

Villa Heights Baptist Church Philosophy of Youth Ministry

Whether or not every church or para-church organization realizes it, they all have a philosophy of ministry. It may not be written down, but every ministry practices one. Often the philosophy of ministry will change with the target group. For instance one wouldn't reach out to teenagers the same way they minister to the elderly. One has to adapt to the specific calling. Until we verbalize our POM (philosophy of ministry) we may unknowingly counter it. These next several points outline our beliefs about how to do the job God has commanded us to do in reaching out to the teenagers of our church and the Roanoke Valley.

2 reasons for clearly defined ministry:

1. In order to avoid haphazardness
2. To avoid serious pitfalls-dangerous philosophies we might buy into (ex. Join them to win them philosophy)

Villa Heights Baptist Youth POM: If Jesus was youth pastor and His disciples were the youth group then we should follow what He did by:

1. Keep Jesus at the forefront in everything we do.

Though Jesus wasn't always promoting Himself (in fact, he was often telling people not to spread His fame). His very presence made a huge impact on all He encountered and it is only the presence of Jesus that can work any good in the hearts and lives of teenagers. The work of Jesus on the cross, when He became sin for us, is our driving force, our only source of hope and inspiration. Without the cross of Jesus our faith is in vain, we are without hope, and we are bound for hell (Eph. 2:12).

2. Build relationships.

What's great about Jesus' ministry is that He was always reaching out to others, especially His disciples. In fact Jesus had an inner circle of 3 disciples (Peter, James, and John) who He shared so much with. He was always eating with his disciples and other friends. The Bible says He was great friends with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. He told Zaccheus "I'm coming to your house to eat." The point is Jesus moved people by being relational with them. He had friends and acquaintances. He remembered people's names and their life stories. This is the only effective way to do ministry; to get to know people. This is a key part of our youth ministry. This is why we go out to eat all the time, have fun events, and allow fellowship time during part of Sunday School.

3. Teach what the Bible says.

If all we do is hang out then the teens will never learn anything. In the Gospels you always see Jesus going somewhere so He can either heal, pray, rest, or teach. The majority of the time He is teaching (sermon on the mount, he went into this or that synagogue, teaching in the temple in Jerusalem, teaching from a boat, teaching His disciples as they were in transit). In today's God-

less climate and secular culture we must have good doctrine taught in our churches. Too many churches have taught whatever is popular and whatever will draw a crowd, but that will not introduce people to Jesus.

4. Promote self-sacrifice and repentance.

Time after time Jesus said, "I must go to Jerusalem to die." His disciples never really got it till they watched him get arrested and die on the cross. He preached all the time, "deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:36). The call to repentance must be heard because getting teenagers into a right relationship with God is what ministry is all about. But one has to remember that balance in all things is vital tool, which is why the next point is so important.

5. Be non-judgmental of sinners, yet still call them to repentance.

What was Jesus' response to the woman caught in adultery? He saved her life by telling the ones who were preparing to stone her, "Let him who has no sin cast the first stone." He loved her, showed her compassion, and allowed her to live. He did not judge or condemn her, yet he still challenged her to repent by saying, "go and sin no more." We cannot judge the teenagers because that is God's job after death (Heb. 9:27). Our job is to prepare them for the judgment after death.

6. Lead by serving.

In John 13 Jesus washed His disciples' feet. He never used them or exploited their talents. He always led them by serving them. When we minister to teens by serving them (giving them rides, buying them things, listening to their concerns, loving them unconditionally) we show them that we really care. If anyone can spot a hypocrite fast it's a teenager and serving them sacrificially shows them we are not hypocrites at all.

Frank Hamrick's Ten lessons on youth ministry can help us get a sense of how to minister to teenagers. They areⁱ:

1. The Bible is the authority for our philosophies.
One day we will all be judged for how faithful we were to the Bible in our teaching, doctrine, music, method, etc.
2. The Bible is the answer to man's problems and decisions. Therefore teens should be prepared to face these problems without the help of a Sunday School teacher, youth pastor, or pastor. They should be equipped to find the answers to their problems in the Bible. Teach not only what the bible says, but how to go to the Bible and find what the Bible says. Every single problem of every single human throughout history can be answered from the Bible.
3. The local church is God's institution for ministry. Matt. 16:18 says "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it"
4. Parents are the key to youth ministry (Deut. 5:30-6:9) Parents are the #1 youth leaders in the world because they spend more time with youth. The Bible places the responsibility of youth ministry on the parents. The design of our youth program is to undergird the parent's ministry to teens.

5. Christian maturity is the purpose of ministry (Eph. 4:12). “perfecting of the saints for the work of ministry” We want to produce high school graduates who are rooted in their faith and are ready for the responsibilities of independence.
6. The front line of youth work is reaching those teens who have not dropped out of society. Preventive (put a fence at the top of the cliff-church youth group) vs. remedial (building a hospital at the bottom of the cliff-street ministry, drug houses).
7. We win them by being different not by being like them (Matt. 5:13-16).
Join them to win them-leads to compromise and softens the message
8. We must balance evangelism, personal development, and bible knowledge.
There are some essentials (eggs, flour, salt, milk) and some enhancements (icing, candles). Stop leaving out the essentials. Balance the 3 essentials. Evangelism alone will produce off-balanced Christians. And vice-versa. Develop character and ministry skills in our young people.
“Sadly we are more interested in outward conformity than inward growth.” Knowledge of the Bible must be involved or else the program will have evangelism, outreach, and activities WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE, which is not even effective evangelism.
9. We must teach teens by doing, not just by hearing.
Bible studies should involve work on the part of the student. (digging in the Bible at home)
It might frighten some of the weak ones away, but it’s the only way to build spiritual discipline.
Do we want the largest youth group? Or do we want to produce champions for God?
Don’t water down Bible studies so that they will be palatable for students.
10. You get what you honor. (1 Tim. 5:17) If you exalt the cool kids, you’ll get more and more cool kids. If you exalt the godly ones, you’ll get more godly ones. Whatever teens see you spending most of your time doing, they will view as most important.
You should honor: evangelism, scripture memory, meditation.

¹ Hamrick, Frank. “Leadership Training”, Positive Action for Christ.