



Introduction

What is a “model” for youth or young adult ministry? As a teen I gained experience both by copying and by doing the opposite of what others in leadership modeled for me, although I didn’t think of their example as a model. But it was.

My final two years in college, the local youth pastor hired me as a student minister. This turned out to be my unofficial internship as this unconventional youth pastor steered me in ways I would have never chosen on my own. Yet I didn’t consider this as a “model” for youth ministry. It was simply the way we did things, and I learned many new things from my mentor, Bill Smith.

Upon graduation I received sheer grace in the form of an official internship at the Lodi English Oaks Church in the Northern California Conference. To this day I thank God for what this church and the senior pastor, Don Mulvihill, did to train me. Again, I never thought of this as a “model” for youth ministry. We simply did youth ministry and marveled at what God did with our humble (and sometimes not so humble) attempts to serve.

In graduate school at Andrews University, I once again received undeserved opportunities to minister. I remember testing out a way of ministry that forced people out of their comfort zones. The results typically proved to be

significant—either positive spiritual growth for some or anger, denunciation, and even threatened lawsuits from others. It was potent, whatever “it” was. I might have referred to it as fresh, Godly, inspired, or some other euphemistic label. Others probably would have labeled it as reckless.

What was I doing? If you had asked me what model of ministry I followed, my response would have been some sort of jumbled theory, a story of unbridled success, an enthusiastic invitation to join God’s activity, and then divert to another topic. I had no idea what type of “model” I was using. I simply used whatever had worked for me before or any new idea that barged into my head.

A Break Through

During one of those hour-long Seminary-wide lectures designed to provide a burst of insight beyond regularly scheduled classes, my thick skull felt penetration. The professor presented and critiqued Avery Dulles’ *Models of the Church*. At the end of the lecture I had several take-aways:

- I don't agree with everything the author (or professor) said.
- I do agree with some of what was presented.
- I can't integrate all of the elements with which I agree.
- I need to figure out how to evaluate and prioritize what is best.

All of these are part of what a student should experience in graduate school. It shouldn't be just a "jug-to-mug" dumping of information from a smart professor into the empty head of a dumb student. Those who fret about unanswered questions, gray areas, and potential lack of clarity should remain in memorization levels of education with fill-in-the-blank worksheets rather than learning how to think. By all means, graduate education should teach students how "to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought" (White, 1903, p. 17). The professor might have neatly tied off the topic at the end of the lecture, but my mind continued the exploration for months.

At a youth ministry training event, I made presentations and then listened to another experienced youth leader proclaim that the secret to youth ministry was to have a youth choir. All ministry must run through the youth choir. Immediately my gut tensed and my mind countered silently, "No, all ministry must run through a sports program." Then I remembered a guitar-toting friend who would claim that all ministry funnels through praise music. I later observed a youth pastor who centered all ministry through a high-impact drama troupe.

Some claim that mission trips are all that matter. Others maintain that small groups make the lasting difference. Mentoring programs come and go, much like peer counseling has an ebb and flow. It seems that every new youth leader, and the few congregations that have a youth pastor, each

have their own recipe or perspective on the secret to youth ministry. But very few have even a faint concept of what a "model" for youth ministry might be or should be.

Young adult ministry often proves to be more vague since it seeks to be different from youth ministry (whatever that happens to be). With a more mobile, independent and transitory group, any "model" easily fluctuates from leader to leader, from week to week. Few move beyond whatever the latest program is to what model they might implement. Either they copy what others have already done, do something in contrast to what has been done, or strike out on an untested, new idea. Each of these is a model, but few know they are following it.

How Models Work

A model provides structure for ministry. Like the skeletal system of the body, it functions best when it supports the body. You don't want your bones to be broken or to show themselves, just like you don't want your model for ministry to be broken or to show itself. It serves the ministry rather than vice versa.

A model indicates place, purpose, and process for ministry. For example, a street ministry model would be more likely to occur on the streets of a city rather than a suburban sanctuary. It would connect those living on the streets with Jesus and possibly those ministering would connect with Jesus by connecting to those on the streets. And the process might be a short burst onto the street scene followed by retreat or possibly setting up an outpost center in or near the street.

