/>.

⁹ CMS missionary George Clarke, on early signs of progress among the Maori, quoted in Keith Newman, *Bible and Treaty*, 52.

¹⁰ Barna Research Group.

¹¹ Sonlife Ministries and Barna Research Group.

¹² Mark DeVries, *Sustainable Youth Ministry*.

your hearts. Get them inside of you 7 and then get them inside your children. Talk about them wherever you are, sitting at home or walking in the street; talk about them from the time you get up in the morning to when you fall into bed at night. 8 Tie them on your hands and foreheads as a reminder; 9 inscribe them on the doorposts of your homes and on your city gates.

(2) Youth ministry must honour the jurisdiction of the family and not supersede the spiritual role of parents.

b. Youth.

(1) **Pr 20:11** 11 Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.

(2) **Ec 11:9** 9 Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

(3) Our kids are their own people with free will, but there are definitely steps we can take to prepare them well.¹³

c. Church.

(1) Different philosophies exist regarding youth ministry:

(a) Family-church integration (<https://ncfic.org>).

1) “God did not ordain youth ministry. There is zero pattern for it.”¹⁴

(b) Think Orange (<http://thinkorange.com>).

(2) Youth ministry must not become an independent entity, effectively separate from the local church. Beware of creating a “two-eared Mickey Mouse,” the ears being children’s ministry and youth ministry.¹⁵

(3) Churches that engage teens in lasting mentorship relationships with more than one adult have the most success at creating the next generation of committed Christians.

4. Strategy.

a. Teens are usually make up about 10% of the local population. For example, with a population of about 120,000, there are about 12,000 teens in the city of Dunedin.

b. A teen’s friends have 100 times more influence on him or her than we do.

c. Connect with youth in years 7-8 (ages 11-12) and establish good routines.

d. “We’re trying to help you [parents] point your kids in the right direction through thousands of micro conversations. ... You are God’s plan for your kids. There’s a generational passing of the faith. That’s how God planned it.”¹⁶

e. Substance: having a lot of boisterous fun during youth group might make church a hangout destination during high school, but it doesn’t predict a lasting spiritual formation.

5. Good Policies.

¹³ David Eaton and Jeremiah Callihan, *Engaging Your Teen’s World*, 142.

¹⁴ *Divided: The Movie*.

¹⁵ Jay Sedwick, Dallas Theological Seminary.

¹⁶ David Eaton and Jeremiah Callihan, *Engaging Your Teen’s World*, 181-82.

- a. Regularly police vet all youth leaders and keep good records.
- b. During Sunday worship at the beginning and end of the school year, update the church on the youth ministry and pray together.
- c. Open and close each year with a parents meeting.
- d. Always include parents in your online/phone communications to youth. Don't communicate with youth via electronic means without parents cc'd.
- e. Publicise activities to both parents and youth.
- f. Ask a mature older couple in the church to be the youth group grandparents.
- g. Confine every youth activity to one goal only—ministry training, growth, group outreach, or leadership. Don't try to tackle two or three things at once.
- h. Follow the classical model of education at age appropriate levels: grammar, dialectic, rhetoric.
- i. Establish a discipleship pathway and reinforce it constantly.
- j. Balance head (biblical story, biblical books, theology, apologetics, biblical worldview), heart (identity in Jesus, prayer, spiritual disciplines, D groups), and hands (outreach, service in the church, life skills).
 - (1) Do everything you can to break the hearts of your youth for the lost. Take them on a field trip to the most broken parts of your city to engage the people there. Mobilise youth to share their faith.
 - (2) Invite guest speakers like the director of the local rescue mission or a police officer.
- k. Require all leaders to attend Ministry Safe training (<https://ministrysafes.com/>).

6. Weekly Gathering.

- a. Order: (1) welcome; (2) game; (3) announcements; (4) music; (5) video; (6) talk; (7) small group; (8) prayer; (9) supper; and (10) cleanup.
- b. Policies.
 - (1) Greet youth by name each week. Ensure someone is at the door greeting everyone.
 - (2) Match up fringe people with potential friends.
 - (3) Start on time to avoid uncomfortable free time for newer youth.
 - (4) Use the downtime to chat with youth, not other leaders.
- c. Small group questions.
 - (1) Are you having a quiet time with God?
 - (2) Are you trying to share the gospel with your friends?
 - (3) Did anyone have the chance to share the gospel this week?
 - (4) What are your personal goals, and can I hold you accountable?
 - (5) Is the gospel advancing around you?
 - (6) Swap prayer cards.

