



A service of the
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Lutheran Church -
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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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- What am I trying to do?
- **Free youth ministry resources!**

"This is
youth
ministry..."

Staying
focused on
the cross
personally
includes...

What am I trying to do?

I love youth ministry but sometimes I lose my focus. One of the best descriptions I heard of youth ministry came from Dennis "Tiger" McLuen. He said, "This is youth ministry. Stand in front of the cross, get their attention, and duck." Remembering this description provides me two focus checks. One, am I standing in front of the cross? Two, am I ducking? Sounds simple, doesn't it?

I find it incredibly easy to become increasingly busy. Distractingly busy. There are so many good ideas, activities, small group studies etc, etc, etc. Sometimes I fall into the same trap I want the students and families to watch for: too many good choices and my failure to prioritize leads to an over exhausted, burned out youth worker with a diluted message.

So, I must ask myself, "Am I standing in front of the cross?" Hebrews 12:2 begins "Fix your eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of your faith." Am I choosing my activities with God as my priority? Are my activities and choices pointing to the cross? Or am I busy for the sake of busyness? Am I forgetting my true purpose?

I can ask myself these questions in both my personal life and in my ministry. We all know that little we do escapes the view of the students (and parents) we serve. Staying focused on the cross personally includes daily meditation on God's Word, time spent in prayer. I know all this. It's what I teach on a regular basis, but do I truly believe it? Do I practice it? John 15 reminds me that if my branch is not attached to the Vine, my ministry will be fruitless.

After checking my personal focus, it's time to check on my ministry focus. Am I trying to entertain students? Am I trying to get those numbers up there by hyping it up? Our youth ministry team has a mission and vision statement that we revisit annually. This is my first tool for evaluating ministry activities. Does this activity fit into our vision and mission? What area does it fit into and why do I want to do it? Working through this process, hopefully I can say my activities point toward the cross.

Have I
managed to
duck?

Free
resources for
youth
ministry!

Free
newsletter
from the
Board of
Youth
Ministry!

So, now I have completed focus check number one and am standing in front of the cross. I have drawn the students' attention. What do they see? Me? Have I managed to duck? Or am I trapped in the popularity snare. Do I have a need for the students to see me as cool? Am I worried that they are going to think I am lame? What are they going to think about my lesson? Do they think I'm funny? Are they attending youth because they want to hang out with me? Do I get hung up on numbers and feel they reflect my success or lack of it? These questions are all filled with "I" and "my" but not God. If I am so worried about what people think of me, I have not ducked. The focus is on me not the cross. An immediate refocus is required. Focus check number two complete.

Now that I have completed these two focus checks, it's time to start over again. To have a thriving ministry requires continual focus checks. Life is full of distractions. So, keep your eyes on Jesus. Stand in front of the cross and duck!

Blessings on your ministry!
Suzy Hennig

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Find past issues of Youth Supports at:

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

Want Some Ideas for Your Youth Ministry?

The Board of Youth Ministry for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod with a grant from Thrivent started a new electronic youth ministry resource available for free on the internet. Check out <www.youthsource.com/> The web page is not just for adults, but for youth too with a number of links to other great web sites. The October site included an article about the best uses of cell phones with youth ministry and an article about what to do after high school in addition to skits and Bible studies. Pass it on to your own youth!

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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