In contrast, a retreat center model for ministry would be more likely to occur in or near nature and away from the hustle and bustle that typifies many ministries. Its purpose would be to center (or re-center) on God and the values one's lifestyle probably

steals from what a person desires. The process necessitates an investment of time (perhaps a weekend or a week) and maybe a directed focus.

A more traditional model would offer a weekly gathering for worship and religious instruction as well as fellowship. An order of service might provide the standard process from which occasional small deviations could be allowed for the sake of the kids.

A model provides a pattern to plan and evaluate. Deviations are only deviations when they depart from an established norm. A model provides that norm. Sometimes a ministry needs change, but change from what? And why? And how? Without an awareness of an existing model or an alternative, you might simply create a monster or an anti-model that doesn't serve your purpose other than to be different from the others (which would be a model!).

Models help to reveal the purposes and goals of a ministry. Because a model indicates place, purpose and process for ministry, these become anchor points that highlight what matters most. If this fails to reveal what truly matters, individuals and groups are more likely to make appropriate changes, and can do so consistently by changing the model and making further evaluations.

What We Did

The Center for Youth Evangelism (CYE) at Andrews University hosted the 180° Symposium October 19-21, 2010. The topic for this third year of the 180° Symposium was "Models for Youth and Young Adult Ministry." Individuals wrote papers in advance, made brief presentations when we gathered, and then tackled the topic as focus groups. The individual papers form the second half of this book. Most of these follow a relational or incarnational model for ministry. Within a

limited number of pages, each author had to present one's model with a theology for that model as well as an explanation and illustration. We requested a visual representation of the model, but didn't require it.

Under the direction of CYE Director, Japhet De Oliveira and with Terry Swenson, chaplain of Loma Linda University serving as the facilitator, the large focus group subdivided into smaller working units to wrestle with a greater breadth of potential models for youth and young adult ministry. Eventually the group came to a consensus on the top 10 models. Some groups fleshed out a few of these more than others. The rest simply got handed to the book editor to complete. The book editor served as a floater from group to group, gleaned the insights and perspectives of the various contributors. These top 10 models form the core of the book.

Each subgroup selected a delegate for a think tank to meet "after hours" in order to hammer out a theology for youth and young adult ministry. This group's work came back to the larger group the next day for input and revision. This theology forms the brief, theological section right after this introduction.

The interplay of ideas and the conviction and passion expressed joined with the rich diversity of experiences and thought in the various focus groups. At times, things seem to bog down, then pick up, then burst through. Some breakthroughs took place during the meals or intermission; others during the perseverance of the focus group's work. At times it seemed like nothing more than the work of humans; then it seems as though the supernatural took hold. Exhilaration and frustration often seemed like twins. The investment seemed to yield a sharper focus for the participants. We share our results as a work in progress, both on paper and in our ministries.

An additional seven models got added, not because they had been voted or even discussed, but simply because they exist. These may have formed without conscious thought or intention, but they operate. Most will quickly identify them and be able to name places where they have seen them in operation. Mentioning these doesn't endorse them, but it does explain them and hopefully guides people to better models.

Some Who Have Gone Before Us

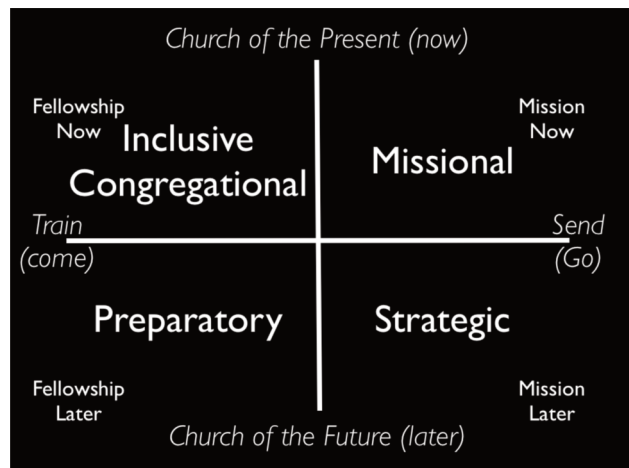
Most of the papers demonstrate a model born out of personal experience by the author. Few refer to youth and young adult ministry professionals who have already written about models in youth ministry. Perhaps this is the place to acknowledge some giants who have already been over this ground. Any one of these resources offers pause to reconsider where one might be currently, as well as where one might want to go when it comes to youth and young adult ministry. We have much to learn from others who have preceded us.