7. Relating to Youth.

- a. "Teens don't change because of correction or the display of authority; they change because of a relationship."¹⁷
- b. Value them.
 - (1) Greet them by name every week.

¹⁷ Mark Gregston.

- (a) “The most beautiful sound in someone’s ear is the sound of his own name.”
- (2) Let them know you missed them when they were absent.
- (3) Talk to them, listen to them, and give them your time. Show genuine interest and concern for their wellbeing. Give them your full attention. Talk to each youth individually.
- (4) Affirm them specifically with words, a note, an email, or a text, without exaggeration or hype.
- (5) Help youth learn to accept their appearance, how to express emotion, and how to interact with people.¹⁸
- c. Understand them.
 - (1) Understand your youth’s world before you offer solutions and advice.¹⁹
 - (2) Remember you don’t have to be the expert.²⁰
 - (3) Get curious about youth. Ask lots of open-ended questions.
 - (4) “We are trying to raise our kids like the 1950s.”
 - (5) Exercise. Choose one new thing your teen is participating in or consuming. If it is a cultural artefact, watch, listen, or consume it with your teen. Ask them some of these questions, developed by David Kinnaman:²¹
 - (a) What did you find that is good in this song, movie, video game, etc.?
 - (b) Why do you believe it to be good?
 - (c) Is the artist saying anything about our world?
 - (d) Is there anything missing?
 - (e) What story is being told?
 - (f) Is there anything confusing?
 - (g) What does Scripture say about it?²²
- d. Believe in them.
 - (1) See potential in youth that they don’t see in themselves. Focus on what your youth can become.²³
 - (2) Low expectations mean youth never rise to meet their full potential, but too high expectations leave youth feeling discouraged and condemned.
- e. Inspire them.
 - (1) Keep things interesting, while not diluting biblical content.
 - (2) “It’s a sin to bore a kid with the gospel.”²⁴
- f. Challenge them.
 - (1) “The idea of having young kids and youth sit through eight hours a day studying the Bible would be ludicrous to most people, but the odds have been defied. This past week, I have witnessed 40+ kids sit from 8:00 in the morning till 5:00 in the

¹⁸ Murray Brown, 4:6-9.

¹⁹ Murray Brown, 4:33.

²⁰ Murray Brown, 4:36.

²¹ David Eaton and Jeremiah Callihan, *Engaging Your Teen’s World*, 85.

²² David Eaton and Jeremiah Callihan, *Engaging Your Teen’s World*, 85.

²³ Murray Brown, 4:48.

²⁴ Jim Rayburn.

evening studying and gleaned truths from Galatians as it was taught chapter by chapter, verse by verse, and word by word. This is a testament to the fact the Word of God speaks for itself.”²⁵

- g. Be honest with them.
 - (1) At appropriate times, share about your mistakes, sins, and weaknesses. Be vulnerable.
- h. Correct them.
 - (1) “Young people are prone to foolishness and fads; the cure comes through tough-minded discipline.”²⁶
 - (2) Create a disciplined environment.²⁷ Set boundaries.²⁸ Enforce consequences.²⁹
 - (3) Include affirmation when correcting. Correct the action or attitude, not the person.
 - (4) Ask: what do you think of what you did? How might you do it better next time?
- i. Comfort them.
 - (1) Help those who HURT: (1) hear; (2) understand; (3) (w)rap; and (4) travel.



- j. Protect them.
 - (1) Establish clear guidelines about adult-youth and youth-youth interactions.
 - (2) Offer security, consistent leadership, and stable programming.³⁰
 - (3) Beware of causing a young believer to sin by misleading or tempting them.
 - (a) **Mt 18:5-6** 5 Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, 6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

8. Outreach.

- a. A talented youth leader is no match for 20 mobilised youth!
- b. One way.

²⁵ Cody Hughes, Disciple Makers Multiplied.

²⁶ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005), Pr 22:15.

²⁷ Murray Brown, 4:46.

²⁸ Murray Brown, 4:47.

²⁹ Murray Brown, 4:52.

³⁰ Murray Brown, 4:17.

