



A service of the
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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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- Family Centered Youth Ministry
- Youth Ministry Resources

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Family Centered Youth Ministry

The most devoted leaders of youth can actually be parents of youth themselves. Why? Because no one has a greater long-term interest in youth than their parents do...and no one has the potential to impact the faith formation of youth as much as their parents can. Equipping parents for their role as the primary nurturers of their children's faith has been an untapped resource for many youth ministry programs. Churches must learn to be as intentional about equipping parents as they are about developing programs for children and youth. (Summary thoughts from *Family-Based Youth Ministry* by Mark DeVries).

I just got back from a trip to the Midwest. As I sat on the plane waiting to taxi for takeoff, the stewardess began to go over the safety features of the plane. She closed by saying something like this:

In the unlikely event of a sudden loss of cabin pressure, an oxygen mask will be released. Place the mask over yourself first, then proceed in giving assistance to those around you.

As I thought about those instructions, I realized an important principle for those in ministry to youth and their families: If parents are the primary nurturers of their children's faith, and if the home is the first and best place for discipleship, then it is imperative for parents to be equipped with the skills to deal the "sudden loss of pressure" in their relationships with their children.

For a long time, I used to think of myself as the key player in the faith formation of the youth in my church – a view that I think is still very common in our youth ministry programs. The result of this approach is that we isolate youth from those who can have the greatest impact on their faith development.

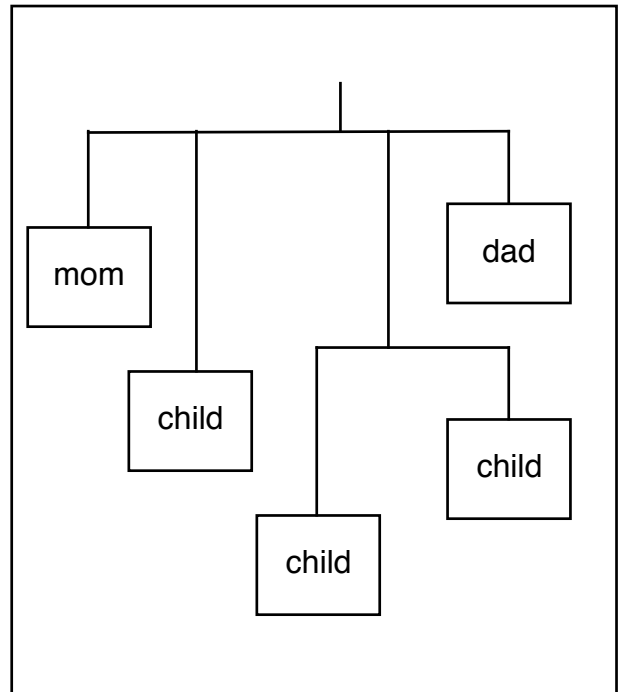
The longer I have been in ministry the more I realize that parents of our youth are feeling less and less equipped for their task. My target for ministry has shifted to

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addressing the spiritual and relational deficits in our teen's family of origin. We still provide resources for a meaningful ministry directly with our youth ministry program. But I have discovered that planning creative events and investing heavily in the organizational structure of a youth program without a ministry which provides support, skills, and encouragement to parents is incomplete.

I've often used the image of a mobile to illustrate the significance of working with youth within their family system (see illustration). When one piece of the mobile is put into motion (for example, dad loses his job), each other piece of the system is also set into motion. The relationship between mom and dad may become strained because of mom needing to find work; the children feel the stresses of their parents and may cry out for help in a variety of ways. For this family system to return to a balance, each member of the family must become a part of the solution.



A family centered youth ministry is based on the principle that our youth are more effectively impacted by significant interactions with adults than by mountain top youth-group experiences. Everything we do in our youth ministries should be, first and foremost, about helping to give kids excuses to build connections with Christian adults...especially their parents.

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Find past issues of Youth Supports at:

http://www.nowlcms.org/educational_services/YouthSupports.aspx

E-Newsletter from Synod Board of Youth Ministry

The Board of Youth Ministry for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has a monthly e-bulletin with youth ministry information. To subscribe to it, go to <http://www.lcms.org/enews/> and follow the directions.

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