Mark Senter has written the most regarding models for youth and young adult ministry. One of his works (Senter, 1992) traces a historical flow of youth ministry with various models prevailing in different eras. The mid-nineteenth century utilized Sunday Schools and entities like the YMCA to reach young people in the United States during westward expansion. Over the turn of the century and through WWI, the model changed from Sunday Schools to youth societies as schools took priority over churches in the lives of young people. The mid-twentieth century moved the center of youth ministry onto the school campus with Youth for Christ and Young Life clubs and an incarnational youth ministry model. Currently, youth ministry relies on a professionalization with a paid youth pastor and publications, conventions, and training through church and para-church organizations.

Senter (1987) also has offered eight specific models of youth ministry:

1. Community model (gather in Christ)
2. Competition model (discipleship vs. secularism)
3. Discipleship model (train students to be God's people)
4. Fundamentalist model (separate from the world)
5. Gift Development model (spiritual gifts for service)
6. Ministry model (train in church for ministry outside of church)
7. Urban model (youth pastor goes to where the kids are)
8. Youth Fellowship model (youth learn to lead in the youth group)

More recently (2001), Senter offered a four-quadrant model for youth ministry that provides two axes. The vertical axis presents the church of the future at one end and the church of the present at the other. The horizontal axis separates training (come) from sending (go). When these two axes cross, the resulting four quadrants are best seen in the following graphic (adapted from Senter, 2001, p. xvi).



Three Ph.D.s in youth ministry (Dean, Clark & Rahn, 2001) forged an academic youth ministry book (that used to be an oxymoron) that presented a theology and seven models for youth ministry. These included:

1. Evangelism (be with Jesus, preach Jesus, confront evil)
2. Family (churches support families as the agents for spiritual maturing)
3. Christian Practices (the means/habits/practices to respond to God)
4. Student Leadership (identify, nurture, and utilize God's gifts to young people)
5. Critical Consciousness (discernment to address current issues for God)
6. Community (come together for transformation)
7. Innovation (living out the story of God in our specific time and place)

Jim Burns challenged the program oriented youth ministry models of the 1980s with a relational emphasis. According to Burns, "Today we realize that long-term influence with lasting results comes from significant relationships and role models. Of course programming has its place in youth ministry, but the long-term positive influence on the lives of students comes from people, not programs" (Burns, 1988, p. 15). As mentioned earlier, this model seemed to be the most prevalent one among the contributors to this book.

Mark Oestreicher (2008) outlined three models of youth ministry and suggested that current models should implement the third version to be effective now. Although each had its time, the presence-oriented model reaches young people today. These three models are:

1. Proclamation, evangelism and correction, identity (Matthew 7:13-14)

2. Programs, discipleship and positive peer groups, autonomy (Matthew 28:19-20)
3. Presence, communion and mission, affinity (John 17:18; Acts 2:44-46)

For those who would like to distill or discover other models for youth and young adult ministry, many are available to examine, evaluate, adapt, or adopt. The trendy emergent church model (Kimball, 2007) is simply one. Belcher (2009) offers something different from the emergent church and yet also different from traditional models. Yaconelli (2002) embraces human inconsistency and clings to God's consistent love. Paulien (2008) presents Jesus as the timeless answer to changing times. A new wave of family-based youth ministry comes from the experiences of Joiner (2009). Miller (2003) offers a new and personal perspective on spirituality outside of typical church garb. Rice (2002) reaches back into Jewish roots for a model he finds helpful for today. And Spencer (2010), while succumbing to cancer, offers his last view of what he imagines the church can be.

What About You?

What model for youth and young adult ministry have you utilized? Are you aware of the models available? Could you name any you would endorse? What would you use to critique the model you currently employ (whether or not you've been aware of it)?

Please remember that a model for youth and young adult ministry serves best when it is the skeletal system for your living organism. You don't want it to be broken and you don't want it to show. But it does need to provide the support and shape for your ministry. And it should be based on God and how God operates. That takes us to the next section—a theology for youth and young adult ministry.

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