- (1) List five friends you want to encourage toward faith.
 - (2) List things that might hinder them from considering faith (these are for prayer and for you to engage them in conversations about).
 - (3) List their interests (these are connection points for you).
- c. Another way.
- (1) Partner with like-minded students (no matter what church they're from).
 - (2) Pray about what you could do together at your school
 - (3) Action...do it.
 - (4) Persevere...keep this process going.
- d. BLESS your teachers and classmates: (1) begin with prayer; (2) listen; (3) eat; (4) serve; and (5) story.
- e. "I won't stop asking God for the next generation to be reached. I won't stop seeing the keys to mobilising Christian teens to spread the gospel to their peers."³¹

9. School Leavers.

- a. Hold a retreat called "What's Next?".
- (1) How to connect work and study.
 - (2) How to find a church and to stay accountable.
 - (3) How to maintain spiritual vitality as an adult.
 - (4) Dating and sex.
 - (5) Dealing with finances.
 - (6) Answering hard apologetic questions.
 - (7) Field trip to U. of Otago.
 - (8) Meet Christian academic.
 - (9) Meet university students.
 - (10) Meet Student Life and TSCF leaders.
 - (11) Panel discussion of various careers.
 - (12) How to choose a career.
 - (13) How to wisely choose accommodation.
- b. Match youth with mentors in their area of interest.
- c. Allow them to discuss doubts openly.
- d. Point them to training opportunities: Pathways Bible College, Headspace, Word of Life, Summit Ministries.
- e. Seven tips for school leavers:
- (1) Decide what you really want. Write down a description of what you want your life to look like a year from now.
 - (2) Take personal responsibility. Set some goals for the next year you will strive toward achieving.
 - (3) Make finding a church home a priority. Describe the sort of church you are hoping to attend.
 - (4) Develop positive friendships. Describe the sort of people you want to have as friends when you move.
 - (5) Explore your doubts. What doubts and questions are you already struggling with?

³¹ Greg Stier, Dare 2 Share Ministries.

- (6) Establish accountability. Who are the people you will approach to hold you accountable?
- (7) Make a plan. Write out a clear and specific plan of action you will implement when you move.

10. Youth Leaders.

- a. Pray for them.
- b. Recruit them.
 - (1) Create a leadership pipeline in your youth ministry to prepare the next generation of leaders.
- c. Equip them.
 - (1) <https://godtalk.nz/leadership/>
- d. Plan with them.
 - (1) Effective team meetings include: programming, problems, pastoral issues, purpose, planning, personal struggles, and prayer.
 - (2) Make decisions by consensus.
- e. Utilise their abilities, gifts, and talents: visionaries, directors, implementers, carers, and analysers. Delegate whole areas to them, but provide oversight.
- f. Evaluate them.
 - (1) Have regular individual meetings with youth leaders. Evaluate their participation and performance.
- g. Appreciate them.
 - (1) Build community through care, compliments, correction, and camaraderie.
 - (2) Host youth leaders for dinner twice per year.
 - (3) Publicly recognise your adult volunteers. Send them thank you notes and gift vouchers.
 - (4) Keep things simple. Establish a routine that is sustainable.

11. Benefits.

- a. Energy.
 - (1) Youth have tremendous energy and enthusiasm and are usually undervalued.
 - (2) “God can and does use children and young people—their prayers, their insights, their words, their initiatives—in changing hearts. They represent ‘new energy’ to transform the world. Let us listen and not stifle their childlike spirituality....”³²
 - (3) Samuel, David, Jesus, John, and Timothy are youth whom God used mightily.
 - (4) **1 Ti 4:12** Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.
- b. Testimony.
 - (1) The humble, innocent faith of youth (Mt 18:1-4) can speak to skeptical adults.
- c. Leadership development.
- d. Legacy.

³² Lausanne Movement, *The Cape Town Commitment* (2011).

