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Youth Supports

A resource to encourage and empower youth
leaders for the expansion of the Lord's kingdom.

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Why am I
doing this?

...Henri
Nouwen
reflects on
three
temptations
that affect
Christian
leadership...

- Should I Be Doing Youth Ministry?
- Youth Ministry Helps!

Should I Be Doing Youth Ministry?

As a volunteer or paid professional who does youth ministry, have you ever asked the question “**Why am I doing this?**” How many times have you asked the question in the past week? If you have never asked this question, this article is not for you. This article is strictly for those who have ever felt inadequate, lost, frustrated or dull when doing youth ministry.

Read the following statements and reflect on if you **Agree or Disagree** with...

1. An effective youth minister is one who knows all the latest trends and fashions, popular artists and music, etc..
2. The more youth like you as a youth minister, the more they will hear the message of the Gospel.
3. The more spectacular the youth program and minister, the better the kids will respond to the Gospel.

In his book, *In the Name of Jesus*, Henri Nouwen reflects on three temptations that affect Christian leadership: the temptation to be relevant, spectacular, and powerful. I have found his reflections to be most beneficial when applied to youth ministry. As a DCE of 14 years, I tried to avoid youth ministry for the first 10 years because of fear and feelings of inadequacy because I was not the cool, hip youth minister I thought I had to be. So guess what I am doing now - and loving it???

So how **relevant** are you? Do you know the latest top 10 pop hits? Do your youth think you are current and “with it”? Nouwen reflects that Jesus was faced with the same temptation when in the desert: to turn stones into bread (see Matthew 4:1-4). “Jesus was faced with these same questions, but when he was asked to prove his power as the Son of God by the relevant behavior of changing stones into bread, he clung to his mission to proclaim the word and said, ‘Human beings live not by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (p.18)

What are some of the temptations you face being a leader in youth ministry to be relevant? Are we so concerned with being “successful” that we have lost track of our mission? Nouwen claims that the Christian leader is called to “stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self ... The great message that we have to carry, as ministers of God’s word and followers of Jesus, is that God loves us not because of what we do or accomplish, but because God has created and redeemed us in love and has chosen us to proclaim that as the true source of human life.” (p.17)

Do you consider you or your youth ministry to be **spectacular**? I have often been tempted to provide glitzy entertainment and fun in order to get youth to come to events. Jesus too was tempted to be spectacular and to do a feat that would bring

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Youth
Ministry
Help!

Him great applause. "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down." (Matthew 4:6a)

Perhaps the most dangerous temptation in youth ministry is to be **powerful**. This can happen when we have the need to be liked by youth or have the need to control every situation. Jesus too was tempted to be powerful. "All this I will give you, if you will bow down and worship me." (Matthew 4:9)

So what is our mission to and with youth? What are we to focus on? The dialogue between Jesus and Peter in John 21 speaks to all in Christian leadership, especially to those of us in youth ministry. Notice that Jesus does **not** ask Peter "what are you going to accomplish for me?" But rather He asks "Do you love me?" He then responds to Peter's reaffirmation that he loves Jesus by saying, "Feed my lambs," "Take care of my sheep," "Feed my sheep" and ultimately "Follow me."

Do you love Jesus? Are you feeding His sheep? Are you nurturing the youth God has put into your life? There is nothing that can replace the acts of kind and encouraging words spoken to youth, time spent with them, and prayers offered for them. If you are doing this, **yes, you should be doing youth ministry!!**

- Carolyn Grohn, DCE, Director of Youth and Family Ministry,
St. John Lutheran Church, Idaho Falls, Idaho

Reference: Nouwen, H. (1989). *In the Name of Jesus*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company.

Find past issues of Youth Supports at:

<http://www.nowlcms.org/Youth/ysupportslist.html>

Youth Ministry Consultants in Your Area

Youth Ministry consultants help you to either fine tune your youth ministry, refresh it or get you started on a complete overhaul. Contact Dick Weniger at the district office at 503/288-8383 or email him at <dickw@nowlcms.org> for more information on how a Youth Ministry Consultant can help you and your congregation!

The Department of Youth Ministry of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has several Internet resources available to you.

One of the items is a monthly E-Bulletin to "provide current information on youth events, resources, updates, plus various & sundry items of interest to youth workers (and youth) of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod." To subscribe to the Youth Ministry E-Bulletin send this message: SUBSCRIBE E-BULLETIN to MAILSERV@crf.cuis.edu.

To unsubscribe send the message: UNSUBSCRIBE to MAILSERV@crf.cuis.edu.

To find out about Bible studies, song books, and other resources available from the Department of Youth Ministry, check out the DYM Web site: <http://cs.lcms.org/youth>.

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