Bibliography

- Boshers, Bo. *Student Ministry for the 21st Century*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.
- Brown, Murray. *The P4 Model of Training*. 4 vols. YouthTRAIN, 2010.
- Cannister, Mark. *Teenagers Matter*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013.
- Chow, David. *The Perfect Program and Other Fairy Tales*. Colorado Springs: NavPress/Think Books, 2005.
- Clark, Chap. *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*. 2011.
- Clark, Chap, Brad Griffin, and Cheryl Crawford. *Sticky Faith Youth Worker Edition: Practical Ideas to Nurture Long-Term Faith in Teenagers*.
- Clydesdale, Tim. *The First Year Out: Understanding American Teens After High School*. 2007.
- Crowe, Jaquelle. *This Changes Everything: How the Gospel Transforms the Teen Years*.
- Dean, Kenda Creasy. *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church*.
- DeVries, Mark. *Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church Can Do About It*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008.
- Drury, Amanda H. *Saying Is Believing: The Necessity of Testimony in Adolescent Spiritual Development*. 2015.
- Dyck, Drew. *Generation Ex-Christian: Why Young Adults Are Leaving the Faith....* 2010.
- Eaton, David, and Jeremiah Callahan. *Engaging Your Teen's World: Understanding What Today's Youth Are Thinking Doing, and Watching*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: BethanyHouse, 2020.
- Fields, Doug. *Purpose Driven Youth Ministry: 9 Essential Foundations for Healthy Growth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- Fields, Doug. *Your First Two Years in Youth Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 2002.
- Joiner, Reggie. *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact when Church and Family Collide*. 2009.
- Joiner, Roger, and Tom Shefchunase. *Lead Small: Five Big Ideas Every Small Group Leader Needs to Know*.

Jones, Stephen D. *Faith Shaping: Youth and the Experience of Faith*.

Kinnaman, David, and Mark Matlock. *Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon*.

Kinnaman, David. *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church....* 2011.

Lawrence, Rick. *Jesus Centered Youth Ministry*. Loveland, CO: Group Publishers, 2007

Mueller, Walt. *99 Thoughts for Parents of Teenagers*. 2010.

McKee, Jonathan R. *The Top 12 Resources Youth Workers Want*. El Cajon: Gospel Light, 2001.

Powell, Kara, Chap Clark, et al. *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids*. 2011.

Rahn, Dave, and Terry Linhart. *Evangelism Remixed: Empowering Students for Courageous and Contagious Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 2009.

Rainer, Thom S. *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation*. 2011.

Rice, Wayne. *Reinventing Youth Ministry (Again): From Bells and Whistles to Flesh and Blood*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.

Robbins, Duffy. *Building a Youth Ministry That Builds Disciples: A Small Book About a Big Idea*.

Smith, Christian. *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*.

Stanley, Andy, and Stuart Hall. *The Seven Checkpoints for Youth Leaders*. West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing Co., 2001.

Stier, Greg, ed. *Youth Ministry in the 21st Century: Five Views*. Loveland: Group Publishing, 2006.

Web

Axis, <https://axis.org/>.

Axis, The Culture Translator, <https://axis.org/CT/>.

Bible Society New Zealand, Lyfe, <https://biblesociety.org.nz/discover-the-bible/lyfe/>.

Center for Parent/Youth Understanding, <http://www.cpyu.org>.

Dare 2 Share Ministries, <https://www.dare2share.org>.

Feed, <https://feed.bible/>.

Generations with Vision, <https://generationswithvision.com>.

GOD-talk NZ, <https://godtalk.nz/>.

GOD-talk NZ, Equipping Videos, <https://godtalk.nz/equipping/>.

GOD-talk NZ, Youth Leadership Series, <https://godtalk.nz/leadership/>.

Impact 360 Institute, <https://www.impact360institute.org>.

Impact 360 Institute, Gen Z Lab, <https://genzlab.impact360institute.org/>.

Jonathan Morrow, <https://www.jonathanmorrow.org>.

The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, <https://ncfic.org>.

New Generation, 101 Ideas, <https://issuu.com/newgenerationuk/docs/magazinespring12>.

Open Network, Youth, <https://open.life.church/categories/315-youth>.

Orange, <http://www.whatisorange.org>.

Scripture Union.

Sonlife, <http://www.sonlife.com>.

Thrive, Small Groups for Students, <http://thrivestudies.com/>.

24/7 YouthWork.

WisdomWorks, <http://www.wisdomworks.com>.

Word of Life.

Youth Alpha, <http://www.alpha.org.nz/youth/>.

Youth for Christ, <http://www.yfc.net>.

Youth Specialties, <http://www.youthspecialties.com>.

YouthTRAIN, <https://www.youthtrain.com/>.

Podcasts

<http://www.jonathanmorrow.org/1-are-we-raising-a-generation-of-almost-christians-podcast/>

Film

Divided: The Movie, <https://ncfic.org/resources/view/divided-the-movie>.

The Merchants of Cool. 2003.

The Social Dilemma.